



Office of the Utilities Consumer Advocate



Annual Report 2019-2020



utilitiesconsumer
advocate

Alberta

Honourable Nate Glubish
Minister of Service Alberta
423 Legislature Building
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Glubish,

The Power & Natural Gas Consumers' Panel last met on May 15th, 2020, to review the Office of the Utilities Consumer Advocate's (UCA) Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2019-20, in accordance with our mandate. We note that while the COVID-19 pandemic affected only the final two weeks of the UCA's fiscal year, and thus it is not readily reflected in the 2019-20 report. We anticipate the pandemic impacts will have a stronger bearing on next year's report.

The Panel includes representation from key municipal, business, and agricultural associations, as well as a cross-section of public members with diverse expertise related to utility issues. As representatives of the ratepayers that the UCA is mandated to represent, we assess that the knowledge and expertise of the UCA provides a significant return on investment for small business, farm, and residential ratepayers. The Panel would like to highlight the following:

- The UCA's interventions in Alberta Utilities Commission rates proceedings last year contributed to over \$108 million in savings for consumers. This was money put back in the pockets of businesses and households that could then be re-invested back into the economy, helping put Albertans back to work and making their lives better.
- UCA mediation services helped 3,960 consumers navigate complicated utility terms and conditions and address their concerns when disputes arose with their utility providers.
- UCA consumer education encouraged competition in a free market system for retail energy services by promoting consumer awareness of choice and providing consumers with tools and knowledge to have the confidence to make decisions in that marketplace.
- The UCA has developed strong in-house regulatory affairs expertise, which has reduced costs for external consultants to defend small consumer interests during AUC proceedings. Ratepayers ultimately fund the UCA through their utility bills, typically less than 20 cents a month for most ratepayers. The UCA is a cost-effective investment for ratepayers, given the results it achieves. Consumers saved over \$28 for every \$1 spent on UCA Regulatory Affairs this year. The UCA has also consistently achieved operational surpluses against its budget allocations over the past few years. Ratepayers only pay for the UCA's actual expenditures, meaning that the UCA is cost-efficient as well.

Taken together, the Panel recommends you accept this Annual Report, and request the Minister of Energy recover the UCA's 2019-20 expenditures from the Balancing Pool and Natural Gas Distributors through the usual Ministerial Orders issued annually.

The Panel looks forward to a continued effort to ensure the concerns of small business, farm, and residential energy utility consumers are understood and addressed.

Sincerely,



Rhiannon Mesler
Power & Natural Gas Consumers' Panel Chair



Honourable Nate Glubish
Minister of Service Alberta
423 Legislature Building
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Glubish:

RE: ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019-20

The Office of the Utilities Consumer Advocate's (UCA) efforts support the Government's priorities of supporting job creation and making life better for Albertans. The UCA works with small businesses, farmers, and residential customers to help reduce their energy costs through representing their interests at regulatory proceedings and advising them on their options for energy utility services.

The UCA Regulatory Affairs Section intervened in 66 Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) proceedings last year advocating for the lowest possible rates for Alberta's utilities consumers, consistent with safe, reliable, reasonable service. The UCA provided evidence cited in Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) decisions last fiscal year that resulted in over \$108 million in cost disallowances, which translate into real savings for Alberta's electricity and natural gas consumers. This figure also represents a return on investment of over \$28 for every \$1 spent on the UCA's Regulatory Affairs program.

The UCA Operations Section advises small business, farm, and residential consumers on their energy utility services options through the UCA's mediation and consumer education programs. The UCA Mediation Team responded to 27,476 calls and emails from consumers during the last fiscal year, which resulted in 3,690 mediations between consumers and their utility providers. The UCA's consumer education program conducted 118 outreach events across Alberta, directly engaging with over 14,000 individuals. This outreach was complemented by over 273,000 consumer visits to the UCA website, an increase of just over 15 % from the previous year.

Alberta's small business, farm and residential consumers of electricity and natural gas still have many concerns with their utilities bills and services. The UCA helps consumers understand their bill, how the charges were determined, and mediates disputes with their utility providers. The UCA also represents their interests to the policy makers and regulators making decisions about electricity and natural gas rates and service quality in a rapidly evolving sector.

I trust you will find this work of value and highly supportive of your agenda of getting Albertans back to work and making life better for Albertans.

Sincerely,

Chris Hunt
Advocate



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1. Executive Summary

The UCA works with small businesses, farmers, and residential utility consumers to help reduce their energy costs through representing their interests at regulatory proceedings and advising them on their options for energy utility services.



