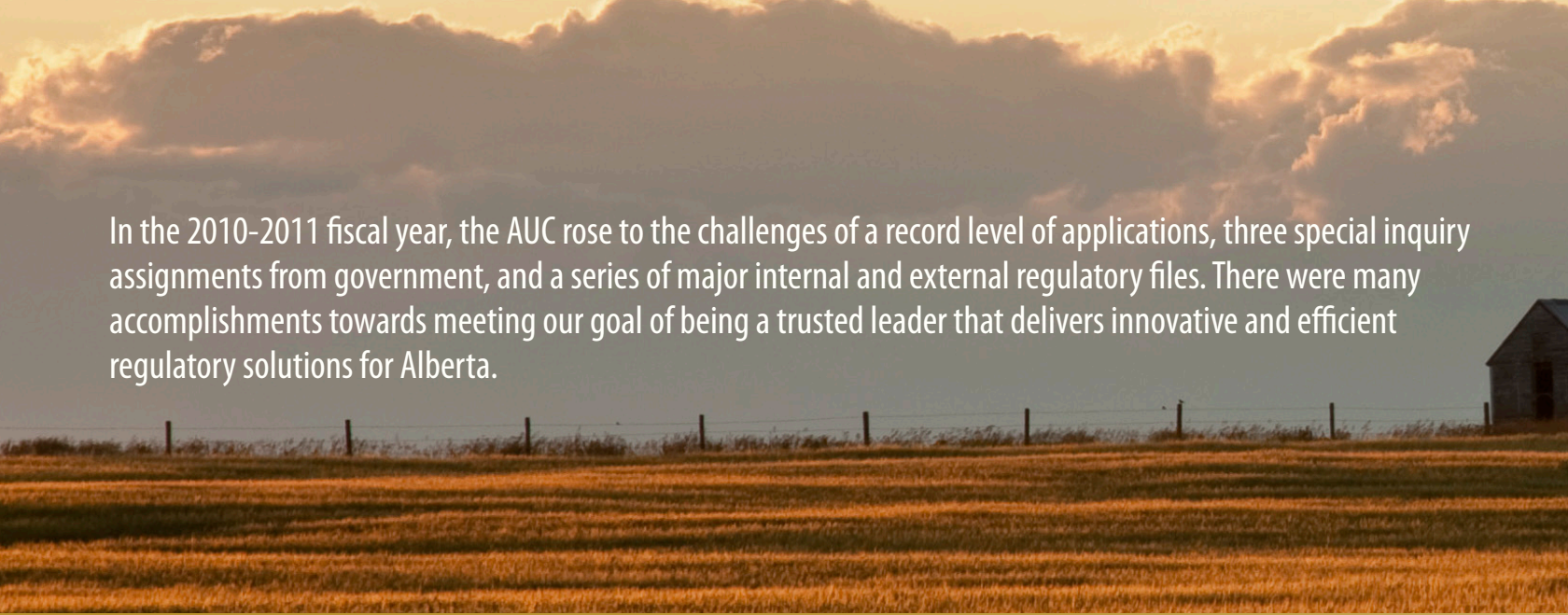




annual review 2011

Effort, excellence, achievement



In the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the AUC rose to the challenges of a record level of applications, three special inquiry assignments from government, and a series of major internal and external regulatory files. There were many accomplishments towards meeting our goal of being a trusted leader that delivers innovative and efficient regulatory solutions for Alberta.

Major accomplishments

In 2010-2011 we:

Issued more than 640 decisions, up nearly 50 per cent from the year before:

- Releasing 199 rate decisions, 20 more than in 2009-2010.

- Issuing 319 facility decisions, nearly 80 per cent more than a year earlier.

- Issuing 27 markets decisions, 17 per cent more than the year before.

Conducted 114 proceedings; 98 written and 16 oral.

Received and processed more than 1,020 applications, up 11 per cent from the year before.

Produced in-depth reports on the Alberta smart grid, on harmonizing the rate-setting mechanisms for default electricity supply and default natural gas supply, and on hydroelectric power generation development. Each is being used to inform provincial policy development.

Moved forward to reform utility rate setting through performance-based regulation (PBR), announced the consensus-based principles under which PBR will proceed, and called for PBR proposals from most Alberta gas or electricity distribution companies under AUC jurisdiction.

