



Ontario Energy Board

Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario

Low-income Customer Service Rules An Update from OEB Staff

Presentation to the FAWG

July 21, 2011

Electricity Distributors - Customer Service Rules

- Final Customer Service Rules (excluding low-income) were issued on July 2, 2010 and they came into effect in 2011.
- Final Customer Service Rules for Low Income Customers were issued on March 29, 2011 and will come into effect on October 1, 2011.

Customer Eligibility

- Customer to be qualified by a partner Social Service or Government Agency
- Pre-tax household income at or below LICO+15%, taking into account family & community size

Billing & Bill Payment Plans

- Equal billing payment plans
- Correction of billing errors

Load Control Devices (Applied to all customers)

- Written explanation of use
- Load control device cannot be installed if customer enters into an arrears management program

Security Deposits

- Security deposits to be waived

Disconnection Notices

- Disconnection suspension for 21 days
- Assistance information before disconnection

Arrears Management

- Down payment up to 10%
- Repayment time period extended to 8, 12 and 16 months depending on amount owing
- Service charges are waived with exception of the late payment charge
- At least two payment defaults are allowed over a two month period
- Can renew arrears agreement

Natural Gas Distributors – Development of Customer Service Rules

- Board conducted a two-stage stakeholder consultation process
- In the first stage, gas distributors were asked to:
 - review the electricity distributors' customer service rules
 - document their current policies and practices, and
 - suggest new or modified customer service policies
- In the second stage, stakeholders were invited to comment on the submissions made by the gas distributors
- Also stakeholders were asked to provide their input in:
 - the Board prescribing specific customer service standards analogous to the electricity sector
 - adopting the modified or new customer service standards as proposed above by gas distributors
 - establishing a complaint process with recourse to the Board
- Submissions from 8 stakeholders (including 3 utilities) were received



Natural Gas Distributors – Notice of Proposed Customer Service Rules

- Board has proposed a non-prescriptive approach to developing service rules for all customers
- Each rate-regulated gas distributor is required to develop a “Customer Service Policy” for its residential customers which shall address, at a minimum, each of the following areas:

- Bill issuance and payment
- Allocation of payments between gas and non-gas charges
- Correction of billing errors
- Equal payment and equal billing plans

- Disconnection for non-payment
- Security deposits
- Arrears management programs.
- Management of customer accounts

- In addition, gas distributors should:
 - publish and comply with their customer service policies
 - establish a complaint process with recourse to the Board
- Stakeholder comments were due July 15, 2011
- Comments have been received from 6 stakeholders (including 3 utilities)



Natural Gas Distributors – Low Income Customer Service Rules

- Board is conducting a two-stage stakeholder consultation process
- In the first stage, gas distributors are asked to:
 - review the electricity distributors' low-income related customer service rules
 - document their current low-income related policies and practices, and
 - suggest new or modified policies for low-income customers
- Submissions from gas distributors are due July 22, 2011
- In the second stage, stakeholders are invited to comment on the submissions made by the gas distributors
- Also stakeholders are asked to provide their input in:
 - adopting the low-income customer service standards as modified and proposed above by gas distributors
 - adopting the same approach as that proposed for customer service standards for all customers (i.e. distributors to develop, publish and comply with their customer service policies for low-income customers)
 - establishing a complaint process with recourse to the Board
- Submissions from stakeholders are due August 12, 2011



Reporting Requirement for Customer Service Rules

- Electricity distributors' reporting requirements for both all residential and low-income customers could be required in the following areas:
 - # of disconnections for non-payment
 - # of customers in arrears, # of arrears agreements and \$ amounts in arrears
 - # of accounts written off and \$ amounts written off
 - # of accounts enrolled in equal payment & equal billing plans
 - # of accounts with security deposits, \$ amounts held
 - # of accounts where security deposits waived and \$ amounts waived
 - # of load limiters and interrupters installed
- Similar reporting requirements could be developed for natural gas distributors after their Customer Service Policies have been developed
- Data collected will assist the Board in monitoring and assessing the use and impacts of customer service rules

Next Steps in LEAP Implementation

- Monitor and assess the performance of the Emergency Financial Assistance Program
- Transition Winter Warmth into the LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance Program
- Develop customer service rules including low-income rules for:
 - Natural gas distributors
 - Unit sub-metering providers
- Develop reporting requirements for electricity and natural gas distributors
- Gas distributors to submit and Board to approve low-income DSM programs for 2012 and beyond

