



Consultation on the future of community natural gas expansion

Ontario's Natural Gas Expansion Program



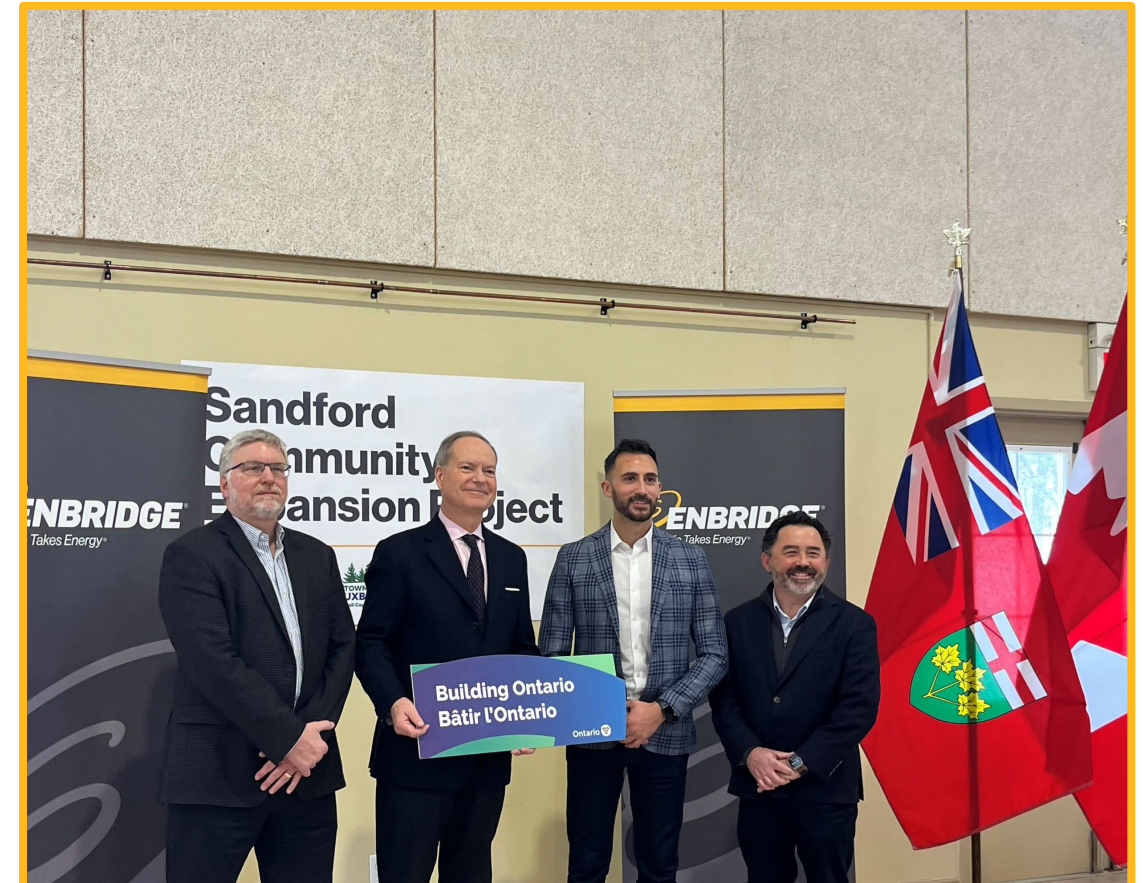
- Launched in 2019, the Natural Gas Expansion Program (NGEP) connects Ontario families and businesses to reliable, affordable natural gas in small-urban, rural, northern, and Indigenous communities.
- NGEP is a leading example of how integrated energy planning can enhance the reliability and resiliency of our energy system to foster growth and address rising energy demands in our communities.
- On August 8, Ontario's Ministry of Energy and Mines launched a policy consultation on the **Future of Community Natural Gas Expansion** (ERO 025-0923) with many municipalities and MPPs interested in participating.
- At the AMO 2025 Conference, Enbridge surveyed municipal representatives about natural gas access, which indicated that **77%** of respondents were *likely, very likely, or extremely likely* to connect to natural gas if available.

Building on success



Results to date

- **Phase 1:** Supported 6 initial expansion projects, aiming to connect ~9,000 customers in 16 communities over 10 years.
- **Phase 2:** Announced in 2021, provided 28 new projects across 43 communities, targeting about 8,750 new connections.
- Together, these first two phases are extending service to an estimated 59 communities and 17,000 homes and businesses that previously lacked natural gas access.
- Local leaders praise these investments for delivering affordable energy and spurring economic growth.



“I believe every house in Uxbridge and every farm in Uxbridge needs two sources of energy connected all the time.” – Mayor Dave Barton

Why does this matter?



- Natural gas keeps Ontario running and keeps costs down. It supplies nearly half of the energy we use and delivers twice as much energy as electricity at about a quarter of the cost.
- For the Town of Essex, it's not just about expanding natural gas access, it is a strategic opportunity to support the community's growth, economic development, and quality of life.
- This Council has a vision of **planning for a sustainable future for residents and businesses** while fostering progress and growth, thereby ensuring affordable, reliable energy is a cornerstone of that vision.

This consultation is an opportunity to:

- Highlight the growth of the community – new housing, business and investments underway.
- Advocate for the variety of agricultural, manufacturing, and rural businesses in Essex and provide them with energy choice to remain competitive, bring new jobs to the region, and drive economic growth.
- Work towards meeting the provincial housing targets and plan for Essex's growing population and energy capacity, ensuring residents have access to a more cost-effective and reliable energy choice.
- Advocate for broader equitable access to energy choices across Ontario.

How to participate

- In response to strong interest, the Ontario Ministry of Energy and Mines is now consulting on the future of community natural gas expansion (a potential Phase 3). The proposal on the Environmental Registry (ERO #025-0923) is collecting input from Ontario municipalities on community needs and readiness until **September 22, 2025**.
- The government recognizes that municipal voices are critical and the unique energy needs of each community shape how Phase 3 can enable affordable heating and economic growth across Ontario.
- The consultation questions focus on:
 - priority uses
 - economic resilience and growth
 - development alignment
 - utility engagement
 - barriers and past project experiences

The Town of Essex's perspective will help the province determine the best path forward for expanding natural gas services and ensure the voice of the municipality is integrated in the future of Ontario's energy planning.

Making your voice heard

Here's how to make your perspective on natural gas expansion in your municipality known to the Ontario government:

- **Submit a Council-endorsed comment**
 - Council may seek to pass a resolution - support for NGEF Phase 3 & local development targets.
- **Address the discussion questions**
 - Staff can prepare a written submission to the Environmental Registry (ERO 025-0923) before the **September 22** deadline, incorporating Council's support.
 - In your submission directly answer the Ministry's questions with Essex-specific input and local reference.
- **Collaborate with local partners and municipalities**
 - Essex could coordinate and amplify submissions with neighboring municipalities like Essex County, promoting local and regional joint priorities.
 - Work with local associations, BIAs, Chamber of Commerce, and community groups to submit letter of support or comments.

Thank you!

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