Managed one of the largest electrical transmission facilities applications ever received, for the proposed Heartland Transmission project. This involved what was also the AUC's most substantial oral hearing to date, conducted over 25 sitting days.

Received and began work on three other critical transmission infrastructure applications, the Western Alberta Transmission Line, the Eastern Alberta Transmission Line and the South Calgary substation.

Worked to improve results from the AUC's first survey of external stakeholders, which showed 93 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the AUC's performance in five key areas: independence, principles, fairness, consistency, and clarity in decisions.

Materially surpassed, for the third straight year, our own target and year-earlier results in our annual United Way fundraising campaign.

Established a natural gas settlement system code.

Further enhanced our proceeding process for select major facilities applications, in four different ways.



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AUC Chair Willie Grieve on teamwork and excellence



Willie Grieve
Chair

A common theme of the AUC since we began our work in 2008 has been to use new approaches, investigate new models and pursue greater efficiency and predictability in the regulation of Alberta's utilities and wholesale electricity market. In fiscal 2010-2011, coincident with our own goal of, and work on, better ways of doing business was an unprecedented volume of applications, major projects and special assignments. We also dealt with three of the largest and most complex facility applications, and preparatory work for the largest single hearing, in our history.

The AUC is very fortunate to have an extraordinarily talented and committed staff and leadership contingent, which is critical to our ability to successfully manage the statutory obligations we oversee, the many regulatory files we deal with and the special projects we either initiate ourselves or have assigned to us.

In addition, the contribution of our Commission members has been vitally important. They distinguished themselves both individually and as a group with their tireless work and their enthusiasm for our mission - which is to protect the social, economic and environmental interests of Alberta where competitive markets do not. Their work ethic and enthusiasm was coupled with extraordinary expertise in utility regulation. When specific expertise was needed we identified and recruited acting Commission members to assist us.

The enthusiasm and expertise of Commission members was obvious in everything we did, whether it be the intensive work around the three special inquiries we conducted for the government of Alberta, or the more than 1,020 applications we assessed and adjudicated. Many of these applications involved extraordinarily complex concepts requiring very thoughtful and, frankly, difficult decision-making that nonetheless had very real impacts on Albertans. Any organization is only as good as its best people and we were very fortunate to have a singularly top-tier, judicious and honourable team of Commission members. Without this group of Commission members the achievements of the AUC would not have been possible.

Willie Grieve

A handwritten signature of Willie Grieve in black ink.

Alberta Utilities Commission 2010-2011

Commission members:



Vice-Chair Carolyn Dahl Rees



Tudor Beattie, QC



Kay Holgate



Neil Jamieson



Mark Kolesar



Bill Lyttle



Anne Michaud



Moin Yahya

Acting Commission members:



Roy Billinton



Vern Hartwell



Tom McGee

Chief Executive Bob Heggie on a performance-based organization



Robert D. Heggie
Chief Executive

Since its 2008 launch the AUC has established its culture and reputation as a performance-based organization. Those efforts continued in 2010-2011 as we measured and reported on performance in our business plan; held to budget despite expanding responsibilities and a heavier workload; made our processes more efficient, responsive and engaging; and reached out to our stakeholders.

Our results are impressive, particularly in the face of higher work volume. For example, applications in our Facilities Division rose 18 per cent over two years. In 2010-2011 the Commission managed more than 1,020 applications, issued 648 decisions and held 114 proceedings. Many of these cases were major and of critical importance. Because of this we worked hard to ensure all stakeholders were informed through new, more comprehensive notification and communications efforts. These efforts, which are ongoing, improve confidence and understanding of the AUC.

We recognize that some of our current methods are not sustainable given workload increases, so we are evaluating avenues to increase efficiency. We are reviewing processes in the Rates Division to bring greater discipline and predictability to our work flow. Similarly, the Facilities Division reviewed procedures for minor gas and electric facility applications to clarify our requirements, reduce delays and free up resources for larger, more complicated cases. This work will continue to identify opportunities in our facilities framework for additional efficiencies, including those that may require legislative amendments.

A key tenet of our operational approach is fiscal responsibility. Our approach was founded on the idea that the historical growth in public sector expenditures is not sustainable. Even though our operations are funded by utility customers and market participants, we are a public body and subject to public accountability.

