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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Presenters urge Public Utilities Board to recommend significantly higher energy-savings targets for Efficiency Manitoba including a shift away from natural gas.

Several public interest organizations and environmental experts have urged the Public Utilities Board (PUB) to increase energy savings efforts and broaden the scope of issues to be tackled by Efficiency Manitoba to address the climate crisis and make a more meaningful reduction in Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on imported fossil fuels. The PUB recently completed public hearings about the first three-year plan proposed by Efficiency Manitoba, the province's new Crown corporation devoted to energy conservation. Groups presenting included Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition, Council of Canadians, Green Action Centre, Manitoba Eco-Network, Sustainable Building Manitoba and Infotechnika.

Manitoba Eco-Network urged the PUB to use its powers and discretion to "broaden the interpretation of the regulatory framework to allow for better consideration of environmental and climate impacts and to conduct a comprehensive regulatory review that better considers Manitoba's regulatory framework as a whole and enables environmental organizations to advocate for positive change."

A central focus of several presentations was the need for Manitoba to immediately begin transitioning away from natural gas. Natural gas contributes approximately 20% to Manitoba's GHG emissions. Canada's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 and Manitoba's vision to be the "cleanest and greenest province" cannot be met without a major reduction in natural gas use. Technologies including heat pumps, solar installations, electrification of vehicles and public transit, net zero and passive house construction along with building retrofits were highlighted as examples of proven technologies capable of replacing natural gas and other fossil fuels to exceed EM's legislated targets and produce deeper reductions in GHG emissions.

Infotechnika states that, "Efficiency Manitoba's targets do not reflect the climate crisis and urgency needed to achieve much deeper emission reductions. Annual energy savings targets should ramp up from 1.5% for electricity and 0.75% for natural gas to 3% to match recommendations from both national experts and the International Energy Agency." Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition also added that, "No new buildings or major renovations should be constructed using natural gas and no new investment be made in natural gas infrastructure."

Another major theme included leveraging Manitoba's abundant hydroelectric resources and developing other green energy alternatives. Green Action Centre recommends that "heat pumps and electric vehicles reduce GHGs when they replace propane, heating oil, diesel and

gasoline, are much more efficient than their fossil fuel counterparts, and spend fuel dollars in Manitoba rather than sending them to Alberta.”

In order to help cover costs, Sustainable Building Manitoba "would suggest focusing on deep energy retrofits on social housing" and Manitoba's portfolio of government buildings to keep savings "within the public purse and be available for incremental investments to further drive social and environmental benefits."

Other recommendations from presenters included:

- Strengthening Efficiency Manitoba’s commitment to support community energy planning including community scale geothermal heating and cooling.
- Matching other jurisdictions that have mandated energy-performance labelling of new and existing homes and buildings offered for sale or rent.
- Strengthening Manitoba’s Green Building Policy to require that all new provincially-funded building projects be net-zero energy.
- Replacing the provincial retail sales tax exemption for natural gas for home heating with a tax credit to increase the incentive for home retrofits.
- Broadening incentives for building owners to transition off natural gas.
- Increasing stakeholder engagement and public participation opportunities in the development and delivery of programming.
- More development of and funding for targeted programming such as low-income retrofits and programs aimed at new Canadians.

We hope that in light of our recommendations, the PUB recommends that the provincial government take the climate crisis more seriously and use Manitoba’s unique position to truly become a leader in green energy technologies. Climate experts tell us that we do not have much more time to act and so we need to take advantage of this opportunity to take genuine steps towards change.

For more information:

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Complete presentations of the groups can be found at:

<http://www.pubmanitoba.ca/v1/proceedings-decisions/appl-current/em-2020-23-plan.html>