Over **\$108M** in cost disallowances* Saving consumers **money!**

The UCA Regulatory Affairs Section intervened in 66 Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) proceedings last year advocating for the lowest possible rates for Alberta's utilities consumers, consistent with safe, reliable, reasonable service.



Consumers saved over **\$28** for every \$1 spent on UCA Regulatory Affairs!



27,476 calls from Albertans and mediation services for 3,690 customers

The UCA Operations Section advises small business, farm, and residential consumers on their energy utility services options through the UCA's mediation and consumer education programs.

The UCA's consumer education program conducted 118 outreach events across Alberta, directly engaging with over 14,000 individuals. This outreach was complemented by over 273,000 consumer visits to the UCA website.

During Fiscal Year 2019-2020, the UCA informed more consumers about their utility options, helped more consumers resolve disputes with the utility providers, and helped contain consumer electricity costs, while delivering its services even more efficiently. The UCA delivered all its programs for \$6.097 million in Fiscal Year 2019-2020, over \$500,000 less than in the previous year. The UCA continues to innovate and deliver value to the electricity and natural gas ratepayers who fund it.



* The figure of \$108 million in regulatory cost disallowances does not include disallowances from AUC Decision 20514-D02-2019 ATCO IT Common Matters, which were significant but confidential. The UCA intervened in this AUC Proceeding alongside the City of Calgary. More information regarding this decision is available at: <https://newsroom.calgary.ca/city-intervention-means-natural-gas-utility-rates-reduced-for-2020/> and http://www.auc.ab.ca/regulatory_documents/ProceedingDocuments/2019/20514-D02-2019.pdf#search=common%20matters





2. Introduction

The UCA empowers small business, farm, and residential consumers of electricity, natural gas, and water utility consumers in Alberta through its three core functions:

Advocacy ▶ The UCA acts as the voice of electricity and natural gas consumers in dozens of regulatory proceedings every year to ensure the lowest-possible rates for Alberta utility consumers, consistent with safe, reliable, reasonable service. The UCA works closely with other governmental departments and agencies, as well as utility service providers, to ensure that consumer interests are addressed in policies, regulations, and industry practices.

Mediation ▶ When consumers have exhausted known avenues of issue resolution, the UCA will investigate and attempt to resolve their concerns through mediation with utility companies.

Education ▶ The UCA provides information and advice to consumers so they understand their utility services, and how to make informed choices about how to purchase electricity and natural gas based on their individual circumstances.

Vision

Alberta's small business, farm, and residential utility consumers are confident the UCA provides them with the information and representation they need to protect their interests.

Mission

The UCA advocates, mediates, and educates for Alberta's small business, farm, and residential utility consumers to provide the information they need to make informed decisions about their utility services, mediate disputes with their utility providers, and represent the interests of electricity and natural gas consumers at regulatory proceedings to ensure they receive reliable services at reasonable prices.



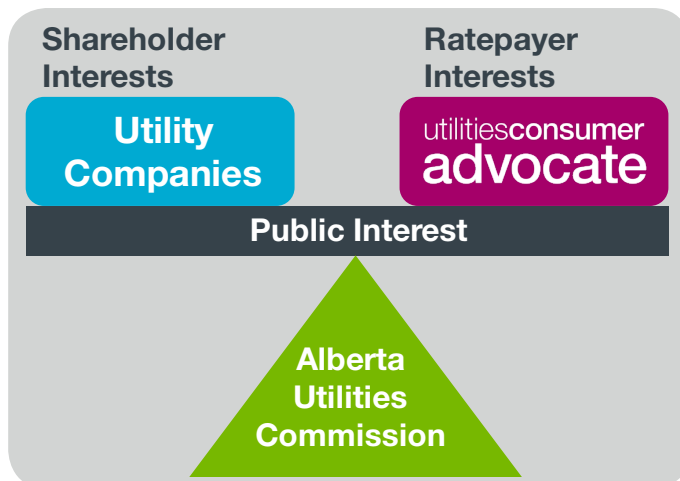


3. UCA Advocates

Regulatory Affairs Program Activities

The UCA advocates for safe, reliable, cost-effective utility service that meets the needs of consumers today and tomorrow. The Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) reviews hundreds of application each year through regulatory proceedings. The UCA typically intervenes in the few dozen proceedings annually that could have the most impact on consumers. Most of the AUC proceedings where the UCA intervenes address service quality, terms and conditions, or rates for consumers. The UCA intervened in 66 AUC proceedings during the 2018-19 FY; 42 of those proceedings were concluded and a decision issued by the end of the FY on March 31st, 2020. UCA evidence and arguments cited by the AUC in its decisions prevented unjustified expenses from being downloaded to consumers.