This approach has served us well. It has established our reputation as fiscally prudent and restrained. Our history of operating below targets by, on average, 12 per cent, is allowing us to operate with budgetary independence during the government's austerity program. This allowed us to focus on excellence during a heavy regulatory agenda. The amount we operate below our annual target – which is adjusted through the year – is not collected and therefore is not surplus at year end. However, we consistently operate about two per cent below our internal budget. These funds remain with us, providing a cash-flow cushion and a potential source of funds to reduce future industry funding requests. It is our intention to move to our spending target - in order to build the AUC in a responsible and cost-effective manner.

Once again, an independent party evaluated our success in meeting our performance targets. We achieved 81.6 per cent of the targets in our business plan, compared with a historical average of 86 per cent.

There were several reasons for this. In some cases, factors were outside of our control. For example, where we are measuring full-cycle timelines for application processing, we depend on participants meeting our process schedule deadlines. This does not always occur.

As well, in many cases we set our measures at 100 per cent compliance. An example is our commitment to release every facility decision within 90 days of the close of record. This year we released 313 out of 314 facility decisions or 99.7 per cent, within our target. While technically not meeting our self-imposed measure, the results were nonetheless outstanding given our heavy regulatory agenda.

I am proud of the dedication of AUC employees and the work they do every day for Albertans. We regularly survey our staff to shape and improve our work environment. This feedback, together with our stakeholder survey, allows us to measure our progress and identify what we can do better. Overall the latest results reflect that most AUC employees like their job and get a sense of satisfaction from their work. While our results are lower in some areas, we compare favourably to data from elsewhere in the public sector.

For the first time in 2010-2011, we also sought feedback from our external stakeholders. A Leger Marketing Inc. survey found 93 per cent of respondents were satisfied with our performance in five key areas: independence, principles, fairness, consistency, and clarity in decisions. I'm particularly pleased that our communication and consultation work was identified as a significant strength.

AUC decisions can be appealed to the Court of Appeal of Alberta. While we are diligent, they can be sometimes overturned or returned to us due to the complexity of the cases we deal with. I'm happy to report that since 2008 only 35 of 1,260 decisions have been challenged in court and we have had a high success rate in appealed cases. Only four cases out of 35 appeals filed resulted in judgments for the appealing party.

We have made remarkable progress over our first three years, however there is still much to do and our current year represents our busiest regulatory agenda yet. Fortunately, we have a strong and committed team of employees who willingly take on additional duties.

I'm particularly indebted to Darin Lowther and the Markets Division team who delivered outstanding results during a challenging year. I also extend my appreciation to the Commission, my executive team and all of the staff who continue to demonstrate expertise and a true commitment to excellence.

Robert D. Heggie
Chief Executive



“I am proud of the dedication of AUC employees and the work they do every day for Albertans.”



Across the organization, Commission members and staff managed the workload of a record level of applications, while devoting great energy, time and brainpower to organizational, process and system improvements.

AUC story 2010-2011

The AUC's 2010-2011 fiscal year was a period of unprecedented activity for the organization. Notably, from the inside it was dominated not by the raft of unusual projects such as the three special inquiries for the Alberta government, utility rate regulation reform and preparation for, and work on, a series of large-scale critical transmission infrastructure project applications. Rather, across the organization, Commission members and staff managed the workload of a record level of applications, while devoting great energy, time and thought to organizational, process and systems improvements.

These improvements are most clearly seen in the efforts to reduce costs, improve fairness and safeguard competitiveness by updating existing and creating new Commission rules. These rules set out the structure and specifics of the AUC's requirements to be implemented and followed by the entities under our jurisdiction. These are foundational documents for exactly how we carry out our various regulatory roles and in many cases

they are highly technical guides. Nonetheless, they must evolve as both industry and regulatory best practices evolve and as the AUC seeks to further improve regulatory efficiency.

The breadth of subjects is a telling indicator of just how much the AUC oversees. Topics addressed ranged from noise control, to the establishment of a natural gas settlement system code, to inter-affiliate codes of conduct, to penalties for contraventions of independent system operator rules and reliability standards, to the rate application process for water utilities, to annual reporting requirements of utilities' operational and financial results. In all cases, the work involved extensive consultation with industry, consumer groups and other stakeholders. In all cases the changes were made to improve clarity, increase certainty and streamline procedures.

