ENVIRONICS RESEARCH GROUP

Ontario Energy Board
2005 Survey of Stakeholders

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The Ontario Energy Board

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ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH GROUP

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In September 2005, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) retained Environics Research Group to conduct a survey among members of its various stakeholder groups. The major goal of this research is to measure the Board's performance and to provide information to assist the Board in identifying areas for improvement in the way it operates and in the way it communicates with stakeholders and the public.

The OEB interacts with diverse stakeholders. This survey includes interviews with consumer and advocacy groups, energy sector organizations (including sector associations, energy retailers and marketers), electricity and gas distributors, financial organizations (such as debt and equity analysts, rating agencies and institutional investors) and others (academics, consultants, the legal community, the media).

OEB provided Environics with a list of 80 stakeholder organizations. Interviews were successfully completed by telephone with senior officials representing 71 of these organizations. The survey was conducted between November 15 and December 2, 2005.

Stakeholder category	List	Interviewed
Consumer and advocacy groups	12	12
Energy sector organizations	13	12
Power generation companies	6	6
Electricity and gas distributors	22	22
Financial organizations	11	9
Other	16	10
Total	80	71

Because of the relatively small sample sizes within the various stakeholder category subgroups, caution is advised in interpreting differences among these categories.

Where appropriate, survey responses are compared to the responses from a survey of 46 stakeholders interviewed in 2004 survey of stakeholders.

The topics addressed in the 2005 survey include:

- Key top-of-mind energy issues and priority of issues
- Perceived role or function of OEB and importance of role in future
- OEB strengths and weaknesses
- Importance of various OEB functions
- OEB overall performance and performance on a variety of attributes
- Evaluation of industry and consumer communications
- Evaluation of service quality
- Awareness and participation in regulatory policy initiatives

This report summarizes and describes the main findings of the survey.

Throughout the survey, respondents are asked to provide evaluations using a ten-point scale. In interpreting these findings, scores above five can be considered positive and scores less than five are considered to be negative.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall

A major finding of the 2005 survey is the overall increase in satisfaction with the OEB's performance. Using a 10-point scale, approval has increased from 5.4 in 2004 to 6.4 in 2005. In addition, performance ratings for the Board have increased in all areas which were measured in both 2004 and 2005.

The major areas for improvement for the OEB, as identified in the survey, are timeliness and providing consumer information. The major areas of strength are its professionalism in conducting hearings and proceedings, and the fairness of Board decisions and regulations.

Issues

Electricity supply issues continue to be seen as the single most important energy issue facing Ontario today by a majority of stakeholders. The rising price of electricity is a second-tier issue.

When asked about specific issues, stakeholders again give the highest priority rating to the issue of electricity supply; other issues with high importance are electricity reliability, policy stability and electricity pricing.

Roles and functions

Regulation – either in general, or specific regulation of energy prices or the energy sector – remains by far the dominant theme associated with the role or function of the OEB. Consumer protection and education is also mentioned, though not as frequently as various aspects of regulation.

A large majority of stakeholders continue to say that the role played by the OEB will become more important in light of changes occurring in Ontario's energy sector.

The most important OEB functions, in the view of stakeholders, are setting utility rates and adjudicating utility requests for rate increases, setting and enforcing regulatory requirements, and protecting consumer interests.

Performance assessments

Overall satisfaction with the OEB's performance has increased from 5.4 in 2004 to 6.4 in 2005.

Stakeholders identify various aspects of the regulatory process, followed by communications and stakeholder consultation, as the tasks that the OEB performs the best. Issues of timing and timeliness are mentioned most frequently as the task that the OEB performs worst.

When assessed on a variety of attributes, the OEB receives its best performance ratings for professionalism in conducting its hearings and proceedings, and fairness in its decisions and regulations.

About one-half of stakeholder participants are satisfied with the level of OEB regulation; however, almost as many say the OEB regulates too heavily.

Communications

Stakeholders give the OEB an approval rating of 6.9 on its industry communications activities. This is higher than the 5.3 rating on a related question asked in 2004.

Almost all stakeholders find the OEB website either very or somewhat useful.