The AUC may accept a "Cost Disallowance" based on evidence from interveners. E.g. An applicant may request \$6M for new computers. The UCA presents evidence to show they only need \$4M. The AUC accepts the evidence and disallows this cost; this represents a cost disallowance of \$2M (6M-4M).



Total cost disallowances since 2013 -

\$1.430 billion saved

Table 1 on the following page summarizes the participation and value of UCA regulatory interventions in AUC proceedings since 2013. These cost disallowances are significant, totalling \$1.430 billion since 2013, and over \$108 million during FY 2019-20. Table 2 also demonstrates the strong return on investment consumers have received from the UCA's

Regulatory Affairs program during 2019-20; for every \$1 dollar invested, almost \$28 in cost disallowances were recorded. The UCA has included a performance measure of a rolling three-year average for cost disallowances to adjust for the variance in the number of AUC proceedings and decisions that occur from year to year. For 2019-20, that rolling three-year average was \$208 million.

Table 1 - UCA Participation in AUC Regulatory Proceedings: 2013-20

UCA Participation in AUC Regulatory Proceedings

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
# of proceedings	60	44	35	33	33	38	42
# of issues contained in those proceedings	612	689	429	471	369	308	279
Intervened in (# of issues)	115	232	127	108	125	90	125
Filed evidence (% of issues)	21.2%	18.2%	66.4%	73.7%	72%	28%	49%
Filed Argument on (% of issues)	94.6%	96.9%	98.1%	95.83%	86%	69%	66%
AUC agreed with UCA on (% of issues)	58.7%	59.9%	50%	72.5%	42%	59%	59%
UCA was sole intervener on (% of issues)	48.3%	35%	47.3%	33.27%	52%	43%	21%
UCA Regulatory Affairs Program costs (millions)	\$4.99M	\$5.02M	\$4.64M	\$3.92M	\$4.42M	\$4.00M	\$3.81M
UCA evidence/argument cited in AUC decision as cost disallowances (value in millions)*	\$48M	\$522M	\$30M	\$204M	\$251M	\$267M	\$108M
Cost disallowances per \$ invested in UCA Regulatory Affairs	\$9.62	\$103.98	\$6.47	\$52.04	\$60.47	\$66.78	\$28.35
Rolling three-year average of cost disallowances	N/A	N/A	\$200M	\$252M	\$161M	\$241M	\$208M

* The significant variance in annual cost disallowances is largely tied to the value of issues being examined by the AUC in their proceedings and the decisions published in each fiscal year. For example, AUC Decision 2941-D01-2015 Generic Cost of Capital included cost disallowances of \$239.6 million and was published on March 23, 2015; had it been published nine days later, it would have counted against 2015-16 statistics.

As well as regulatory interventions, the UCA continued to undertake “best practices” research and provide input to AUC, Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO), Department of Energy and other industry bodies, on policy and regulatory initiatives including Regulated Rate Option (RRO) policy and distribution policy.

The UCA was an active participant, representing consumer interests, in discussions with the AUC and industry on various AUC Rules, service quality Rules 002 and 003, and Rule 032 for specified penalties. The UCA’s work also included identification of possible contraventions of AUC rules via consumer complaints and other means, to inform AUC Market Oversight and Enforcement activities.



Other AUC related activities include working with industry experts to develop comprehensive submissions for the AUC Distribution System Inquiry, which is a look into the current and future needs of the distribution system based on emerging changes in technology and the industry. The UCA submitted views from a consumer perspective related to rates, metering, electric vehicles, utility asset disposition, and distribution system planning and operation, among other topics.

The UCA provided input into government and AUC initiatives to reduce red tape. This input was incorporated into changes in AUC procedures that sped up regulatory proceedings by narrowing issues in disputes and improving information sharing between proceeding participants.