The Commission also worked to make its information systems and proceeding processes more accessible, as well as tightening performance

Photo above: Market Division's Andrew Davison, Darin Lowther, Mike Selci and Cam Hughes

Photo opposite page: Facility Division's Keith Gladwyn and Allan Anderson



standards for dealing with applications. The year began with the imposition of new internal processing deadlines for gas and electric rate applications, completing an AUC initiative to apply shorter timeframes to the bulk of the applications we deal with. In June 2010, we substantially expanded the types of applications that can be filed electronically and in January 2011, we announced streamlined standing and intervener status rules for the Western Alberta Transmission Line application. In March 2011, we rationalized and restructured our application categories to better reflect industry practices.

While the AUC was deeply focused on its core regulatory responsibilities, three special teams worked simultaneously to produce exhaustive reports for the government of Alberta on each of the Alberta smart grid, on harmonizing the rate-setting mechanisms for default electricity supply and default natural gas supply, and on hydroelectric power generation development.

Each report was a major undertaking and each will be used to inform provincial policy development or review. We also moved forward on our initiative to reform utility rate setting in Alberta through performance-based regulation (PBR). In July, 2010, we announced the consensus-based principles under which PBR will proceed and called for PBR proposals from most Alberta gas or electricity distribution companies under AUC jurisdiction.

While all of this was unfolding, the AUC was managing one of the largest facilities applications it had ever received, for the proposed Heartland Transmission Project. Formally received in September 2010, the application was the first dealing with critical transmission infrastructure (CTI) for which need was deemed in provincial legislation. In response to the application, we launched the second of two rounds of information sessions as part of an unprecedented campaign to ensure accessibility for those affected by our

hearing process, and prepared for the AUC's most substantial oral hearing to date. That hearing got underway in April 2011. Three other CTI applications were also received, the South Calgary substation on December 17, 2010; the Western Alberta Transmission Line on March 1, 2011; and the Eastern Alberta Transmission Line on March 26, 2011. Preparations for these applications had been underway since at least the fall of 2009.

As an organization and as a regulator, the AUC measured much of its success by the volume and complexity of the applications it adjudicated, the initiatives it launched and completed, and the improvements it made to utility regulation. However, the AUC is also very much a team of people and derives its success as well from positive contributions made to the communities where we live and work. We were pleased that for the third straight year, the AUC eclipsed both its own target and year-earlier results in its annual United Way fundraising campaign.



Regulatory leadership

The vision of the Alberta Utilities Commission is to be a trusted leader that delivers innovative and efficient regulatory solutions for Alberta. The AUC believes that true leadership is reflected in many ways, one of which is contributing to the understanding and advancement of regulatory law in Alberta, across Canada and around the world.

Best practices and progressive thinking in utilities regulation and in administrative tribunal jurisprudence continues to evolve and the AUC intends to be a leader of that evolution, where it supports efficient regulatory solutions and protects the public interest. The AUC supports the advancement of utilities regulation and regulatory law through its work, its own initiatives and by supporting other efforts.

In 2010-2011, the AUC and its personnel were involved in many projects aimed at improving what we do and how we do it, providing leadership to our peers in other jurisdictions, improving the practice of regulatory law and acting as an expert

resource for policy development. The most prominent work in this regard was the three special inquiries assigned by the government of Alberta into each of: the Alberta smart grid, hydroelectric generation development and harmonizing default rate-setting for electricity and natural gas. In each case the AUC's work is expected to help inform public policy development.

The AUC is also a leading member of the Canadian Association of Members of Public Utility Tribunals, or CAMPUT. The association is a self-supporting, non-profit organization of federal, provincial, and territorial boards and commissions responsible for the regulation of the electric, water, gas, and pipeline utilities in Canada. Its goals include continually improving public utility regulation in Canada, and improving the education and training of commission members and staff of utility tribunals.

Photo above: Law Division's Doug Larder, Carmen Austria and Shailaz Dhalla

Photo opposite page: Rate Division's Mike Hagan



The AUC believes that true leadership is reflected in many ways, one of which is contributing to the understanding and advancement of regulatory law in Alberta, across Canada and around the world.

