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**2 UCA process – group to discuss timelines and other changes to process for 2017/2018**

- In light of the coming winter moratorium, UCA staff is gearing up for the Winter Utilities Reconnection Program. The UCA asked that the list of customers disconnected for non-payment since the last winter moratorium, and who remain disconnected, and in arrears, be sent in by an earlier date this year, as it has found that receiving the list on November 1 causes them a delay in their community outreach program. For this reason, UCA staff requested that the November 1 deadline be changed to October 27 this year.
- As per last year, UCA staff announced that they will outsource their mail outs, as this did cut down in overall administrative processing time. As mentioned in the spring, the success rate with mail outs was not very good, with 750 returned letters out of 2,100 mail outs. Because the large percentage of returned mail is still a problem, in the interest of improving the overall number of vulnerable customers with whom contact is made, UCA staff had asked retailers, in the spring, to identify whether there would be any privacy or legality issues which may prevent them from sharing customer email addresses with the UCA as part of the WURP. The retailers that responded indicated that if available, they are able to share customer email information with the UCA for the purpose of WURP. UCA staff advised that since no privacy or legality issues around providing or collecting email addresses was discovered, they would alter the template to incorporate this new column for email addresses, update the template with some examples, and send it to the AUC to circulate. UCA staff asked that retailers please not alter the template, as its layout is integral to their system for data collection and analysis. UCA staff asked when retailers would like to have the updated template provided to them, and there was a general consensus that it would be preferred by October 1, 2017.
- UCA staff clarified that they need both the service and mailing addresses filled out on the list, otherwise the information will not be usable for their data collection software.
- UCA staff mentioned that unlike in the past, they are hardly receiving any commercial addresses on the list; last cycle they counted less than a dozen.

**ACTION:**  
**UCA to update the WURP template and send it to the AUC to distribute by October 1, 2017**

- As discussed in previous meetings, the UCA has tried to identify assistance programs for customers who do not qualify for third party assistance from Alberta Works or AISH, such as customers living on reserve land. UCA staff mentioned

that although they cannot help those customers through financial assistance, they can still help through mediation. UCA staff submitted that a potential way of informing those customers about WURP could be to send a poster to community offices referring them to the UCA mediation team for further information about the program.

- UCA staff informed the group that they had been receiving a high volume of calls related to landlords and tenants, and their utilities. As a result, the UCA has added a link on their website with information about residential utilities, titled: Moving In and Moving Out.

### **3 Referral process – social service agencies to provide updated contact and process information.**

**ACTION:**

**Stakeholders to review and provide any changes to last year's Winter Utilities Reconnection Program contact list, and send to [regulatorypolicy@auc.ab.ca](mailto:regulatorypolicy@auc.ab.ca) by October 10, 2017. The AUC will circulate the updated contact list, at the same time it circulates the template from the UCA.**

### **4 Distributor site visit process and timelines**

- Discussions around site visits for vulnerable customers who owe \$50 or less, and still remain disconnected.
  - During the May 16, 2017 WURP meeting, UCA staff committed to continuing the practice of contacting customers who owe \$50 or less, in an effort to obtain reasons for customers who remain disconnected despite owing a small amount. The group committed to continuing efforts to contact these customers, in hopes that no vulnerable customer is overlooked.
  - The group discussed whether distributors would be able to adopt the practice of performing site visits for those disconnected sites identified as customers owing \$50 or less. Distributors advised that they would be able to incorporate this practice on a case by case basis, without issue.

### **5 Process evaluation**

- Revisiting discussion around repeat customers, and customers who get disconnected after the moratorium and then switch retailers.
  - UCA staff would like to know how many customers were switched back on for winter (with a repayment plan) and then shut back off again in April due to non-payment. Retailers say they haven't been tracking figures for this.

- The group discussed potential reasons for seeing repeat customers on the list. There was agreement on the fact that there are a number of customers who, each time they are unable to pay their bill and subsequently get cut off by their current retailer for non-payment after the winter moratorium, switch retailers. The total figures of customers who bounce between retailers, and have payments in arrears, on the whole may be low, but this is an ongoing issue. Credit checks are done, but some say that credit history is not necessarily indicative of a future customer's ability or intention to pay their utility bill. It was discussed that perhaps a potential customer could be asked if they have had their site energized before, or if they are new to the address; only Just Energy, UtilityNet and ATCO ask this question, currently.

## **6 Other issues and next steps**

- There was further discussion around the proper use of drop codes, as the UCA staff was hearing from customers who had been cut off, with an incorrect drop code having been used. UCA staff suggested that retailers be sure to ask and confirm whether the customer is moving, or just cancelling service, as this may help. UCA staff also suggested that the question is posed to the customer who is cancelling services, whether they are terminating, or transferring their service. It was acknowledged unanimously that proper use of drop codes is an industry wide discussion and issue. It was suggested the topic will need to be discussed at the industry consultation for AUC Rule 021 or 028, so that there are more industry voices involved.
- EDTI announced that it will implement a load limiting program, which was approved on August 30, 2017. A communication packet for this initiative is forthcoming and EDTI will be in touch with the UCA, the CCA and the AUC on this matter.
- AUC staff thanked all parties for their participation and continued hard work on this initiative, and said that they would be sending out a consultation survey to collect responses regarding industry's experience at the meeting. AUC staff advised that the next meeting will be scheduled for the spring of 2018.