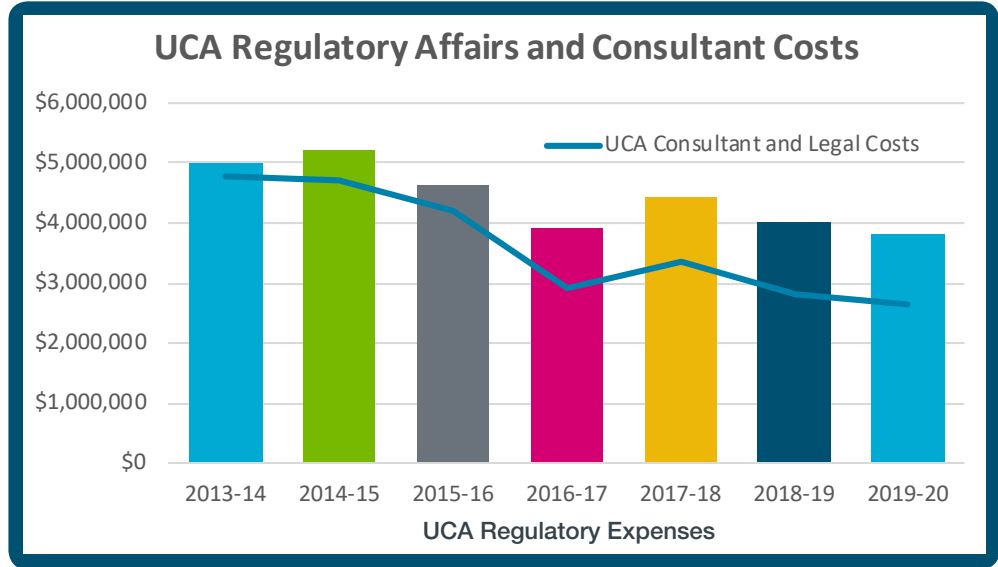
Early in the fiscal year the UCA was an active participant in the AESO application for a capacity market. The UCA did research and analysis that helped formulate the position taken at the proceeding and helped to ensure a comprehensive representation of the consumer point of view. The UCA also participated in the Government of Alberta’s consultations regarding market design, and endorsed the continuation of an energy-only electricity market in Alberta. The UCA continues to engage in AESO led initiatives such as energy storage and wholesale market pricing framework.

The UCA also conducted research and analysis on sub-metering and participated in meetings with representatives of sub-metering providers, contributing to their voluntary participation in the winter disconnection rules.

Table 2 - UCA Regulatory Affairs Performance Measures

UCA Regulatory Affairs Performance Measures			
Performance Measure	2019-20	Actual 3-year rolling average	Target 3-year rolling average
Cost disallowances per dollar invested in UCA Regulatory Affairs	\$28	\$51.87	>\$50
Success rate on the issues contested at the AUC	59%	53%	>66%
% of Regulatory Affairs program budget spent on external legal counsel and contractors	69%	72%	<75%

Table 3 - UCA Regulatory Affairs and Consultant Costs



Regulatory Affairs - Program Objectives

The UCA Regulatory Affairs program supports the following Service Alberta 2019-23 Business Plan Outcomes and Key Objectives:

Service Alberta Outcome 1 - Consumers are Protected

**Service Alberta
Key Objective
1.2**

Ensure legislation and regulatory frameworks enable consumers and businesses to operate in an efficient, fair and openly competitive marketplace.

UCA Regulatory Affairs Program Objectives

One	<p>Assist regulatory decision-makers with gaining a richer understanding of issues under their consideration by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ intervening in regulator proceedings; conducting independent analysis of applications to regulatory agencies (particularly the AUC); and ▶ presenting evidence and arguments on behalf of small business, farm, and residential consumers of electricity and natural gas.
Two	<p>Pursue results oriented regulatory interventions and consumer focused input into GOA policy development concerning energy issues by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ responding to government priorities and policy direction by providing expert analysis and advice that represents consumers' best interests; and ▶ prioritizing effort to issues of significance to consumers because of their financial, service quality, precedential, or other regulatory implications. See Appendix B – Proceeding Intervention Criteria for more details.
Three	<p>Ensure timely UCA reporting of regulatory results, successes and future challenges, including informing the Minister of Service Alberta on critical issues arising from regulatory applications.</p>

**Service Alberta
Key Objective
1.3**

Balance effective industry regulation and protection of consumer interests while enhancing governance and reducing unnecessary red tape.

UCA Regulatory Affairs Program Objectives

Four	<p>Reduce regulatory burden by identifying opportunities to address reoccurring regulatory issues and improving standardization of terms, tariffs, and conditions through collaboration with industry and other stakeholders, generic regulatory proceedings, or updates to regulation.</p>
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4. UCA Mediates

Mediation Program Activities

The UCA received 27,476 calls from Albertans through the 310-4UCA (310-4822) line during FY 2019-20. The majority of calls to the UCA are customers looking for advice and information about their utility situation. Mediation Officers provided consumers with a list of retailers and product offers, education about the energy market, and information that will help a customer to make an informed choice about their service. Of the total calls, 3,690 calls were provided with mediation services. These services included investigating concerns raised by consumers and attempts to resolve their concerns through mediation with utility companies. The most common reasons for mediation are: billing issues; early exit fees; concerns about billing and customer service; and disconnections for non-payment or non-application.