The AUC's vice-chair, Carolyn Dahl Rees, is a CAMPUT board member and secretary treasurer, and AUC officials are a driving force behind the annual CAMPUT Energy Regulation Course at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont. This is the Canadian standard in training for utility regulatory staff and tribunal members.

A direct outgrowth of this course was the publication and release in 2011 of *Energy Law and Policy*, a much-needed reference for understanding the development, evolution and execution of energy regulation in Canada and the U.S. The 573-page book was co-edited by AUC Chief Executive Bob Heggie and former Ontario Energy Board vice-chair Gordon Kaiser, and is already into its second printing. Proceeds support offering the CAMPUT course to those who might otherwise not be able to afford to attend.

Also at the national level, members of the AUC executive are the founders, leaders and organizers of the Canadian Energy Law Forum, an annual

conference that gathers leading energy law experts from across Canada to discuss emerging issues. Similarly, the AUC is among the lead organizers and strongly supports the organization each year of the Energy Regulatory Forum, a Calgary-based, western-Canada-focussed examination of issues and trends in regulatory and administrative law. Both of these forums are unparalleled in Canada.

In Edmonton, AUC principals, including executives and Commission members, helped to design, carry out and instruct the inaugural offering in January 2011 of a combined business and law course at Edmonton's University of Alberta: *Law and Policy of Energy Utility Regulation in Alberta*. Given the key role energy regulation plays in the Alberta economy, the course has met a long-standing need and garnered positive reviews.

The AUC is also active at promoting regulatory best practices and regulator-to-regulator dialogue at the international level, by way of

involvement in the World Forum on Energy Regulation. In 2010-2011, senior representatives of the AUC were involved in planning for the Fifth World Forum on Energy Regulation, which will be held in Quebec City May 13 to 16, 2012.

At home in Alberta, the AUC is continuing to exhibit its leadership in examining and considering alternative ways of regulation. The most potentially far-reaching of these efforts is in the area of performance-based regulation, where the Commission is leading efforts in Canada to implement performance-based regulatory regimes that positively reward consumers and utilities for superior utility performance. Our 2009 PBR decision for Enmax was among the first of its kind in Canada. Since then we have worked with industry to create a framework for broader PBR implementation. In 2011-2012 the AUC will be moving forward with assessing PBR plans for Alberta's major regulated distribution utility companies.

By the numbers

The AUC continued to sharpen its processes and improve its accessibility, while dealing with a materially higher volume of applications, legal files, and information requests, as well as both externally-generated and internally-generated special projects. We also actively surveyed our stakeholders to provide feedback for use in pursuing further improvement.



Engaged

The Alberta Utilities Commission experienced higher workloads in a number of its core areas in fiscal 2010-2011, led by a nine-per-cent increase in facility applications and a 52-per-cent increase in public information requests. For our Law Division, applications for review and variance, and other application files, were substantially higher than a year earlier. The 443 facility applications we received included the three largest facility applications in the Commission's history, related to critical transmission infrastructure. A number of smaller, but still very significant, regional transmission reinforcement facility applications were received as well.

These applications and obligations were concurrent with the three special inquiries assigned by Minister of Energy Ron Liepert, and our own initiative on performance-based regulation.

Overall, the AUC received 896 rate or facility applications in the latest fiscal year compared to 837 applications in fiscal 2009-2010. Applications for review and variance of earlier AUC decisions rose to 10 from eight in the prior fiscal year. A modest decline in complaints (down four per cent to 1,848) was counterbalanced by the sharp increase in public information requests to 1,833 from 1,204 a year earlier. Across all of the AUC's divisions our work on applications, files, rules, standards and other statutory obligations rose nearly 14.5 per cent to 4,708 items.

Open

The AUC took a multi-pronged approach to improving its transparency and accessibility in 2010-2011. Chief among these efforts were process upgrades and procedural enhancements related to major critical transmission infrastructure facility applications. In this respect - and related to every major facility application we received - we delivered information about our regulatory role, our intervenor programs and our quasi-judicial processes to potentially affected stakeholders across Alberta during 20 public information sessions throughout the province. In addition, we distributed close to 100,000 printed notices, thousands of plain-language brochures and published 89 rounds of newspaper advertisements.