Stakeholders give the OEB an approval rating of 4.6 on its performance in the area of informing consumers about important issues and changes occurring in the electricity and gas sectors. This is higher than the 3.2 rating received in 2004.

Service quality

When assessed on several service quality dimensions, OEB staff receive their highest overall ratings in the area of being knowledgeable about areas of the energy sector, followed by being objective and fair in their dealings with stakeholder organizations.

Policy initiatives: awareness and involvement

Most stakeholders – 86 percent - report awareness of regulatory policy initiatives undertaken by the OEB.

Stakeholders became aware of regulatory policy initiatives in a number of ways: the most frequently mentioned sources are a notification or invitation to participate from the OEB, or involvement through an industry organization.

Most frequently mentioned initiatives are: smart meters, the natural gas forum, natural gas and electricity review, transmission study or code, regulated price plan, conservation initiatives in general, the conservation and demand program, and rate application/standardization.

A majority of stakeholders – 63 percent - have been involved in OEB regulatory policy initiatives.

Stakeholders have most frequently participated in smart meters, natural gas forum, natural gas and electricity interface review, transmission code, and rate settings/hearings/applications.

Stakeholders who have been involved in policy initiatives give the OEB satisfaction rating of 6.7, up from 5.5 in 2004.

Closing comments

Closing comments and words of advice from stakeholders vary widely. Aside from several general comments of approval or encouragement, the most frequently raised issue is faster or expedited responses, an issue clearly related to concerns about timeliness which emerge elsewhere in the survey.

3.0 DETAILED FINDINGS

3.1 ISSUES

Most important energy issue

Electricity supply continues to dominate other topics as the single most important energy issue facing Ontario for stakeholders. From the survey, three-quarters of respondents mention electricity supply (61%) and a lack of generator capacity (14%). The rising price of electricity is a second-tier issue. Other issues are mentioned by only one or two stakeholder respondents. The issue of electricity restructuring, which received four mentions in 2004, has disappeared from the list of top-of-mind issues.

Single most important energy issue				
What do you think is the single most important energy issue facing Ontarians today?				
	2005		2004	
	%	N	%	N
Electricity supply	61	43	59	27
Lack of generator capacity	14	10	7	3
Electricity prices/rising price of electricity	13	9	–	–
Policy stability	3	2	7	3
Regulatory/pricing clarity	3	2	2	1
Coal program/phase out	3	2	–	–
Electricity blackouts	1	1	4	2
Conservation/environment/clean air	1	1	2	1
Electricity restructuring	–	–	9	4
Investment	–	–	4	2
Other	1	1	4	2

A majority of stakeholders in all sectors name electricity supply as the single most important energy issue facing Ontario.

Priority of issues

When asked to assign a priority to a series of specific issues (on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is highest priority), stakeholders again give the highest rating to the issue of electricity supply. Other issues with high importance include electricity reliability, policy stability and electricity pricing. Natural gas pricing, energy conservation, natural gas supply and competition are given a lower priority.

Since 2004, the importance assigned to the issues of electricity reliability and natural gas pricing has increased somewhat; policy stability and investor confidence receive somewhat lower ratings now than in 2004.

Priority of issues	
Please rate the priority of the following energy issues on a ten-point scale, where a score of 1 means the issue is the lowest priority and 10 means it is the highest priority.	
	Mean
Electricity supply	9.1
Electricity reliability	8.4
Policy stability	8.2
Electricity pricing	8.0
Investor confidence in the energy sector	7.6
Public confidence in the energy sector	7.3
Natural gas pricing	6.6
Energy conservation	6.5
Natural gas supply	6.2
Competition	5.5

Some differences in priority ratings can be seen among the different stakeholder groups, although many of these differences are relatively minor. Electricity pricing is a higher priority among consumer advocacy stakeholders than among other stakeholder groups, while natural gas supply and investor confidence are given lower than average ratings. Energy sector organizations place greater than average priority on competition. Generator stakeholders see policy stability and investor confidence as higher priorities; natural gas supply, natural gas pricing and energy conservation are given lower than average priority by generator stakeholders. Distributors assign a higher priority to conservation and a lower priority to competition. Financial organizations tend to place a higher than average priority on most of these issues, with the exception of conservation (which is given a lower priority) and pricing issues. Stakeholders categorized as "other" place a slightly higher priority on natural gas pricing, electricity supply, natural gas supply, and a lower than average priority on competition.