Of 27,476 calls,
3,690 received
mediation services

Each year, the UCA participates in the AUC's Winter Utility Reconnection Project. The UCA is supplied with the names and contact information for Albertan consumers whose electricity and/or natural gas services are being disconnected at the beginning of the winter season.



**40 households
reconnected**

Multiple attempts are made to reach those individuals through phone calls and letters in an effort to assist in the reconnection process. This includes providing information and advice, mediating payment arrangements, and connecting consumers with support programs, if required. As part of the AUC Winter Utility Reconnection Program, the UCA helped reconnect 40 disconnected households during the 2019-20 winter season.



Table 4 - UCA Mediation Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2019/20 Actual	Annual Targets
Abandoned call rate	2%	7%
Average speed of answer	13 seconds	30 seconds
Average days to close energy utility mediation	7 days	14 days
Average days to close water utility mediation	7 days	28 days
Winter Utility Reconnection Program completed	December 2nd	December 15th

Mediation Program Objectives

The UCA Mediation program supports the following Service Alberta 2019-23 Business Plan Outcomes and Key Objectives:

Service Alberta Outcome 1 - Consumers are Protected

Service Alberta Key Objective 1.5

Improve access to timely and efficient consumer dispute resolutions.

UCA Mediation Program Objectives

One	Resolve disputes between consumers and energy service providers through timely and effective mediation.
Two	Contact disconnected residential consumers through the Winter Utility Reconnection Program in order to assist with activating their gas and/or electricity service during winter months.
Three	Support Service Alberta's consumer protection focus by advising the Minister of critical and sensitive issues and on trends identified from mediation activities.



5. UCA Educates

Consumer Education Program Activities

The UCA Consumer Education and Awareness Program includes three complementary components:

1. the www.ucahelps.alberta.ca website
2. UCA social media channels
3. UCA consumer outreach program

Website

The www.ucahelps.alberta.ca website is the foundation of the UCA Consumer Education and Awareness Program. The UCA website provides an important objective source of information for consumers about retail choice, their monthly bills, helpful tips and hints, and where to go for help. The site also includes detailed information about the energy markets, and utility regulatory processes and decisions. The website includes a cost-comparison tool so that consumers can easily review the products available in their area.

ucahelps.alberta.ca
visits up by 15%



There were 273,092 visits to the UCA website in FY 19/20, and increase of over 15% over the previous FY; however, it was 3% below the target for FY 19/20. The increase in website visits is assessed to have resulted from the increase in UCA Consumer Education Sessions and UCA social media posts.



Visit the UCA Cost Comparison Tool at ucahelps.alberta.ca/CCT

A site visit can be defined as the period of time a website user is actively engaged with the website. The average time spent on the UCA website was 4:06, a 2.35% increase from 2018-19. The average number of pages viewed per visit is 3.79, a 7.83% decrease from 2018-19 numbers. The decrease can be attributed to the UCA’s efforts in improving site navigation and search functionality.

Social Media Engagement

246,820
page reach



The number of UCA social media engagements (likes, shares, and comments) on Facebook and Instagram was 22,710 for FY 2019-20, which was 62% below targets for the year set in the UCA Strategic Plan and 54% below engagement rates from FY 2018-19.

2,096
followers



A number of factors may have contributed to the decrease:

- A mandatory two-month social media freeze during the election
- a change in the Facebook algorithm introduced in October 2019 favouring paid content, and
- changes in posting practices from 301 Facebook posts and 253 Instagram posts (average of 6 and 5 posts per week respectively) in FY 2018-19 to 173 Facebook posts and 158 Instagram posts (average of 3 posts per week) in FY 2019-20. Averages based on full 52-week year.

The total UCA Facebook page reach was 246,820. The UCA Instagram gained a total of 45 followers throughout the year. The Service Alberta Twitter account released an additional 40 messages related to UCA content, resulting in 52,310 impressions and 229 engagements.

UCA is working with Communications and Public Engagement to enhance social media practice to educate more small business, farm, and residential utility consumers within the province.

