

Power and Natural Gas Consumer's Panel Mandate and Roles

Document (Pure Advisory Committees)

1. Mandate and Accountability

Agency Mandate

Created under s. 7 of the *Government Organization Act*, the Power and Natural Gas Consumer's Panel ("the Committee") is an advisory agency accountable to the Minister of Affordability and Utilities ("Minister") and responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding current and emerging energy consumer issues.

Agency Accountability

Committee members must act honestly, in good faith, leaving aside personal interests to advance the public interest and the mandate of the agency. The Committee is accountable to the Minister.

Minister's Accountability

The Minister of Affordability and Utilities is accountable to the Legislature for the operation of the Committee.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

The Committee:

- Is responsible for providing advice to the Minister regarding the following:
 - The interests of residential, farm, and small business electricity and natural gas consumer in Alberta with respect to policy and regulatory issues, with emphasis on:
 - regulated rate structures for electricity and natural gas so they are formulated to best serve Albertans;
 - consistency in billing for utility services, so that consumers more easily understand the components of their bill, even if they change providers;
 - local access and municipal franchise fees impacts on consumer bills; and
 - the electricity pricing system with the goal of reducing transmission and distribution costs;
 - Issues that are of concern to consumers;
 - Options for addressing concerns to consumers;

- Opportunities to enhance educational activities and supports for consumers to make informed decisions about electricity and natural gas services;
- Interventions in proceedings of the Alberta Utilities Commission or other regulators;
- The annual budget of the Utilities Consumer Advocate (UCA);
- The priorities and effectiveness of the UCA in meeting its mandate to educate, mediate, and advocate for consumers;
- On the following final or draft documents:
 - respecting the UCA referred to the Panel by the Minister; or
 - any policy papers referred by the Minister, or tabled by Affordability and Utilities or other government departments or agencies for the Panel's input.
- Other electricity and natural gas consumer-related matters as may be requested by the Minister, including but not limited to:
 - support to vulnerable consumers;
 - retailer customer service and billing;
 - distributor consumer service and fees;
 - terms and conditions of consumer contracts;
 - distribution and transmission policy concerns of consumers;
 - energy efficiency and consumption; and
 - emerging "prosumer" issues (i.e., someone who is simultaneously a producer and consumer, such as in the case of micro-generation).
- Will ensure its plan and priorities for the next year, as well as its achievements for the previous year, are reflected in the UCA Strategic Plan and UCA Annual Report respectively.
- Will hold meetings as required, but generally at least 2-3 times a year.
- Will discuss with the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of Affordability their resource support needs and adjust its plans in accordance with the resource supports agreed to by the ADM and resource supports available from other sources (e.g. stakeholders represented on the Committee), where applicable.
- Will engage stakeholders and the public in order to gather information and become knowledgeable about different perspectives to ensure informed advice is provided.
- Will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the advice provided to the Minister is evidence-based.

- Is responsible for overseeing compliance with all relevant policies and procedures by which the Committee operates, and ensuring that the Committee operates at all times in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, the Committee's Code of Conduct and to the highest ethical standards.
- Through an efficient process led by the Chair, conducts an annual evaluation and review of the performance of the Committee, sub-committees, and the Chair of the Committee. The Committee reviews the results of such evaluation and discusses potential ways to improve Committee effectiveness. The Committee also discusses the results of the evaluation and adopts agreed upon improvements.
- Is responsible for addressing how it interacts with the public and will consult with the Minister on items of concern.

The Minister:

- Appoints, or recommends the appointment of, the Board Members and the Chair based on her/his assessment that the appointees have the appropriate knowledge, skills, experience and values to assist the Committee in achieving its objectives and performing its functions.
- Monitors the operations and performance of the Committee to ensure that it is fulfilling its mandate in compliance with Government policies.
- Informs the Committee of Government policies and direction affecting the work of the Committee.
- Conducts regular (at least every seven years) reviews of the Agency's mandate and purpose to determine if the work of the Committee is still relevant to the needs of Albertans, if it is aligned with Government priorities and if the operations and functions are being carried out in a manner that can achieve Government objectives.

The Deputy Minister:

- The Deputy Minister supports and acts under the general direction of the Minister.
- The Deputy Minister is responsible for the following activities which have been delegated by the Minister:
 - Approval of change requests for resource support needs to the Committee.

The Department:

- Through the Office of the UCA is responsible for supporting the Committee in the following areas:
 - secretariat support including administrative and financial matters;

- management of the Committee's budget as a program with the UCA's overall budget;
- research support on policy issues of concern to the Committee; and
- liaison with other government departments or agencies to seek information on issues of concern to the Committee.

3. Recruitment and Appointment of Committee Members

Individuals are recruited and appointed by the Government of Alberta and collectively constitute "the Committee". Appointment of each member of the Committee is for a fixed term of up to three years, with the potential of re-appointment based on satisfactory performance. An individual's appointment is limited to a maximum of 10 years of continuous service.

The Committee, in consultation with the Minister's designate, will develop a competency matrix that outlines the skills, experience and knowledge the Committee requires as a collective and identifies how each individual contributes to these needs. When vacancies arise, the matrix will be used to identify competencies required of the new recruit.