3.2 ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

Perceptions of OEB role

Regulation – either in general, or specific regulation of energy prices or the energy sector – remains by far the dominant theme associated with the role or function of the OEB. Consumer protection and education is also mentioned, though not as frequently as aspects of regulation. Other roles identified include: balance between suppliers and consumers, facilitation of stability and efficiency in the market, ensuring fairness and independence from government.

Perceived role or function of OEB*

Please describe in your own words how you perceive the role or function of the Ontario Energy Board.

	%	N
Regulator/quasi-judicial entity/provides regulation	44	31
Protection/stability/education for consumers or public	27	19
Protection/regulation of energy prices	23	16
Regulate energy sector/industry/utilities/markets	13	9
The balance between suppliers/consumers	10	7
Facilitate stability/efficiency in the market	10	7
Enforces rules/laws	10	7
Independent from government	8	6
Ensures fairness/fair treatment among different parties	8	6
To regulate monopolies	6	4
Ensure we obtain appropriate levels of services	4	3
Ensure protection/stabilities for investors	4	3
Clarify policy issues	4	3
Economic regulator	4	3
Policy advice for government/policy expertise	3	2
Encourage investment	3	2
Ensure reliable/adequate supply of energy	3	2
Over regulates	3	2
Other	6	4
DK/NA	1	1

* more than one answer is possible

A large majority of stakeholders continue to say that the role played by the OEB will become more important (in light of changes occurring in Ontario's energy sector). However, a somewhat larger proportion – 18 percent – now believe that the importance of the OEB's role will be the same as before, compared to only two participants in 2004.

The role played by OEB will become:				
In light of the changes that are occurring in Ontario's energy sector, would you say that the role played by the Ontario Energy Board will become…?				
	2005		2004	
	%	N	%	N
More important	82	58	96	44
Less important	–	–	–	–
The same as before	18	13	4	2

Most important functions

The most important OEB functions (rated on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means of critical importance) in the view of stakeholders are setting utility rates and adjudicating utility requests for rate increases, setting and enforcing regulatory requirements, and protecting consumer interests. The less important functions are seen to be providing information to consumers and facilitating conservation initiatives.

Importance of OEB functions		
I'm going to name several functions that are part of the OEB's mandate. Please rate the importance of each function, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means it is of no importance and 10 means it is of critical importance.		
	2005 Mean	2004 Mean
Setting utility rates and adjudicating utility requests for rate increases	8.6	8.6
Protecting the interests of consumers	8.5	8.2
Setting and enforcing regulatory requirements	8.5	8.7
Supporting economic efficiency in the energy sector	7.4	7.8
Promoting a viable energy sector	7.4	7.9
Stakeholder communications	7.2	7.3
Providing information to consumers	6.3	6.1
Facilitating conservation initiatives	5.3	4.2

The importance of most functions has not markedly changed since 2004. The levels of importance assigned to supporting economic efficiency and promoting a viable energy sector have declined slightly; the importance assigned to facilitating conservation initiatives has increased, although it remains the lowest-rated function.

Some modest differences emerge in the importance of these functions to the various stakeholder groups. Setting utility rates and protecting the interests of consumers is of greater than average importance to consumer advocacy organizations. Energy sector organizations place greater than average importance on providing information to consumers. Generators assign greater importance to promoting a viable energy sector, and setting and enforcing regulatory requirements. Distributors place more importance on supporting economic efficiency and promoting a viable energy sector than do other stakeholder groups. Financial organizations place higher importance on stakeholder communications and facilitating conservation initiatives. Stakeholders categorized as "other" place higher than average importance on protecting the interests of consumers, and setting and enforcing regulatory requirements.

3.3 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

General performance assessments

Overall satisfaction with the OEB's performance, on a ten-point scale, has increased since 2004, from 5.4 in 2004 to 6.4 in 2005.

The OEB's performance is rated at 6.0 or higher by all stakeholder groups.

