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OEB Initiates Phase 2 of Its Customer Service Rules Review

By David Stevens

The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has now announced plans to proceed with “Phase 2” of its Customer Service Rules Review. Key areas of focus will include:

- Opening and closing of accounts
- Billing errors
- Service charges relating to management of customer accounts

The OEB indicates that it will look at how utilities have implemented existing rules, and will consider how effective the current rules have been in protecting consumers. As promised earlier (see here), the OEB will also review whether changes are required to the current Reporting & Record Keeping Requirements. Also as part of “Phase 2,” the OEB will look at prepaid metering, which is a subject that arose in a recent Hydro One Distribution rates proceeding (see here).

According to the OEB’s letter, there will be a variety of engagement activities used to gather information relevant to the “Phase 2” review. Among other things, the OEB will engage consumers, consumer representatives and utilities through surveys and meetings. The OEB also plans to “conduct a broad jurisdictional review of customer service standards in the energy sector and other sectors to gain an understanding of experiences in other jurisdictions and to identify best practices in customer service.”

This “Phase 2” of the Customer Service Rules Review follows the OEB’s September 6, 2018, Report on the Review of Customer Service Rules for Utilities (Phase 1 Report), which recommended changes to aspects of certain customer service practices, including changes relevant to billing, disconnections and gas distributor rules (see our previous post). While many interested parties submitted comments in response to the Phase 1 Report, the OEB has not yet issued updated proposed customer service rules for comment or implementation.

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