When a vacancy occurs, the Committee will recommend a set of desired values and competencies to the Minister to form the basis for the recruitment of a new individual. Values will include respect, integrity, excellence, and accountability. Competencies will include strong listening and communication skills, skills in developing consensus, an understanding of wise stewardship of resources, and competencies identified in the competency matrix.

The recruitment and selection process will be managed by the Public Agency Secretariat. A member, or members of the Committee, may be included in the selection process.

After appropriate screening for conflict of interest considerations, recommendation of a list of names will be made to the Minister for consideration. The Minister will choose an individual from the list and the Department will formalize the appointment process through drafting a Ministerial Order.

The following stakeholder representation on the Committee is set out in the MO establishing the Committee:

- One member selected from nominees provided by the Alberta Municipalities (ABMunis).
- One member selected from nominees provided by the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA).
- One member selected from nominees provided by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce.
- One member selected from nominees provided by the Alberta Federation of Agriculture.
- Four public members at large.

- One public member with related experience to provide a residential consumer perspective.

From the public members, one will be designated by the Minister as the Chair of the Panel and will report directly to the Minister.

The Minister's appointments:

- shall specify the term of the appointment;
- may include conditions; and
- may be rescinded by the Minister in the Minister's sole discretion.

When requested to do so by the Minister, specified organizations will provide a list of at least two nominees to the Minister.

An individual is not eligible for appointment if they are:

- a) an employee, representative, agent, officer or board member of the owner of:
 - an electric utility as defined in the *Electric Utilities Act*, SA 2003 c. E- 5.1;
 - a gas utility as defined in the *Gas Utilities Act*, RSA 2000 c. G-5;
 - an electricity retailer as defined in the *Electric Utilities Act*, SA 2003 c. E- 5.1; or
 - a gas retailer as defined in the *Gas Utilities Act*, RSA 2000 c. G-5.
- b) a councilor of a municipality that owns:
 - an electric utility as defined in the *Electric Utilities Act*, SA 2003 c. E- 5.1;
 - a gas utility as defined in the *Gas Utilities Act*, RSA 2000 c. G-5;
 - an electricity retailer as defined in the *Electric Utilities Act*, SA 2003 c. E- 5.1; or
 - a gas retailer as defined in the *Gas Utilities Act*, RSA 2000 c. G-5.
- c) an employee, representative, agent, officer, or board member of a majority or controlling shareholder of:
 - an electric utility as defined in the *Electric Utilities Act*, SA 2003 c. E- 5.1;
 - a gas utility as defined in the *Gas Utilities Act*, RSA 2000 c. G-5;
 - an electricity retailer as defined in the *Electric Utilities Act*, SA 2003 c. E- 5.1; or
 - a gas retailer as defined in the *Gas Utilities Act*, RSA 2000 c. G-5.
- d) An individual who is not eligible under the conflict of interest policy applicable to the Panel.

If the Agency has specific stakeholder representation set out in legislation, the process for filling vacancies will be similar to the process outlined above.

The individuals nominated to fill specific vacancies will be subject to the same screening processes.

Remuneration

The remuneration of non-government members appointed to the Committee will be set according to Schedule 2, Part B of the Committee Remuneration Order (O.C. 466/2007).

Remuneration rates and payments will be disclosed by Affordability and Utilities through the Office of the Utilities Consumer Advocate website and its annual report, as well as through the consolidated public sector body compensation database to the public on an annual basis.

4. Interaction between Committee and Department

Most interaction between the Committee and Department will be conducted between the Chair and the Executive Director of the UCA. This will include planning for future meetings, and any requests for briefings or research from the Committee, as well as the production of post-meeting documents and reports. Committee members may also contact the Executive Director of the UCA individually on issues of concern, particularly those where the Committee has delegated tasks to one or more members.

Committee members may also interact with UCA staff as designated by the Executive Director to assist with routine administration (e.g. travel claims, etc.). Requests for research, briefings, or other operational work must be routed through the Chair to the Executive Director of the UCA.

Any unresolved disputes between UCA staff (including the Executive Director) and members of the Committee shall be brought to the attention of the Chair for resolution with the Executive Director of the UCA. In the event a dispute cannot be resolved between them, it shall be escalated to the ADM of Affordability for resolution.

5. Administration

Review of the Mandate and Roles Document

The Mandate and Roles document shall be in effect for not more than three years. It must be renewed or revised by the expiry date.

- The Mandate and Roles document may be amended at any time; any amendment must be signed by the Chair and by the responsible Minister.


Transparency

Copies of the Mandate and Roles document will be filed with the Minister of Affordability and Utilities, the Agency and the Public Agency Secretariat. In support of the principle of transparency, this document will also be easily available to the public on the Agency's website <https://www.alberta.ca/public-agency-list.cfm> and on the UCA website <https://www.ucahelps.alberta.ca/about.aspx>.

Periodic Agency Review

The mandate and operations of every public agency must, at least every seven years, be reviewed by the responsible Minister. The next review for the Agency is scheduled for January 2030.

Original Signed


Committee Chair/Representative

Minister

Power and Natural Gas Consumers' Panel

Ministry of Affordability and
Utilities

Feb. 21, 2023
Date

Date