Overall satisfaction with OEB performance

How satisfied are you with the OEB's overall performance, using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means you are completely dissatisfied and 10 means you are completely satisfied?

	2005	2004	Consumer advocates	Energy sector org.	Generators	Distributors	Financial organizations	Other
Mean satisfaction rating	6.4	5.4	7.0	6.0	6.7	6.0	7.0	6.5

What the OEB does best and worst

Stakeholders were asked top-of-mind, what the OEB does best and worst.

Various aspects of the regulatory function are mentioned by many respondents, including transparency (8%), independence (7%), pricing (7%), regulation (7%), the hearing process (6%), reviewing rates (6%), fair treatment (6%), utilities regulation (4%), balance (3%) and consistency (3%).

Communications and stakeholder consultation is seen as the best by 28 percent.

In 2004, natural gas utility regulation was most frequently identified as the task that the OEB performs best, by 14 of 46 respondents. The task of communication with stakeholders was mentioned by eight respondents.

What does OEB do best?		
What would you say the OEB does best?		
	%	N
Good communication/consultation with stakeholders	28	20
Transparency of decision-making	8	6
Being independent/impartial/objective	7	5
Sets or monitor prices/costs	7	5
Provide regulation	7	5
The hearing process	6	4
Representing public/consumer interests	6	4
Review rates	6	4
Fair treatment/decisions	6	4
Regulate utilities	4	3
Identifies issues/solutions	3	2
Long-term/effective policies	3	2
Balance/fairness for market participants	3	2
Consistency/predictable	3	2
Efficient/fast processes (various)	3	2
None	1	1
Other	6	4
DK/NA	8	6

As was the case in 2004, issues of timing and timeliness were mentioned most frequently as the task that the OEB performs worst. Other tasks mentioned by more than just three or four respondents are stakeholder communication and consultation, and consumer education (informing the public).

What does OEB do worst?		
And what would you say the OEB does worst?		
	%	N
Timing/timeliness	21	15
Communication/consultation with stakeholders	13	9
Consumer education/informing the public	10	7
Over regulates	6	4
Lack understanding/support in certain areas	6	4
Clarity or consistency of regulation/policies/code	6	4
Regulating companies/utilities	6	4
Management/inefficiencies (various)	6	4
Speed/efficiency in delivering decisions	4	3
Mandate/agenda is not well managed	4	3
Policy analysis/predicting market shifts	4	3
Consistency in regulation/policies/rulings	4	3
Being independent/managing interference	3	2
Hearing process	3	2
Deal equally with all market participants/stakeholders	3	2
Approval process is too long	3	2
Low return/no incentives for businesses or sector	3	2
Other	3	2
DK/NA	10	7

Performance in specific areas

The OEB receives its highest performance ratings for professionalism in conducting its hearings and proceedings, and fairness of decisions and regulations. Its lowest ratings come in the areas of flexibility and timeliness – which were also two of the three lowest-rated attributes in 2004.

The OEB's perceived performance has improved in all comparable areas since 2004, but most notably in the area of transparency, which has moved from being the lowest rated attribute to one of the more highly rated attributes. Performance ratings are also up, though less markedly, for the OEB's performance on the attributes of accountability, cost-effectiveness and efficiency, flexibility and timeliness. No areas show a decline over the one-year period.

Performance in areas linked to OEB's mandate

Here are several attributes that are linked to the OEB's fulfilment of its mandate. Please rate the OEB's performance in each of these areas on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very poor and 10 means excellent.

	2005 Mean	2004 Mean	Consumer advocates	Energy sector org.	Generators	Distributors	Financial organizations	Other
Extent to which hearings and proceedings are conducted in a professional manner	7.9	-	8.6	7.7	7.2	7.7	7.8	8.1
Fairness of decisions and regulations	7.0	6.9	7.1	7.4	8.0	6.4	7.3	7.4
Transparency in reporting on its own performance as a regulator	6.6	4.0	7.1	6.8	7.0	6.2	6.5	6.8
Consistency of decisions across market participants and over time	6.5	6.3	6.7	6.2	6.6	6.0	7.6	7.1
Accountability in clearly defined regulatory processes and sound explanations for its decisions	6.3	5.8	6.3	6.1	6.0	6.1	6.9	6.7
Extent to which decisions are clear and easy to understand	6.2	5.9	6.4	5.7	6.8	6.0	6.6	6.6
Cost-effectiveness and efficiency	6.0	4.7	6.5	6.4	5.8	5.0	7.0	6.4
Flexibility in responding quickly to changing market conditions	5.1	4.1	5.2	5.3	5.5	4.5	6.0	5.5
Timeliness of processes including decisions, application processes, and notification	4.9	4.1	5.3	4.0	5.2	4.4	6.2	5.2

