

Bulletin 2020-13

April 7, 2020

Interim changes to AUC participation involvement program and related information requirements

The Alberta Utilities Commission is implementing steps to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 to protect its stakeholders, its employees and its work critical to Alberta's essential utility services. As part of these efforts, the AUC is making adjustments to its participant involvement program (PIP) requirements for electric and gas facility applications. These adjustments are intended to clarify PIP requirements until things change with respect to COVID-19.

Participant involvement programs

Appendix A1 of Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations and Hydro Developments* sets out the AUC's PIP guidelines for power plant, transmission and industrial system designation projects. Appendix A2 sets out PIP guidelines for independent system operator needs identification document applications. PIP requirements for gas utility pipeline applications are set out in Section 2 of Rule 020: *Rules Respecting Gas Utility Pipelines*.

The principles of effective PIPs and the related information requirements set out in appendixes A1 and A2 of Rule 007 and in Section 2 of Rule 020 continue to apply subject to the following two important adjustments.

First, currently Rule 007 and Rule 020 state that applicants must give stakeholders a minimum of 14 calendar days to receive, consider, and respond to project notifications (Rule 007 Appendix A1, Section 6 and Appendix A2, Section 3.2(c); Rule 020, Section 2.2(4)). Effective immediately, and until further notice, project proponents must give stakeholders a minimum of 30 days to receive, consider and respond to project notifications. The Commission considers this additional time to be reasonable in the current circumstances.

Second, Rule 007 and Rule 020 both promote face-to-face consultation. Given the COVID-19 crisis and the ongoing need to practice physical distancing, face-to-face consultation is discouraged unless it can be undertaken in compliance with physical distancing practices. Further, while there is no requirement in Rule 007 to hold meetings, it discusses the use of open houses or town hall type meetings as components of a PIP. In the current circumstances, applicants should not hold public open houses or town hall meetings.

While Rule 007 and Rule 020 encourage face-to-face consultation where possible, both also recognize the validity of other means of communication for consultation purposes. This could include phone, email, video conferencing, etc. The Commission encourages applicants to employ these alternative forms of communication wherever possible.

The Commission recognizes that these adjustments may affect a project’s schedule; however, the Commission considers the adjustments to be reasonable given the circumstances. The Commission also acknowledges that most, if not all, applicants have recently made the necessary modifications to their PIP practices in response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Indigenous engagement

The Commission is aware that a number of Indigenous consultation offices have closed or are working at reduced capacity as their staff work from home (or remotely) with varying access to technology and the internet.

Applicants should continue to reach out to Indigenous groups to understand their community’s unique circumstances and availability to discuss proposed electric and gas utility facilities under Rule 007 and Rule 020. However, it is important that applicants keep in mind that it may be challenging for consultation contacts to engage community members and leadership at this time. The Commission encourages applicants to be sensitive to the capacity challenges of Indigenous groups and to build additional time into their participant involvement programs, where possible.

Mailing labels for issuing notices

A requirement for facility applications is the provision of mailing labels for stakeholders contacted by a proponent as part of its PIP. This obligation is set out in information requirements PP 21, TS 13 and ISD 22 of Rule 007. For example, PP 21 states:

PP21) Supply a list of mailing addresses, with corresponding land locations and two sets of printed mailing labels of those parties mentioned in PP20 above.

Effective immediately, and until further notice, project proponents are no longer required to provide printed mailing labels. Instead, proponents must file an Excel spreadsheet with their application that lists stakeholder contact information with columns for name, company name, address 1, address 2, city, province, postal code, and country, as shown below.

Name	Company Name	Address 1	Address 2	City	Province	Postal Code	Country
Sally Sanderson		Unit 123	456 Maple Lane	Calgary	AB	T0M 0M0	Canada
Bob Boberson	Bob’s Farm Ltd.		P.O. Box 126	Calgary	AB	T8H 8N6	Canada

If you have any questions about these interim changes, please contact JP Mousseau at jp.mousseau@auc.ab.ca or by phone at 403-592-4452, or Brian Shand at brian.shand@auc.ab.ca or by phone at 403-592-4434. Questions about mailing information can be directed to Kellie Benoché at kellie.benoche@auc.ab.ca or Janelle Schmidt at janelle.schmidt@auc.ab.ca.

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