Consumer Outreach Program



The Consumer Outreach Team conducted many education sessions at community events, trade shows, and conferences, as well as other one-on-one meetings with stakeholders and attended other events. The direct engagement of consumers enabled the Consumer Outreach Team to share feedback that facilitated improvements to the UCA website and social media posts, as well as referrals to the UCA Mediation Team and the identification of regulatory and policy issues to the Regulatory Affairs section.

In FY 2019-20, the UCA Consumer Outreach Team conducted 118 Consumer Education Sessions across the province, directly engaging 14,098 people. The number of people engaged refers to the number of people in attendance at presentations, at meetings and the number of people that were given information and connected with at trade shows. The number of people directly engaged was up over 34% from FY 18-19, and exceeded the FY 19-20 target in the UCA Strategic Plan by over 17%. In FY 2019-20, an average of 119 people were engaged per session, a 21% increase from FY 2018-19.



Consumer Education Program Objectives

Service Alberta Outcome 1 - Consumers are Protected

Service Alberta Key Objective 1.1

Improve consumer protections and outreach activities to educate Albertans.

Service Alberta Key Objective 1.4

Use modern technologies and approaches to distribute important consumer information directly to Albertans.

UCA Consumer Education Program Objectives

Note: All UCA Consumer Education Program Objectives apply to both Service Alberta Key Objectives 1.1 and 1.4.

One	Electricity and natural gas consumers are aware of the energy utility service options available to them.
Two	Electricity and natural gas consumers know where to find independent and impartial information tools to assist in choosing their provider.
Three	Electricity and natural gas consumers are aware of the regulatory protections and oversight of the utilities sector, natural gas and electricity markets.
Four	Electricity, natural gas, and water utility consumers understand the line items on their monthly utility bills.
Five	Electricity, natural gas, and water utility consumers are aware of mediation services available to them if they have a dispute with their utility provider.
Six	Electricity, natural gas, and water utility consumers know where they can learn more about electricity, natural gas, and water utilities issues.





6. Financial Information

The UCA's financial results (unaudited) for the 2019-20 FY are presented in Table 4.

Table 5 - Financial Report, 2019-20 Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2020

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS¹ - 2019-20 (thousands of dollars)

Expense	Budget	Actual	Variance
Advocacy Services	993	842	151
Mediation Services	755	697	58
Regulatory Affairs	5,330	3,807	1,523
Consumer Education & Awareness	871	726	145
Power/Natural Gas Consumers' Panel	32	12	20
Transmission Facilities Cost Monitoring Committee ²	123	13	110
Total Expense	8,104	6,097	2,007

¹The UCA is funded 80 per cent by the Balancing Pool and 20 percent by Natural Gas Utilities.

²The Transmission Facilities Cost Monitoring Committee is funded 100 percent by the Balancing Pool. The Committee ceased operations in 2019.

For FY 2019-20, the UCA had an overall budget surplus of \$2.007 million. The surplus was the result of the following:



- The Regulatory Affairs program, which had a surplus of over \$1.5 million, was the single largest contributor to the overall variance, due to a surplus in contract services as internal UCA staff were used for the majority of research and project management services on regulatory interventions, instead of external consultants.
- Advocacy Services had a surplus of over \$151 thousand due to not filling a vacant position, and through restraint in supplies and services.
- Consumer Education and Awareness program, with a surplus of over \$145 thousand was due to the deferral of several projects such as the consumer information dashboard and retail market awareness campaign.



7. Power & Natural Gas Consumer's Panel Activities

The Power and Natural Gas Consumers' Panel met three times during Fiscal Year 2019-2020. During the June 2019 meeting, the Panel provided advice to the UCA regarding how to better tailor UCA consumer education services to support small business and farm consumers. The Panel also reviewed the UCA Annual report for 2018-19 and recommended its acceptance by the Minister of Service of Alberta.

In mid-August 2019, the Panel conducted a two-day strategic planning session that included meeting with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Service Alberta.

The outcomes of the planning session included:

- Consolidating the Panel's assigned responsibilities into a concise purpose statement of:
 - The Panel improves conditions for small business, farm, and residential electricity and natural gas consumers through the oversight of the UCA and strategic advice to the Minister.
- Identifying the Panel's strategic priorities of:
 - modernization of utilities services to reflect consumer interests;
 - enhancing the retail market; and
 - education and regulatory advocacy
- The Panel provided red tape reduction advice that was incorporated into UCA proposals to the Alberta Utilities Commission and Service Alberta.
- The Panel provided guidance to the UCA regarding its three-year strategic plan to ensure it reflected the priorities of small business, farm, and residential consumers.

