

Kelly Lush

From: Kelly Lush
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To: Kelly Lush
Subject: FW: Ontario Launches Expert Panel to Strengthen Local Electricity Distribution

From: Ontario News <do.not.reply@ontario.ca>
Sent: October 27, 2025 5:17 PM
To: Jennifer White <jwhite@huronkinloss.com>
Subject: Ontario Launches Expert Panel to Strengthen Local Electricity Distribution



NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Launches Expert Panel to Strengthen Local Electricity Distribution

New panel will help build a stronger, more resilient electricity network to deliver reliable, safe power for families and businesses

October 27, 2025
[Ministry of Energy and Mines](#)

TORONTO – Today, Minister Stephen Lecce announced the launch of the Panel for Utility Leadership and Service Excellence (PULSE), a strategic advisory group that will ensure the province’s electricity distribution system can power the most competitive economy in the G7. This panel of industry experts and municipal representatives will support [Energy for Generations](#), the government’s long-term plan to deliver reliable energy that is affordable for families, supports job creating investment and power Ontario’s future.

Ontario's aging and capacity-constrained distribution system requires a significant infusion of capital, with the Electricity Distributors Association (EDA) estimating \$103–\$120 billion over the next two decades to maintain existing assets. This level of investment for stronger and smarter power lines, digital grid management tools and new

substations, dwarfs the current spending trajectory of most Local Distribution Companies (LDCs).

“If the backbone of Ontario’s electricity grid — Ontario’s utilities that bring power to homes, businesses and factories — cannot keep up, Ontario risks falling behind. Our path to self reliance rests on our ability to challenge the status quo and demand better for every ratepayer in Ontario,” said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines. “The world has changed, which is why we need to future-proof Ontario’s grid as we invest in the next generation of electricity infrastructure. Through this review, we will transform all utilities into more reliable, resilient and future-ready systems that are focused on keeping energy rates affordable for families.”

The province’s economy is facing unprecedented realignment and external risks, and yet the local distribution sector has not undertaken a review since 2012. Since then, the world has changed as Ontario transitioned from an era of surplus power to unparalleled power demand and electrification, rising geopolitical threats and advanced technology. Many of Ontario’s nearly 60 utilities are at risk for future credit downgrades, which can lead to higher borrowing costs absorbed by ratepayers.

The government is also seeking recommendations to end the vast disparity of service standards and connection timelines, including response times following extreme weather events. This expert panel will advise Ontario’s government on pathways to mandate and strengthen customer service improvements, in addition to efforts to reduce costs on ratepayers by enhancing shared services and procurement across utilities. The PULSE will provide recommendations on investment frameworks, operational best practices, and regulatory reform planning needed to deliver a reliable, resilient and future-ready electricity distribution system across Ontario. Their work will include:

- Recommending operational and customer service improvements across the system
- Identifying strategies to address rising financing gaps to fund electricity infrastructure
- Addressing barriers to attracting investments into municipally owned LDCs
- Reviewing ownership, governance and investment models that balance municipal interests, financial stability and system efficiency

In 2018, the Ontario Energy Board issued a report calling for reform, stating that “utilities will need to modernize their systems, adopt innovative technologies, and explore new business and partnership models to meet evolving customer expectations and ensure long term system reliability and value for money.” This recommendation echoed the 2012 Ontario Distribution Sector Review panel report, which said that maintaining the status quo would not serve the interests of customers and Ontario needs distributors that are efficient, innovative, and financially strong.

“Ontario’s communities are growing, and we need to ensure we have the energy infrastructure in place to power that growth,” said Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. “Through PULSE’s recommendations, we will ensure that every community has access to power that is safe, affordable, and resilient—both today and for generations to come.