There are some modest differences in the performance assessments made by the various stakeholder groups. Consumer advocacy organizations rate the OEB more highly than others on professionalism. Generators give a higher rating for fairness and clarity. Energy sector organizations give the OEB a lower performance rating on timeliness. Distributors provide slightly lower ratings on a number of dimensions, while financial organizations provide higher than average ratings on a number of dimensions.

Degree of regulation

About half of stakeholder respondents – 48 percent – are satisfied with the level of OEB regulation, saying that it regulates neither too heavily nor too lightly. However, only slightly fewer – 39 percent – say the OEB regulates too heavily. Only ten percent think regulation is too light.

The OEB regulates:

Do you think the OEB regulates…?

	%	Consumer advocates	Energy sector org.	Generators	Distributors	Financial organizations	Other
Too heavily	39	17	33	33	77	33	-
Too lightly	10	17	17	17	-	-	20
Neither	48	67	42	50	23	67	70

The topic of regulation reveals large differences among stakeholder groups. Consumer advocacy organizations, financial organizations and stakeholders categorized as "other" are most likely to be content with the current degree of regulation. Most distributors think that the OEB over-regulates.

3.4 COMMUNICATIONS

Industry communications

Stakeholders give the OEB an approval rating of 6.9 in terms of how it carries out industry communications activities, such as communicating its strategic objectives and decisions, engaging in stakeholder consultations and guiding regulated entities in their obligations.

In 2004, on a related question, the OEB received a rating of 5.3 in terms of its performance in facilitating communications within the electricity and natural gas industries.

OEB performance on industry communications								
When it comes to industry communications, the OEB communicates its strategic objectives and decisions, it engages in stakeholder consultations, and guides regulated entities in their obligations. How do you rate the OEB in carrying out these communications activities, again using the same scale?								
	2005	2004	Consumer advocates	Energy sector org.	Generators	Distributors	Financial organizations	Other
Mean approval rating	6.9	5.3	7.3	6.1	6.7	6.9	7.3	7.1

OEB industry communications is rated at 6.0 or higher by all stakeholders groups.

Website

Almost all stakeholders find the OEB website useful; only three percent find it not at all useful.

Financial organizations are more likely to find the website somewhat useful rather than very useful.

Usefulness of OEB website		
Is the OEB website very useful to your organization, is it somewhat useful or not at all useful?		
	%	N
Very useful	49	35
Somewhat useful	46	33
Not at all useful	3	2

Consumer information

The OEB receives an approval rating of 4.6 from stakeholders on its performance in the area of informing consumers (i.e., the average householder) about important issues and changes occurring in the electricity and gas sectors.

While this rating is below the neutral point, it is an improvement over the approval rating of 3.2 given in 2004.

OEB performance in informing consumers								
Again, using a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 means very poor and 10 means excellent) how good a job is the OEB doing in informing consumers (and by that I mean the average householder) about important issues and changes occurring in the electricity and gas sectors?								
	2005	2004	Consumer advocates	Energy sector org.	Generators	Distributors	Financial organizations	Other
Mean approval rating	4.6	3.2	3.8	4.2	4.8	5.1	4.9	4.9

Consumer advocacy organizations rate the OEB slightly lower than other stakeholders on this dimension.

3.5 SERVICE QUALITY

The 2005 stakeholders survey included a new section probing service quality provided by OEB staff in a number of areas. Stakeholders give the highest overall ratings in the area of being knowledgeable about areas of the energy sector. The OEB also receives positive ratings in being objective and fair and in being easy to deal with and responsive to questions and requests. The lowest rating is given in the area of innovation.