Finally, the Panel met again in November 2019. During that meeting, the Panel discussed the impact of the introduction of the Federal Carbon Tax on consumers. It identified that the Federal Carbon Tax raised costs significantly for small businesses, farm, and community consumers who relied on natural gas for key aspects of their operations such as hay drying, and heating large buildings such as barns, greenhouses, workshops, community centres, and seniors' lodges. The Panel recommended the Government of Alberta continue to raise concerns regarding these cost impacts with the Federal Government. The Panel also identified that the repeal of the Regulated Rate Option price cap provided an opportunity to encourage more Albertans to participate in the competitive retail energy market.



The Panel also identified that consumers were increasingly frustrated with the high ratio of distribution and transmission charges on the bills, and noted that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta had already passed a resolution requesting the Government of Alberta review regulatory requirements relating to transmission and distribution rates.

The Panel meeting that was scheduled for March 2020 was deferred until May 2020 due to COVID-19 response restrictions. The Power and Natural Consumers' Panel has now established remote meeting protocols and is able to conduct future meetings virtually.





8. Appendices

Appendix A

Mandate

The UCA is established by the *Government Organization Act*, Schedule 13.1. The Act assigns the following responsibilities to the UCA:

- (a) to represent the interests of Alberta small business, farm and residential consumers of electricity and natural gas before proceedings of the Alberta Utilities Commission and other bodies whose decisions may affect the interests of those consumers;
- (b) to disseminate independent and impartial information about the regulatory process relating to electricity and natural gas, including an analysis of the impact of decisions of the Alberta Utilities Commission, other bodies and the courts relating to electricity and natural gas;
- (c) to inform and educate consumers about electricity, natural gas and water utilities issues;
- (d) to disseminate independent and impartial information to assist electricity and natural gas consumers in choosing a distributor, provider or retailer, including
- (i) complaints made under this Schedule, the *Electric Utilities Act* or the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act* and the outcome of any recommendation, hearing or settlement,
 - (ii) investigations, orders, administrative penalties or convictions conducted, awarded or made under the *Electric Utilities Act*, the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act* or the *Consumer Protection Act*,
 - (iii) compliance records of a distributor, provider or retailer in adhering to the standards and codes prescribed under the *Electric Utilities Act*, the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act* and the *Consumer Protection Act*, and
 - (iv) any other matters the Utilities Consumer Advocate considers necessary to carry out the purposes of this clause;
- (e) to assist in the resolution of any consumer issue, complaint or dispute between a consumer and a distributor, provider or retailer relating to the provision of electricity, natural gas or water as the Utilities Consumer Advocate considers appropriate and, if a resolution is not reached, to refer the complaint to the person, body or authority the Utilities Consumer Advocate considers appropriate;
- (f) to develop and undertake activities that the Utilities Consumer Advocate considers appropriate for the purposes of

The UCA's mandate is set out in Schedule 13.1 of the Government Organization Act.



- (i) preventing the disconnection of electricity or natural gas provided by a retailer or provider to a consumer, or
 - (ii) facilitating the reconnection of electricity or natural gas provided by a retailer or provider to a consumer;
- (g) to carry out such other responsibilities relating to electricity, natural gas and water as the responsible Minister determines.





Appendix B

Proceeding Intervention Criteria

The UCA may intervene in a proceeding based on the combination of the priorities below (high, medium or discretionary) and the resources available.

Proceeding and Policy Priorities:

1. Base load high priority work - mandatory participation

- Generic Cost of Capital
- General Revenue Applications (GRAs), General Tariff Applications (GTAs) and all subsequent related proceedings including
 - o Interim requests that are excessive
 - o Review and Variance requests
 - o Appeals to the Alberta Court of Appeal
- Retail energy and non-energy proceedings and all subsequent related proceedings
- Regulated Rate Initiative proceedings including PBR and Capital Trackers

2. Medium priority work - participation depending on constraints

- Policy matters and generic proceedings that affect multiple un-affiliated utilities
 - o AUC initiated
 - Utility Asset Disposition
 - Code of Conduct
 - Minimum Filing Requirements
 - Service Quality
 - Distribution Inquiry
 - o Department of Energy initiated
 - Harmonization of regulations
 - Market consultations
 - Others
 - o Industry initiated
 - Transmission constraint management
- Policy matters for affiliated utilities that have the potential to set precedents
 - o Pension management
 - o Others
- Complaints by or on behalf of specific customers

3. Discretionary work/Optional participation

- Facilities Applications
- Needs Identification
- Markets - AESO Rules



- National Energy Board matters related to TransCanada Alberta System (NGTL)
- Interim filings
- Compliance filings
- True up or rider applications
- Research on policy implications of emerging technologies on utilities

Issue Intervention Criteria:

Within proceedings, the UCA will take positions on specific issues based on the following criteria. The validity of these specific criteria and the success on specific issues will be monitored and modified on an ongoing basis.