We also sought to better understand what works well - and what does not - for participants in our quasi-judicial processes by surveying those who participated in the facilities or markets oral hearings we conducted. We have used the information we gathered from more than 100 participants in five hearings to make improvements, such as offering special community hearing sessions for major applications, ensuring hearing venues provide private meeting areas for interveners, and refining our communications tactics.

Our efforts to communicate with those that may be directly and adversely affected by our decisions continues to evolve. Along with continuing efforts to simplify our notices, we took our first gentle steps into social media in 2010-2011, with first a presence on Facebook and then Twitter. The response has been positive, particularly from affected landowners and landowner groups involved in major facility applications. Going forward, we are investigating live streaming of our hearing proceedings via the Internet.

Photo above: Complaint group's Dylan Davis, Paul Dmytruk, Chris Burt, Mark Kellner and Wanda Goudy

Photos opposite page: Rate Division's Liying Ou; Rates' Silvia Danchuk, Corporate Services' Nancy King and Rates' Christine Richards



Progressive

Since being established in 2008, the AUC has continually sought to make constructive adjustments to its procedures to meet our goal of being a trusted leader that delivers sound, principled decisions. In 2010-2011 we further enhanced our proceeding process for select major facilities applications, in four different ways:

- We visited and consulted with communities and potentially affected landowners before the application was received.
- We allowed early registration for all interested persons.
- We automatically qualified, subject to objections from another party, nearby landowners and residents.
- We launched a program to meet directly with, and deliver information sessions to, intervenor groups.

In our rates area, the AUC implemented demanding new internal performance standards to produce shorter timeframes for the issuance of many rate regulatory decisions. In doing so the AUC became a leading utilities regulator in Canada in adopting full-cycle application timelines for standard rates cases. This initiative paralleled new performance standards we implemented for facilities applications in October, 2009.

In the area of rate regulation reform, and with a goal of finding a better way to carry out its mandate while reducing regulatory burden, the AUC worked with industry and stakeholders to identify five principles for developing performance-based regulation (PBR) in Alberta. Those principles will be applied as the AUC reviews PBR plans submitted to it by gas and electric utility distribution companies.

Respected

Throughout much of the 2010-2011 fiscal year three teams of AUC Commission members, staff and outside experts worked to fulfill the government of Alberta's request for special inquiry reports into three key energy regulatory topics. These projects were carried out while ensuring all of our regular workload was efficiently addressed.

The order-in-council inquiries were directed to be carried out by Energy Minister Ron Liepert, and focussed on each of: the smart grid in Alberta, the harmonization of the rate-setting mechanisms for default natural gas and for default electricity supply, and the regulatory environment around development of hydro-electric power generation. Each was intended to inform policy development and was structured to explore options and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches - without drawing conclusions.

In each case the AUC produced authoritative references. In late March, Mr. Liepert thanked AUC Chair Willie Grieve for the first of those reports, describing the 154-page smart grid report as comprehensive, easy to read and bringing clarity to a very complex issue. "Its quality reflects well on the Commission," said Liepert.

Challenges made and met

As part of its ongoing performance-management and performance-improvement process, the AUC each year identifies and sets challenging performance targets tied directly to the organization's business plan. Our performance against these targets is then validated independently by a team from consultancy Solvera Solutions Inc. Here are the results for 2010-2011.

Organization

Provide a foundation to support our core business consistent with our core values.

- ✗ The employee engagement index as measured in the corporate employee survey is greater than 75 per cent. (Result equalled, but did not exceed, 75 per cent.)
- ✗ The quality of work environment index as measured in the corporate employee survey is greater than 78 per cent. (Result was 77.64 per cent.)
- ✓ The internal communications effectiveness index as measured in the corporate employee survey is greater than 75 per cent.
- ✓ Seventy-five per cent of all AUC employees invest 12 hours or more per year on professional development.
- ✓ The AUC's satisfaction index, as measured in the stakeholders satisfaction survey is greater than 75 per cent.
- ✓ Ninety per cent of stakeholder requests for information are responded to within one working day.
- ✓ AUC stakeholders are able to access AUC business systems 95 per cent of the time on business days between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Markets

