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For Immediate Release

November 25, 2016

OEB ruling advances natural gas expansion for Southern Bruce

Kincardine, November 25, 2016. The Municipalities of Kincardine, Huron-Kinloss and Arran-Elderslie have made history by pushing the boundaries of how natural gas can be expanded to reach more citizens in Ontario. The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has recognized that access to natural gas can significantly reduce energy costs in unserved Ontario communities and that competitive bidding and a level playing field are important instruments in attracting new suppliers. A recent OEB ruling adopted many positions advanced by the Southern Bruce communities recognizing that the existing provincial framework contained barriers to natural gas expansion.

“All the hard work Southern Bruce has done over the past several years to bring gas to our communities has been validated by the OEB decision”, said Kincardine Mayor Anne Eadie. “The OEB has recognized what Southern Bruce has been saying for years – that barriers existed to prevent this service from reaching our citizens. We now have a path forward and will continue to work alongside EPCOR to bring gas services to our area as soon as possible”.

Huron-Kinloss Mayor Mitch Twolan added, “Huron-Kinloss, Arran-Elderslie and Kincardine pursued an innovative and creative approach by going out to the market to obtain competitive proposals for gas expansion. This had not been done before in Ontario. We are pleased that the OEB essentially endorsed our approach by establishing new rules that welcome and encourage competition for gas expansion. We view this as a major victory for rural and smaller communities in Ontario.”

“Now that the OEB has laid down new rules for gas expansion, we will work with our chosen partner, EPCOR, to apply for the next round of OEB approvals,” said Arran-Elderslie Mayor Paul Eagleson. “We will continue to explore new and creative ways to reduce overall project costs and advocate for some of the \$230 million Ontario has promised for gas expansion”.

“Our goal is to use provincial funding to help our residents offset their costs to switch to natural gas. In its ruling the OEB supports the use of provincial grants and loans for this

purpose” he added, emphasizing the importance of residents, farms and businesses in all three communities to achieve the highest take-up rate for gas service as possible.

“EPCOR is very encouraged by the OEB decision. It provides a new level of certainty for natural gas providers in Ontario and clearly supports the vision and long-standing position held by our three municipal partners,” said Stephen Stanley, EPCOR Senior Vice President of Commercial Operations. “We look forward to working closely with them in bringing enhanced services to their communities.”

Public information sessions will be held in all three municipalities in early 2017 to update the communities on the project’s continuing progress and timing. “We are energized by the OEB decision and our motto continues to be ‘full steam ahead’ to achieve natural gas service for our region”, said Mayor Eadie.

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