Service quality	
When it comes to service quality, using a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 means very poor and 10 means excellent) how would you assess OEB staff in each of the following areas?	
	Mean
Knowledgeable about the areas of the energy sector they are responsible for	7.4
Objective and fair in their dealings with your organization	7.3
Easy to deal with and responsive to questions and requests	6.8
Open to new ideas and able to provide innovative approaches	5.4

Consumer advocacy organizations give higher ratings than others to staff service on all four dimensions. Financial organizations give higher ratings in the areas of knowledge and innovation. Stakeholders categorized as “other” give higher ratings on knowledge, innovation and objectivity.

Energy sector organizations rate service quality lower in the areas of knowledge, innovation and objectivity. Distributors give OEB staff a lower rating on knowledge. Generators rate OEB staff lower on responsiveness and higher on objectivity.

3.6 POLICY

Awareness of policy initiatives

Most stakeholders report being aware of regulatory policy initiatives undertaken by the OEB; there has been no change in the high level of awareness reported in 2004.

Aware of policy initiatives				
Are you aware of any regulatory policy initiatives that the OEB has undertaken?				
	2005		2004	
	%	N	%	N
Yes	86	61	87	40

Stakeholders mention a long list of regulatory policy initiatives of which they are aware. Most frequently mentioned (each by more than five participants) are: smart meters, the natural gas forum, natural gas and electricity review, transmission study or code, regulated price plan, conservation initiatives in general, the conservation and demand management program, and rate application/standardization. Some participants mention more than one initiative.

Regulatory policy initiatives recalled*		
What initiatives are you aware of? (among those aware)		
	%	N
Smart meters	31	19
Natural gas forum	20	12
Natural gas and electricity interface review	20	12
Transmission study/transmission code	13	8
Regulated price plan	11	7
Conservation initiatives (general)	11	7
Conservation and demand management program (CDM)	10	6
Rate application/standardization	10	6
Cost allocation/budgeting	8	5
Distribution system code/rules	8	5
Natural gas/supply of gas	8	5
Distribution rates	7	4
LDC efficiency/review of LDC	7	4
GDAR (Gas Distribution Access Rule)	7	4
Performance-based regulation/initiative	7	4
Demand side management	5	3
Electricity/review/supply of electricity	5	3
Standard offer contracts/program	5	3
Electricity price (various)	5	3
Natural gas storage	3	2
Supply plan/management for the province	3	2
Consultation (various)	3	2
Service quality issues	3	2
Other	13	8
DK/NA	3	2

* more than one answer is possible

Stakeholders became aware of regulatory policy initiatives in a number of ways. Most frequently mentioned sources are a notification or invitation to participate from the OEB, or involvement through an industry organization. Stakeholders are least likely to identify the OEB website as a source of information about policy initiatives.

In 2004, similar proportions mentioned OEB notices or invitations and the OEB website, while industry associations and the media were mentioned less frequently than in the current survey.

Among stakeholders, generators are more likely than others to mention being notified or invited by the OEB, and financial organizations are more likely than others to mention the media as a source.

Source of awareness of policy initiatives:*		
How did you become aware of this initiative? (among those aware)		
	%	N
Notified by OEB or invited to participate	44	27
Involved through my industry association	31	19
Heard from colleagues/company	21	13
Heard/read about it in the media	18	11
Read about it on OEB website	16	10
Other	2	1
DK/NA	2	1

* more than one answer is possible

Involvement in policy initiatives

A majority of stakeholders – 63 percent – have been involved in OEB regulatory policy initiatives; the proportion reporting involvement is down somewhat since 2004.

Reported involvement is highest among consumer advocacy organizations and energy sector organizations; no financial organizations report taking part in policy initiatives.

Involvement with policy initiatives				
Have you or your organization become involved in any OEB regulatory policy initiatives?				
	2005		2004	
	%	N	%	N
Yes	63	45	80	37

Stakeholders who have been involved with policy initiatives (N=45) mention a wide variety of policy initiatives in which they have participated. Initiatives most frequently mentioned included smart meters, natural gas forum, natural gas and electricity interface review, transmission code and rate settings/hearings/applications. A number of participants mention involvement in more than one initiative.

