



## BC UTILITIES COMMISSION ADVOCACY FACTSHEET

### WHAT IS THE BC UTILITIES COMMISSION?

The BC Utilities Commission (“BCUC”) is an independent provincial agency which regulates BC’s electricity and gas utilities, intra-provincial pipelines and universal compulsory automobile insurance. The BCUC operates under and administers the *Utilities Commission Act*.

The BCUC’s stated mission is:

“...to ensure that ratepayers receive safe, reliable, and non-discriminatory energy services at fair rates from the utilities it regulates, and that shareholders of those utilities are afforded a reasonable opportunity to earn a fair return on their invested capital.”

In addition to its regulatory responsibilities, the BCUC provides the following services and assistance:

- reviews ratepayers' complaints about the actions of utilities;
- provides electronic or paper copies of documentation prepared by the BCUC at no charge;
- provides access to regulated utilities' Tariffs;
- provides access to information filed in public hearings; and
- responds to requests for general information regarding utilities.

For more information, visit [www.bcuc.com](http://www.bcuc.com).

For more information on how to get involved in Commission proceedings, visit:

<http://www.bcuc.com/Documents/MiscDocs/NewUsersGuide.pdf>

For more information on energy regulation in British Columbia, visit:

[http://www.bcuc.com/Documents/Guidelines/Participant\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.bcuc.com/Documents/Guidelines/Participant_Guide.pdf)

### WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN REGULATORY HEARINGS AT THE BCUC?

Before a utility can take certain actions, such as raising rates or building new infrastructure, it must apply to the BCUC. The BCUC will hold a hearing on the application, which provides the opportunity for interested members of the public to intervene and make submissions on how the BCUC should respond to the application. Regular interveners include consumer groups (industrial, commercial and residential), environmental groups, business associations, community associations and municipalities. There are also few dedicated individuals who regularly intervene as active participants or observers.

## **WHAT UTILITIES ARE REGULATED BY THE BCUC?**

The following utilities are regulated by the BCUC:

### **Electric Utilities**

- BC Hydro and Power Authority
- FortisBC Inc.
- Corix Multi Utility Services Inc.
- Hemlock Valley Electrical Services Limited
- Silversmith Power & Light Corporation
- The Yukon Electrical Company Limited

### **Natural Gas, Thermal Energy and Propane Utilities**

- FortisBC Energy Inc.
- FortisBC Alternative Energy Services Inc.
- Pacific Northern Gas Ltd.
- Pacific Northern Gas (N.E.) Ltd.
- Creative Energy Vancouver Platforms Inc.
- Big White Gas Utility
- Cal-Gas Inc.
- Corix Multi Utility Services Inc.
- Dockside Green Energy LLP
- Port Alice Gas Inc.
- River District Energy LP
- Stargas Utilities Ltd.
- Sun Peaks Utilities Co., Ltd.

### **Universal Compulsory Automobile Insurance**

- Insurance Corporation of British Columbia

**Municipally-owned electric utilities** are not regulated under the Utilities Commission Act. Only the City of Nelson's electric utility with service outside of the Municipal boundaries is subject to regulation by the British Columbia Utilities Commission.

### **Municipally-Owned Electric Utilities**

- City of Grand Forks
- City of Kelowna
- City of Nelson
- City of New Westminster
- City of Penticton
- City of Summerland

**For a complete listing of company names, addresses, and service areas of the utilities regulated by the BCUC, visit: [www.bcuc.com/Documents/MiscDocs/Regulated\\_Utilities.pdf](http://www.bcuc.com/Documents/MiscDocs/Regulated_Utilities.pdf)**

## WHO DOES BCPIAC REPRESENT AT THE BCUC?

Since its creation in 1981, BCPIAC has acted as counsel for a group of community-based organizations who collectively represent the interests of BC's low and fixed income residential utility customers. Our clients include organizations who advocate on behalf of people living in poverty, people with disabilities, seniors, and residential tenants. In many regulatory hearings, we are the only voice speaking for the interests of residential consumers, and almost always the only voice speaking for low and fixed income people. Our clients' priorities include obtaining fair and stable rates for residential consumers, maintaining and improving utility system reliability and utility service quality, environmental stewardship and maintaining BC Hydro as a publicly owned utility.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity ("CPCN"):** a formal approval from the Commission for a utility to make a capital investment at the expense of its customers.

**Revenue requirement application ("RRA"):** an application made by a utility which determines how much revenue the utility will need to provide services during a future period.

**Rate design application ("RDA"):** an application made by a utility which determines the proportion of revenue the utility will collect from each customer class (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial).

**Tariff:** a document produced with legislative authority, similar to a regulation, governing how a utility must conduct itself. Some tariffs applicable to residential customers are:

[BC Hydro Electric Tariff](#)

[FortisBC Energy Inc. \(Gas\) Tariff](#)

[FortisBC Inc. \(Electric\) Tariff](#)

[Pacific Northern Gas Tariff](#)

**Investor-owned utility:** a utility that is owned by shareholders. In the case of publicly owned utilities such as ICBC and BC Hydro, the "investor" or the "shareholder" is the Province of British Columbia.

**Rate payer:** a customer of a utility, (either an individual or a business), who pays a certain rate to access energy such as electricity.

**Special direction:** an order issued by the provincial cabinet, instructing the BCUC how to regulate a certain aspect of a utility.

**Transmission grid:** an interconnected system of high voltage/high pressure transportation lines and associated facilities used to move bulk energy across long distances. Residential customers do not directly access the transmission grid.

**Distribution grid:** an interconnected system of low voltage/low pressure transportation lines and associated facilities used to deliver retail voltage/pressure energy to customers.