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SPEECH

**Ontario Energy Association
Breakfast Series**

Toronto, Ontario
May 6, 2011

Thank you and good morning everyone!

First, let me say how delighted I am to be here this morning and to have the opportunity of delivering my first remarks as the new Chair of the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) at an Ontario Energy Association (OEA) event. I want to thank Elise and George, in particular for inviting me, and, more importantly, for providing such a welcoming venue with so many familiar faces.

Some of the familiar faces, I would like to acknowledge that are here today include our OEB staff and Board members. They have been working diligently, and patiently, over the last month or so, to bring me up to speed on both the operational side of the OEB, as well as the many policy initiatives and issues the Board is currently managing.

I would also like to take a moment to single out our Vice Chair, Cynthia Chaplin, who is well known to most of you, and to take this opportunity to publicly thank Cynthia. In addition to her responsibilities as Vice Chair, Cynthia also served as interim Chair of the OEB after Howard's departure in November. She, and indeed all of the OEB staff, have done an outstanding job in keeping the work of the Board moving forward and providing stability during this period of change. My thanks to all of them.

Now, as I mentioned, the OEA is a familiar venue for me, and the energy sector, or at least the electricity distribution side of it, is fairly well known to me. And to many of you in the room, I am, perhaps, an all too familiar face! But I also know that to many of you, I am very much an unknown quantity. So I thought I would take the opportunity this morning, to tell you a little bit about my background and how I think it fits in to my new role. Sharing a little bit of my history, I think, will provide the best insights into my vision and my priorities for the Ontario Energy Board.

For those of you in the room who know me, it is probably as the former Chief Executive Officer of Hydro Ottawa, one of Ontario's municipally-owned local distribution companies, a position I held until April 5th of this year, prior to my appointment to the OEB. But my time in the electricity sector marks only a small part of my professional career, the bulk of which has been spent in the municipal public sector.

In fact, my public service roots date way back, to the very beginning of my professional development, which started with an undergraduate degree in public administration from the University of Ottawa, followed by a law degree from this same university.

As a student of public administration, I learned the mechanics of government and the roles and responsibilities of the bureaucracy. But most importantly, I learned the importance of good public process in developing sound public policy.

As a student of law, I learned the rules of procedure and the basic tenets of law and how they are applied. But most importantly, I learned the importance of good process, fact based information, and objectivity in decision making. And throughout my career, I have had many opportunities to apply, refine and add to these important lessons.

As I said, prior to joining Hydro Ottawa, I spent twenty-three years working with the City of Ottawa, where I had the opportunity to oversee a number of portfolios – from my days as an articling student prosecuting municipal by-law violations, to my six years as Deputy City Manager of Public Works and Services, overseeing the provision of the most basic hard services in the City, services like drinking water treatment and distribution, wastewater treatment and collection, solid waste collection and disposal, public transit, road maintenance and construction, to name a few. Basic services that each of us, as residents, takes for granted, as we go about our daily routines. Services that we take for granted until they fail to live up to our expectations, or, fail us entirely.

In fact, in telling folks about my job, I used to say, if you can look out your window and complain about it, it's probably in my department. And you know, these days, that sounds remarkably like the energy sector, and my new job!

Now I say that, jokingly of course. But it does underscore what, in my mind, was the most important aspect of my position as Deputy City Manager of Public Works back then, and one of the most important aspects of my new role with the Ontario Energy Board today -- ensuring the seamless delivery of one of the most basic essential services/commodities that Ontario residents, businesses, and industries rely on, each and every day. An essential service, that has, for far too long, been taken for granted in this province, and in this country, because, quite simply, it has always been there when we need it.

As I mentioned, more recently, I have had the privilege of leading Hydro Ottawa, the third-largest municipally owned electricity distribution company in Ontario. During my tenure at Hydro Ottawa, I learned something about both the distribution and renewable generation sides of the energy business. And, I experienced first-hand some of the issues and the challenges facing the energy sector of our province - the need for *new* infrastructure to meet growing demand, the imperative of refurbishing *aging* infrastructure, and the importance of renewing a greying workforce.

And as the entity closest to the consumer, I also gained an appreciation of the importance of not only meeting customer expectations, but of understanding what those expectations really are – expectations that are very simple to articulate – responsiveness, affordability, and let me underline this one, *reliability*.

But achieving affordability, *and* ensuring reliability in the face of the many real challenges facing our industry is, as everyone in this room knows only too well, much easier said than done. But it is a mission that each of us in this room shares, and *must* be committed to delivering on.