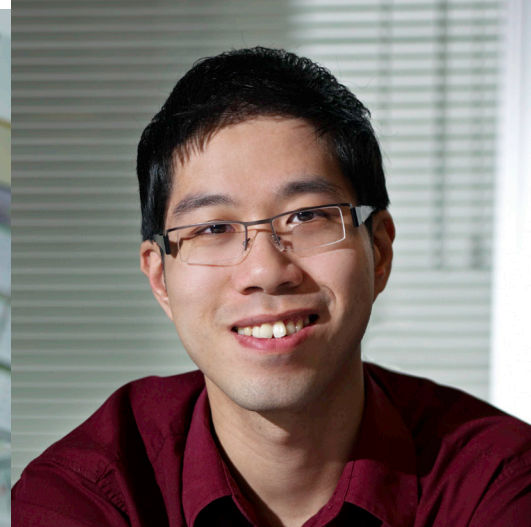
Support competitive markets by ensuring that market rules and reliability standards are fairly and consistently developed and market contraventions are fairly adjudicated.

- ✓ One hundred per cent of decisions are issued within 90 days after the close of record.
- ✓ Seventy-five per cent of all participants in markets hearings indicate they were satisfied with the opportunity to present their views and were treated fairly.
- ✓ Ninety per cent of all market applications are processed within established timelines.
- ✓ Eighty-five per cent of participants in market proceedings indicate they understand the hearing process.

Regulatory policy

Facilitate the fair, efficient and transparent operation of the retail natural gas and electricity markets through the use of technical regulation.

- ✓ No disputes between the market participants are being brought to the AUC for adjudication under rules 002, 003, 004, 010, 021 and 024.
- ✓ Eligible micro-generation projects are approved and connected to the grid in a timely manner.
- ✓ Harmonization of regulatory requirements results in demonstrated cost savings to regulated entities.
- ✓ Technical rules related to competitive retail energy markets are adopted or amended according to the timelines agreed upon by the industry stakeholders as part of the consultative process.



Facilities

Ensure understanding of and confidence in, the impartiality, transparency and competence of the AUC in its timely review and oversight of energy projects and of the opportunities for meaningful participation.

- ✗ One hundred per cent of decisions are issued within 90 days after the close of record. (One decision of 314 was delayed, at the request of the Commission.)
- ✗ The AUC will determine 100 per cent of needs and facility applications within 180 days of the application being deemed complete. (Two decisions of 117 were issued beyond 180 days; one due to a request for deferral from the applicant.)
- ✓ One hundred per cent of application response letters are sent within 15 working days of the application being filed.
- ✓ The AUC will conduct a minimum of one information session for each major facility application.
- ✓ Eighty per cent of facility applications are processed within established timelines.
- ✓ Seventy-five per cent of hearing participants indicate they understand the needs and facility application process.
- ✓ Seventy per cent of hearing participants indicate they were treated fairly.

Rate regulation

Rate making-related responsibilities will be carried out in a principled, effective and efficient manner.

- ✗ Notices or response letters will be issued for all applications within established target timelines. (One response letter was issued late for procedural reasons.)
- ✗ Eighty per cent of the proceedings for each proceeding type will have the record completed within established target timelines. (Target was not met for two of seven proceeding classes; both due to out-of-the-ordinary process steps.)
- ✓ One hundred per cent of decision reports or approval letters for each proceeding type will be issued within 90 days after the close of record.
- Eighty per cent of audit work will be completed within established target timelines and budgets. (No audits were conducted.)
- ✓ Ninety-seven per cent of email and phone complaints will be responded to within one working day.
- ✓ Ninety per cent of all written complaints will be responded to within three working days.

Values

We are impartial and objective.

We are accountable and strive for excellence in everything we do.

We treat everyone with dignity and respect.

We maintain and promote a positive work environment.

How we do it

The Alberta Utilities Commission is fair, open and transparent in its regulatory processes and delivers sound principled decisions.

What we do

The Alberta Utilities Commission regulates the utilities sector, natural gas and electricity markets to protect social, economic and environmental interests of Alberta where competitive market forces do not.

Vision

The Alberta Utilities Commission is a trusted leader that delivers innovative and efficient regulatory solutions for Alberta.

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