

Bulletin 2021-15

July 21, 2021

Changes to the AUC participation involvement program, related information requirements

As a result of the recent lifting of various restrictions and public health measures, the Alberta Utilities Commission has reassessed its participant involvement program (PIP) requirements for electric and gas facility applications. To support AUC regulatory efficiency, the changes reduce the notification period and remove restrictions on permissible meetings and consultations for applicants, while encouraging practical flexibility and stakeholder preferences.

Last year, the Commission implemented a number of steps outlined in [Bulletin 2020-13](#) to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 to protect its stakeholders, its employees and its work critical to Alberta’s essential utility services. One of those steps was to adjust the Commission’s PIP requirements for electric and gas facility applications in [Rule 007: Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations and Hydro Developments](#) and [Rule 020: Rules Respecting Gas Utility Pipelines](#) to clarify its expectations with regard to consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the lifting of public health-related COVID-19 measures, the Commission has now made further changes to its PIP requirements, outlined in the new requirements column in the table below. The table compares last year’s interim requirements, with the AUC’s new, updated requirements.

Rule 007 and Rule 020	2020 interim changes	New requirements
Applicants must give stakeholders a minimum of 14 calendar days to receive, consider, and respond to project notifications.	The minimum 14-day period was extended to 30 days.	Given the possibility that different communities may be subject to varying levels of local COVID-19 response or restrictions, applicants must give stakeholders a minimum of 14 calendar days to receive, consider, and respond to project notifications. The Commission recognizes that all communities are not in same state of readiness to reopen and applicants should give extra time where warranted. The Commission will then assess the adequacy of PIPs on a case-by-case basis.
Face-to-face consultation is encouraged, including the use of open houses or town hall type meetings as components of a PIP.	Applicants were discouraged to employ face-to-face consultation unless it could be undertaken in compliance with physical distancing practices.	Open houses and town hall meetings are no longer disallowed, and the Commission no longer discourages face-to-face consultation but recognizes the continued practicality of alternative communication. Applicants have discretion to consider whether such forms of

	Open houses or town hall meetings were also discouraged. Applicants were encouraged to employ alternative forms of communication such as phone, email, video conferencing, etc., wherever possible.	communication are appropriate in the circumstances, taking into account expressed preferences of stakeholders for a certain form of communication where possible.
Rule 007 requires applicants to provide printed mailing labels for stakeholders contacted by a proponent as part of its PIP.	Applicants were no longer required to provide printed mailing labels; instead they were required to provide a spreadsheet with stakeholder contact information.	Applicants must provide electronic lists of stakeholder contact information, in the format required in Bulletin 2020-13.

Indigenous engagement

The Commission reiterates its comments from Bulletin 2020-13 with respect to Indigenous engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission continues to encourage applicants to be sensitive to the potential ongoing capacity challenges of Indigenous groups and to build additional time into their PIPs.

If you have any questions about these interim changes, please contact Wayne MacKenzie at wayne.mackenzie@auc.ab.ca or by phone at 403-592-4420, 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 Benoche at kellie.benoche@auc.ab.ca or Janelle Schmidt at janelle.schmidt@auc.ab.ca.

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