In carrying out my various responsibilities over the years, I have learned that, serving the public and the public interest is, to say the least, a complex undertaking. It is about considering the big picture on behalf of consumers. It is about playing the long game, not about political expediency of the day. It is about having due regard to the longer term and the greater good. It is an undertaking that requires the ability to step back and objectively consider, and balance, the legitimate but competing interests and competing priorities among a variety of stakeholders. .

To be successful in finding the right balance, I have also come to appreciate the importance of reaching out, across traditional lines, across organizations, and to develop productive relationships that can help to foster common understanding, and to share knowledge, which will ultimately lead to better outcomes, and better serve the broader public interest. While each of us has our own unique roles and responsibilities, in my experience, objectives are quite often aligned.

And, I would suggest, that the energy sector is no different. The Ontario Energy Board, as you know, has a number of objectives, which are enshrined in legislation. Its primary objective is to protect the interests of consumers with respect to price, *and* reliability, *and* quality of service. I think everyone in the room will agree that that *is* job one!

I also think that everyone will agree that this mandate is not exclusive to the OEB, but very much a responsibility which we all share, whether you are a politician, a bureaucrat, a utility manager, or a regulator, whether your constituents are ratepayers, taxpayers, customers, or consumers. In the end, we are all engaging with the same person. And, we are all attempting to respond to their needs, expectations, and priorities, as we have defined them, each in our own way. The energy consumer is, for each of us, without question, at the forefront of everything that we do.

Another one of the OEB's objectives is to facilitate the maintenance of a financially viable industry for Ontario residents. Because without a financially viable sector, job one – ensuring an affordable and reliable supply for consumers – quite simply, will not be achieved. This, in my view, is another one of those responsibilities that is shared among all industry participants and stakeholders.

So therein lies the challenge -- balancing the competing priorities: needed investments in infrastructure, generation, transmission, and distribution to ensure reliable service; conservation programs to help reduce demand and capital investments and to help consumers reduce their energy costs; containing overall costs in the delivery of energy services to maintain affordability; and, ensuring economic viability.

In my view, these are challenges that can only be addressed if we look at the sector and its needs more holistically than we have in the past: what is needed and when; what *are* the most pressing requirements; and, how can we better plan and prioritize as a sector. How can we, working together, mitigate and smooth impacts on the consumer's bill, while providing for needed investments and a fair return? How can we better educate, inform, and engage the individual consumer, about the very real issues facing the sector? Because, in today's reality, one thing is certain: energy, the invisible essential service, is no longer quite so invisible to the average consumer. But it is still largely taken for granted.

We have acknowledged our shared responsibility, and our common objectives. Now, we must start actively working together, in a meaningful way, for a common good and toward a common purpose: a strong, sustainable and viable energy sector.

As I am learning more and more everyday, the role of the OEB is complex. And, as the sector continues to evolve, I expect that it will become even more complex. But the OEB's objectives are clear - to protect the public interest *and* to promote economic efficiency in the energy sector.

To achieve these objectives in the future, I believe, will require greater engagement with industry participants and industry associations so that we can better understand technical and operational challenges. It will mean finding better ways to engage, and hear *directly* from the consumer, not just through associations and intervenors. It will mean finding ways to exchange with our peers in government and across agencies to better define direction, roles and responsibilities.

While I of course acknowledge the importance of the independence of the regulator, I do believe that the Board can, while respecting its independence, play a lead role in facilitating better cooperation and collaboration right across the energy sector – from the ministry, to its agencies, to utilities, retailers and marketers, and the public.

Stakeholders in this sector need to engage with each other in an open, constructive and ongoing dialogue, a dialogue that will result in a shared understanding of our individual and collective objectives, and our respective challenges in achieving them, a dialogue that will result in the sharing of knowledge, expertise and experience that will, I believe, facilitate the development of a strong, sustainable and viable energy sector that will meet the long-term needs of Ontarians.

Many years ago, American industrialist Henry Ford said something that has proven true time and again. He said, “If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”

Having worked with so many of you in my previous capacity, I know how seriously you take your responsibility to consumers and how passionate you are about meeting, and exceeding the expectations of your customers. Like you, the Ontario Energy Board takes its responsibilities to consumers seriously. And I am committed to working with you, in the days, months, and years to come, to ensure that together we deliver on those expectations, and ensure that the energy consumer continues to come first.

Thank you once again for allowing me to share my thoughts with you this morning.