

News Release

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Alberta Utilities Commission review of distribution system-connected generation moves forward

Alberta's independent utilities regulator is moving forward in its detailed review of distribution system-connected generation in Alberta, to inform government policy development aimed at growing alternative and renewable distribution system-connected generation, including micro- and small-scale community generation.

Today, the Alberta Utilities Commission invited the 49 participants that registered for the review to respond to a series of questions drawn from the review's terms of reference about distribution-connected generation. The AUC is interested in hearing more about the current state of alternative and renewable distribution system-connected generation in Alberta and the barriers and enablers that may exist around its expansion. Full details on the AUC's review, including its terms of reference, are available on the AUC website at www.auc.ab.ca.

Distribution system-connected generation includes small-scale technologies such as solar, wind and hydro used to produce electricity at, or close to, the end users of power and often by the end users of power themselves. That is, electricity customers could also be electricity producers. On March 31, the provincial government assigned the Alberta Utilities Commission a broad review and consultation on matters around alternative and renewable distribution system-connected generation.

Registered participants in the AUC proceeding include municipalities, utilities, generators, renewable energy associations, the Utilities Consumer Advocate, energy advocacy groups, the Metis Nation of Alberta, rural electric associations, the Consumers' Coalition of Alberta, and others. Along with 49 participants, there are 10 groups and individuals registered as observers.

The AUC is asking participants to provide their input and evidence on topics directly based on the areas the government outlined in the review's order-in-council and associated terms of reference. The AUC also set out the preliminary timing and schedule of its proceeding steps, including oral proceedings.

The goal of the review is to provide the provincial government with insight into how broader deployment of distribution system-connected generation focused on renewable and alternative energy sources might be implemented. Promoting renewable electricity is a key part of the province's Climate Leadership Plan and meeting its 30 per cent renewables by 2030 target. The AUC will investigate and report on various approaches, but will not provide recommendations. The AUC will provide an interim report on the review to the Minister of Energy by August 31, and a final report will be delivered by December 29, 2017.

The AUC is an independent, quasi-judicial agency of the province of Alberta that is committed to delivering innovative and efficient regulatory solutions. The AUC regulates the utilities sector, natural gas and electricity markets to protect social, economic and environmental interests of Alberta where competitive market forces do not.

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Backgrounder

Highlights of the AUC's terms of reference to review distributed generation include considering:

- The current status of renewable and alternative distribution-connected generation in Alberta.
- The current state of Alberta's distribution systems, billing and settlement systems, and supporting acts, regulations and rules.
- Enablers and barriers for broader deployment of alternative and renewable distribution-connected generation, in Alberta.
- Methods for assessing costs and benefits of infrastructure investments that may enable and facilitate broader deployment of alternative and renewable distribution-connected generation and efficient energy use.
- Current and potential regulatory approaches to consider alternative and renewable distribution-connected generation when planning the development of distribution networks.
- Opportunities to improve processes for connecting alternative and renewable distribution-connected generation.

- The potential to align the planning and development of Alberta's distribution systems and broader deployment of alternative and renewable distribution-connected generation with government objectives of providing clean, affordable and reliable energy to Albertans.