

Ontario Energy Board accepts Assurance of Voluntary Compliance from Provident Energy Management Inc.

TORONTO (February 11, 2021) — The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has accepted an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance (AVC) from Provident Energy Management Inc. (Provident), a licensed unit sub-meter provider. The AVC follows an inspection into the company's disconnection practices which were found to be non-compliant with OEB rules.

Under the terms of the AVC, Provident will pay an administrative monetary penalty of \$9,000.

An AVC is a binding commitment by a regulated entity to take measures to rectify or prevent non-compliance. Failure to abide by the terms of an AVC can lead to enforcement action being taken by the OEB.

The OEB's inspection found, and Provident admitted, that between April 2019 and January 2020, approximately 1,045 disconnection notices were sent to customers that did not comply or may not have complied with all of the requirements of the OEB's Unit Sub-Metering Code (USMC). In that time, 261 customers had their electricity disconnected, 253 of whom paid reconnection fees. Provident has refunded some of those customers and under the terms of the AVC, will refund the others.

At the time of Provident's non-compliance, the USMC required a unit sub-meter provider to provide at least 10 days' notice prior to disconnection. Provident did not comply with this provision in some cases, and in others, it may not have complied. As a result, these customers were not or may not have been given sufficient notice of their possible disconnection by Provident. This timeline has since been made longer under new customer service rules put into place by the OEB starting March 1, 2020 to better protect consumers.

As well, some of Provident's disconnection notices did not include information about arrears payment programs and emergency bill assistance, and did not inform customers that disconnection can occur whether or not they are at the premises. These requirements are also set out in the USMC.

Under the terms of the AVC, Provident will send a letter to each of the customers that paid reconnection fees, advising them of its non-compliance with the USMC and the reason for the refund. After an internal review, Provident has implemented operational changes to ensure that its disconnection notices contain clear and accurate information, and assures the OEB that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure compliance with its customer disconnection-related obligations.

Quote

“Utilities must provide accurate information in disconnection notices so that customers know how much time they have to pay the amount they owe, and are aware of arrears payment and bill assistance programs that may help them. Otherwise, customers are at risk of being harmed. This assurance acknowledges that it is the utility’s responsibility to comply with the rules that are in place to protect consumers.” – Brian Hewson, Vice-President, **Consumer Protection & Industry Performance**

Additional Information and Resources

- Read the [Assurance of Voluntary Compliance](#) – Provident Energy Management Inc. (EB-2021-0066)
- Learn about the OEB’s [Customer Service Rules](#) for electricity utilities, including those governing disconnections
- Learn about the OEB’s [Compliance and Enforcement Process](#)
- Understand the OEB’s [Consumer Complaint Process](#)

About the Ontario Energy Board

The OEB is the independent regulator of Ontario’s electricity and natural gas sectors. It protects consumers and makes decisions that serve the public interest. Its goal is to promote a sustainable and efficient energy sector that provides consumers with reliable energy services at a reasonable cost.

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