In 2004, the most frequently mentioned policy initiatives mentioned were: natural gas forum, DSM, distribution system code and LDC efficiency.

Regulatory policy initiatives: involvement*		
What initiative(s) were you involved with? (among those involved)		
	%	N
Smart meters	31	14
Natural gas forum	22	10
Natural gas and electricity interface review	20	9
Transmission code	20	9
Rate settings/hearings/applications	20	9
Regulated price plan	13	6
Distribution system code/rules	11	5
LDC efficiency/distribution sector consultation	11	5
Conservation/CDM program	7	3
Cost allocation	7	3
Natural gas supply/policies/regulation	7	3
Distribution rates	7	3
GDAR (Gas Distribution Access Rule)	7	3
Rate handbook	7	3
Standard offer contracts/program	7	3
Performance-based initiatives	7	3
Demand side management	4	2
Service quality issues	4	2
Security deposits	4	2
Other	20	9

*more than one answer is possible

When asked to indicate satisfaction with the way the OEB conducted policy discussions or initiatives (on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied), stakeholders who have been involved in such initiatives give the OEB a satisfaction rating of 6.7. This is higher than the level of satisfaction expressed in 2004.

Satisfaction with OEB's conducting of policy discussions/initiatives (among those involved in initiatives: N=45)		
On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied how satisfied were you with the way the OEB conducted this policy discussion or initiative?		
	2005	2004
Mean satisfaction rating	6.7	5.5

3.7 CLOSING COMMENTS

About three-quarters of stakeholders offer some closing words of advice to the OEB. Some stakeholders offered more than one comment or suggestion.

The comments vary widely. Aside from several general comments of approval or encouragement, the most frequently raised issue is faster or expedited responses, an issue clearly related to concerns about timeliness which emerge elsewhere in the survey. Other topics mentioned by five or more respondents include better policies, enhanced staff training, more consultation with stakeholders, consumer education and consistency.

Suggestion/final comment topics*		
Finally do you have any closing words of advice for the OEB?		
	%	N
Respond faster/expedite processes/reduce bureaucracy	18	13
Better policies/rulings (various)	11	8
Enhance training for their new staff	8	6
Consult more stakeholders/better balance their concerns	8	6
Good progress/keep up the good work	7	5
Stay consistent	7	5
Inform or educate public/consumers	7	5
Reduce regulation	6	4
Provide solutions/protection for consumers	4	3
Improve website/more user-friendly	3	2
Focus/prioritize on economic regulatory issues	3	2
Maintain independence	3	2
Attract investment/investors	3	2
Give stakeholders more lead time to respond to initiatives	3	2
Take a less adversarial approach	3	2
Other	6	4
None	24	17

*more than one answer is possible

APPENDIX

SURVEY METHODS

Interviews for this survey were conducted between November 15 and December 2, 2005. Prior to the start of fieldwork, all potential respondents on the list supplied by the OEB, primarily senior personnel in the various stakeholder organizations, were sent a letter from the Chief Operating Officer of the OEB inviting them to participate in the survey.

All attempts were made to secure the full participation of as many stakeholders as possible. Alternate respondents were permitted to complete the interview if the named respondent was aware and approved of the alternate. Of the 71 interviews completed, the named respondent participated in 65 of the interviews.

Also, groups were allowed to participate in a speaker phone interview, rather than have just the one respondent interviewed. A total of 60 interviews were conducted with a single respondent and 11 with multiple respondents.

Respondents were assured that their responses to the survey would remain confidential in every respect.

The interviewing was conducted from Environics' central facilities in Toronto. All surveys were conducted in English. Field supervisors were present at all times to ensure accurate interviewing and recording of responses. Ten percent of each interviewer's work was unobtrusively monitored for quality control in accordance with the standards set out by the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association.

Of the list of 80, a total of three were not eligible to participate because of their changed title, work status or location, leaving 77 eligible to participate. This results in a very high final response rate of 92 percent of those eligible to participate.

Response distribution table:

Total	80
Not eligible	3
Not available	3
Refused	3
Completed	71
Response rate:	92%

(completed/[total sample – not eligible])