

# Announcement

April 17, 2020

## **Update on the impact of COVID-19**

First of all I want to thank the utility industry for their efforts, in particular the efforts of their workers, in keeping essential energy flowing to Albertans.

This crisis is a global issue and we have not faced a challenge of this scale in our history. Governments are leading the response, but we think it is important to keep you updated on steps we at the AUC and others are taking in response to the crisis.

As a sector, our most important job is to ensure the health and safety of customers, staff and workers to ensure all are protected as best they can be. At the AUC, we are monitoring the advice from government and health officials and are following their guidance.

An additional overarching objective is to maintain secure and reliable utility service and to ensure customers' needs are met – particularly those who are struggling to pay their bills if their income has been reduced, or in some cases, eliminated altogether.

To that end, retailers are working with the Alberta government to support eligible customers who may be impacted by COVID-19. The industry is providing approaches to ease pressure on bill payment, including the potential to defer payment for those affected. Generally, retailers are considering a customer's ability to pay because of current circumstances and are providing assistance and information to identify payment options. Debt collection activity by retailers has been paused during this period. Customers should not be disconnected during this crisis because of an inability to pay.

Here at the AUC, we are now working from home for the foreseeable future. We are using technology to host internal meetings and have eliminated travel.

We are mindful of the limits our stakeholders have and the extraordinary challenges they are facing in these circumstances. We are looking at our approach to regulation during this period and have assumed a more flexible approach to regulation including a pragmatic approach to compliance. For example, we have deferred compliance filings, suspended specified penalties for self-reported contraventions and supported the Market Surveillance Administrator in adopting a flexible approach for market participants.

We are also examining our approach to our 2020-2021 Operational Plan objectives and initiatives. Many of those activities are outward facing and require involvement of our stakeholders through meetings and consultations. As a result we are examining how we can

advance this agenda while being mindful of competing priorities, including exploring whether and how we can apply technology to our consultations and hearings.

For the moment we have delayed publication of our operational plan, which we had intended to post at the beginning of our fiscal year, while we consider how best to deliver on that agenda. We will keep you updated on our approach through our website and these periodic updates.

Please stay safe and healthy during these difficult days.

If you have questions or comments, please email us at [info@auc.ab.ca](mailto:info@auc.ab.ca).

Stay safe and best wishes,

Mark Kolesar  
AUC Chair