1. Impact on Alberta consumers - Potential benefit or harm
 - (a) Costs
 - (i) timing
 - (ii) magnitude
 - (iii) direct channel to consumers
 - (iv) reasonableness or prudence
 - (b) service reliability and quality
 - (i) for all service types (retail, distribution, transmission and wholesale)
 - (ii) for both physical operations and customer service
 - (c) terms and conditions of service
 - (d) Intergenerational equity
 - (e) Legitimate or reasonable request from constituents
2. Past successes or failures on specific, related or similar issues
 - (a) Have we exhausted all avenues?
 - (b) Was the best case put forward?
3. Resource availability to address the specific issues
 - (a) Internal
 - (b) External
4. Regulatory precedent, support or impact
 - (a) Aligned with the regulatory compact
 - (b) Within Alberta
 - (c) In other Canadian jurisdictions
 - (d) In other jurisdictions including the US
5. Regulatory Affairs principles to be defended
6. Alternative means exist for addressing the issues (i.e. another proceeding or policy input)
7. Are the UCA's interests adequately represented by other interveners?





Appendix C

Power & Natural Gas Consumers' Panel Biographies

Panel Mandate

Created under s. 7 of the *Government Organization Act*, the Power and Natural Gas Consumer's Panel ("the Committee") is an advisory agency accountable to the Minister of Service Alberta ("Minister") and responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding current and emerging energy consumer issues.

Panel Members FY 2019-2020

Rhiannon Mesler - Chair, Public Member



Born and raised near Strathmore, AB, Dr. Rhiannon M. Mesler is an Assistant Professor in Marketing at University of Lethbridge. She holds a PhD and MSc from the University of Calgary, and a BA from the University of Waterloo. She has also been named to Calgary's Top 40 Under 40 and Marketing Magazine's 30 Under 30.

Bill Given - Member representing Alberta Urban Municipalities Association



In October 2017, Bill began his third term as Mayor of Grande Prairie. The lifetime city resident was first elected to Council as an alderman in 2001 and served three terms. Prior to becoming Mayor, Bill's career included marketing and communications consulting, and sales in the information technology sector.

Tom Burton - Member representing Rural Municipalities of Alberta



Tom has had several different occupations, including general manager for the DeBolt and District Agricultural Society. Tom became a member of the DeBolt Fire & Rescue in 1993, and in 1995 was selected as the Chief, a position he still retains today. Tom continues to be a councillor for the Municipal District of Greenview #16, after being elected in the 2001.

Don Oszli - Member representing Alberta Chamber of Commerce



Don holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Alberta and is a Chartered Accountant, Certified Management Accountant and Certified Internal Auditor. For the past 25 years, Don has taught at the Institute of Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta and created new professional development course material.



Humphrey Banack - Member representing Alberta Federation of Agriculture



Humphrey has been involved with the Alberta Federation of Agriculture since 2003, serving as president for four years. He served as Vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture from 2011 to 2017, meeting agricultural producers from across Canada and around the world.

Barbara Baker - Public Member



Barbara is a power industry professional with over 27 years experience working in a variety of disciplines, including trading, enterprise risk management, generation development, retail regulatory advocacy, and energy efficiency. She has earned her BSc (Physics) and MA (Economics) from the University of Alberta.

Sandra Moore - Public Member



Sandra is the Dean of Business, Environment and Technology with Norquest College in Edmonton. She is also a Ph.D. Candidate in the School of Environment and Sustainability at the University of Saskatchewan where her research focuses on the socio-economic impacts of the oil and gas industry on rural communities.

Michael Ng - Public Member



Michael is a professional engineer (PEng), project manager (PMP), and operational lead with diverse industry experience. Michael previously worked in utility project management, executing over 800 million dollars in projects for a transmission facility owner (TFO). Currently, Michael serves as an executive for an oil and gas technology company.

Aida Nciri - Public Member



Aida has spent over seven years working as a policy analyst and researcher in both industry and academia, gaining experience in energy systems, energy policy and governance of low-carbon transitions. Aida holds a Master of Public Policy (Science-Po, Paris, France) and PhD (University of Calgary).