Comment on Bill 165

I’m a member of First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, a faith community with approximately 300 members. Our seventh religious principle calls upon us to have respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part. As such, we have an Environmental Action Group which acts on the congregation’s deep concern about climate change. We have just come through a four-year climate crisis focus as a congregation and many of our members have installed heat pumps, among other actions, to avoid the use of fossil fuels at their homes.

Bill 165 is not of benefit to the people of Ontario despite Minister Smith’s claim. It is the mandate of the Ontario Energy Board to provide a reliable and cost effective energy supply which is responsive to the changing needs of the people of Ontario. The decision that new infrastructure to put methane gas in new developments should be paid upfront by developers rather than paid off over 40 years by Enbridge customers through higher rates discourages the use of gas. This is a good thing, maybe not for Enbridge, but certainly for Ontario residents. It is inevitable that with the necessary move to renewable energy, the use of gas will decrease and the building of new gas infrastructure will give rise to a stranded asset, which is both a waste of money and an unnecessary source of emissions. The installation of air source heat pumps would be a far more affordable option for new owners and a positive contribution to the decrease in our emissions.

Moreover, Bill 165 allows the government to overrule the OBE as it likes. The OBE is meant to be at arm’s length from the government of the day, independent of both government and stakeholders, working for the good of the people of Ontario. It should remain so. Its decisions should not be controlled by the political whims of the government political party in power.

I thank the province for this opportunity to comment.