Minister Lecce has appointed Anthony Haines, Paula Conboy, Alexander Nuttall and David MacNaughton, who collectively bring a wealth of leadership and expertise in the energy sector. The work of the panel will be supported by Stephen Poloz in the role of expert advisor, who brings his experience from his time serving as the Governor of the Bank of Canada. By advising on investment frameworks, operational best practices and regulatory reform, PULSE will help ensure the sector can finance and deliver the electricity system expansion needed to power new homes and a strong economy—without compromising service quality or affordability. PULSE is expected to deliver its final recommendations to the Minister of Energy and Mines in early 2026, shaping the future direction of Ontario’s local electricity distribution system.

Quick Facts

- Ontario has one of the cleanest electricity grids in the world with over 80 per cent of power coming from non-emitting resources.
- Ontario has nearly 60 LDCs.

Quotes

"We are focused on providing affordable energy rates for the people and businesses of Ontario. Alongside our generational integrated energy plan, this review will help drive affordability by securing improvements in grid reliability, customer service standards for families, and economic development opportunities for communities – ensuring that our province is prepared to meet the energy demand of today and tomorrow."

- Hon. Sam Oosterhoff

Associate Minister of Energy Intensive Industries

"Local leaders know better than anyone the strain on services when infrastructure doesn't keep pace with growth. Keeping the lights on isn't just about energy. It's about supporting jobs, housing, and everyday life. PULSE is an important step to make sure utilities are equipped to deliver dependable service, so communities can plan with confidence and residents aren't left in the dark."

- Hon. Graydon Smith

Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

"Ontario's local hydro utilities are central to enabling the energy transition. With up to \$120 billion in total capital investment needed in distribution grids to meet growing electricity demand over the next 25 years, investing in utilities is essential to power communities and drive economic opportunity and growth across the province. We look forward to proposing our solutions to the government's panel, which will focus on ensuring all electric utilities have the financial, regulatory and policy tools needed to be grid-ready for all customers."

- Teresa Sarkesian
President & CEO, Electricity Distributors Association

"Making sure that LDCs can fund and deliver infrastructure when and where it is needed is critical to supporting local housing and economic growth. AMO is pleased that the panel will be responding to our call for new funding and financing mechanisms to renew and expand LDC infrastructure."

- Robin Jones
President of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Mayor of Westport

"Powering communities in Western Ontario – as Ontario's economic engine – requires a reliable, resilient, and future-ready energy system. For our small and rural communities, access to dependable power is essential to attract new housing, support industry, and sustain economic growth. The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus commends the Province for recognizing the need for long-term, forward-looking energy solutions and for including municipal perspectives in this vital work. The decisions made today will shape Ontario's success and ensure that regions like ours are equipped for the future."

- Amy Martin
Chair, Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, Mayor of Norfolk County (WOWC)

"The creation of the Panel for Utility Leadership and Service Excellence (PULSE) is an important step toward ensuring stability and reliability across our electricity network. Mayors know our communities best, and we appreciate the Minister including municipal representation on this panel. Across the province, we work diligently to manage electricity needs while planning and advancing critical projects such as housing, infrastructure, and hospitals. Our on-the-ground experience offers valuable insight and we look forward to contributing."

- Marianne Meed Ward
Mayor of Burlington, Chair of Ontario's Big City Mayors

"The creation of the PULSE panel reflects a strong commitment to collective action and long-term planning. Municipalities are key partners in shaping Ontario's energy future, and it's encouraging to see local insight included in this initiative. By uniting industry



leaders and municipal voices, the Ontario government is taking important steps to strengthen our electricity system and prepare for a growing, electrified economy."

- Bonnie Clark
Chair, Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

"As Ontario prepares for an electrified future, Northern communities must be at the table to help design a system that's reliable, resilient, and fair for all. NOMA applauds the Province's leadership in launching the PULSE panel and looks forward to working with industry partners to ensure Northern Ontario's unique challenges and opportunities are part of Ontario's energy planning conversation."

- Rick Dumas
President, Northern Ontario Municipalities Association

Additional Resources

- [Panel for Utility Leadership and Service Excellence \(PULSE\)](#)

Media Contacts

Isha Chaudhuri
Minister Lecce's Office
isha.chaudhuri@ontario.ca

Robert Quartarone
Communications Branch
robert.quartarone@ontario.ca

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