

Hélène Lauzon: So I would just, would like to introduce you to my colleague, whose flight was delayed. He just got in. So my co-Chair, Mr. Gary Merasty.

Josée Touchette: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair, Mr. Chair, and panellists. My name is Josée Touchette and I am the Chief Operating Officer of the National Energy Board. I am here today to present an outline of the key elements of the internal transformation process we've undertaken.

In order to provide a better understanding of the intent behind this transformation, I would like to begin by giving you a broad overview of the context in which we operate. As Mr. Watson explained, from the moment we both began our mandates, it was abundantly clear that we were operating in a very dynamic, rapidly changing environment. It was also quite clear that this environment was characterized by growing polarization on the issues, from energy and climate policy, to Aboriginal and land issues.

We would also like to recognize from the outset that public confidence in the pipeline lifecycle regulator is critical. In addition, Parliament had made some changes, notably through the Pipeline Safety Act, which sought to solve certain issues, leaving others untouched. Therefore, as it seemed clear to us that we needed to regain public confidence, we embarked on an ambitious internal transformation process.

That being said, we are very happy to see that a panel has been tasked with reviewing the modernization of the National Energy Board. We are confident that the work we have done so far will make the panel's task easier, in that a number of internal measures have already begun and some have even been completed.

I would now like to talk about the different areas of internal NEB transformation. While there are six areas in all, changes focus mainly on three key areas. The first of these involves the improvement of internal governance, with an emphasis on performance and reporting. The second area of focus deals with increasing public engagement, and the third involves leveraging the information we have at our disposal as well as our advisory capacity to provide Canadians with comprehensive, neutral energy information and data.

Next, I would like to talk about some of the internal governance measures we have taken. We have implemented an improved internal governance structure and robust operating practices, which enhance transparent reporting to Canadians and Parliament.

Mr. Watson spoke about the new results framework we instituted. We believe that this framework will allow Canadians to better measure and assess the Board's performance in a comprehensive way. It gives us the tools we need to take a good look at ourselves in order to self-assess and determine the steps we need to take to better meet the public's needs and expectations.

We have also implemented a strong internal management system that is aligned with the results framework. For instance, we developed a management system and a manual to guide our employees through this process. We also went ahead with a reorganization to better align our resources and structure with Board and government priorities, and implement the results framework.

Allow me now to address safety and emergency management. Over the last year, the Board has undertaken a number of transformation initiatives in the areas of safety and emergency management to be more transparent about our expectations from all our regulated companies. We undertook a public consultation process on the availability of the emergency response plan that resulted in companies giving Canadians access to their emergency procedure manuals.

We have enhanced our data collection and analysis systems to learn from past incidents and, by extension, reduce future incidents. The Board has also publicly released Safety Culture Indicators based on the Safety Culture Framework. Greater collaboration has been achieved with industry associations, such as the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, in a number of areas, including safety management systems, safety culture initiatives, and auditing.

I would now like to talk a bit about transparency. The Board is enhancing transparency by making more information about pipeline safety and industry performance available to all Canadians through every phase of the energy infrastructure lifecycle. For instance, we are posting field inspection reports online, as well as condition compliance information. We are also making enforcement actions public, and establishing project-specific portals on condition compliance.

We will be posting a map online of pipelines that will be, pardon me, pipelines that are regulated by the Board. This map will be available shortly. We are also updating our Web site and social media strategies to make it easier to access our information.

The next thing I would like to talk about is engagement. The Board is continuing efforts to increase engagement across Canada throughout the energy infrastructure lifecycle, in order to understand various perspectives and to inform Canadians about what the NEB does to promote safety and environmental protection.

For instance, we have opened regional offices in Vancouver and Montréal. We have improved and revitalized the Land Matters Group. We have entered into an agreement with the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal to share information and promote co-operation. We have developed a new engagement strategy and we are working on a new participation and engagement strategy for Aboriginal groups.

We have strengthened our leadership role in the stewardship of regional emergency management systems in certain parts of the country. We have also increased our understanding of the Board's role and of its expectations from companies throughout

the lifecycle of the regulated infrastructure, and we have shared this enhanced understanding with Canadians. We aim to give Canadians appropriate avenues to engage with the Board beyond the hearing process, as discussed earlier by Mr. Watson.

My next item concerns meaningful participation and innovation with regard to hearings. The Board is taking new and innovative approaches to providing the public with more meaningful opportunities to participate in NEB hearings, including giving greater consideration to the public's input regarding the Board's processes. For instance, the oral portions of the hearings are broadcast directly through the Board's Web site.

Communications regarding hearings have also been enhanced. This includes making information about hearing processes easier to locate on the Board's Web site. We are also assisting with the implementation of the Government's interim principles, above and beyond what was required. Additional Board members will be assigned to work on enhancing participation beyond the regular hearing process. It will therefore be possible to increase engagement and improve communications with the public.

The technical input provided to Environment and Climate Change Canada for their upstream GHG assessments is yet another example of increased measures beyond what we used to do.

Finally, I would like to talk a little about our approach to energy information. We provide leading-edge and comprehensive energy information and data. This is part of our mandate, as described by Mr. Watson, and it is intended to foster a well-informed dialogue across the country.

We have launched an innovative tool to clarify complex energy supply and demand information, using easily understandable visualizations. People who go to our Web site and use these visualizations are able to manipulate the data and select variables to ask questions and get answers from this tool which can vary depending on the location, the issue or the commodity the user is asking about.

We have also involved other government agencies to identify gaps in the information available to Canadians on energy which could be bridged by leveraging the Board's in-house expertise. This is one of the key measures, pardon me, these are the key measures we took and they provide an overview of the internal transformation initiatives implemented by the Board.

To conclude, I would like to draw your attention to the considerable body of work that has been accomplished by the Board towards our internal transformation, while remaining within the limits of the current legislative framework. This internal transformation is well aligned with the objectives of the modernization review with which you have been tasked and we feel that all of these measures are critical to regaining the public trust.

As has been the case with previous legislative changes, the Board awaits your modification proposals, and, once they have been adopted, we will implement them both faithfully and enthusiastically. We believe that this is critical to improving the public's trust. We also know that we must innovate in other areas of the energy system—be it energy and climate policy, aboriginal rights, or the challenges identified by your review and the Canadian population.

On a final note, please know that we will make ourselves available to you to answer any question you may have and that your proposals for change will be welcomed most enthusiastically. Thank you.

Hélène Lauzon: Thank you, Ms. Touchette.

So for the record, we will be asking our questions at the end of your presentations.