

Announcement

August 22, 2023

Update to AUC application review process during approval pause period

The Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) will continue to process applications up to the approval stage for new hydro developments and power plants that produce renewable electricity while the approval pause period is in effect. The AUC is prohibited from issuing approvals until the pause period expires.

On August 3, 2023, the AUC issued an [announcement](#) asking stakeholders to provide feedback on three options for implementing the approval pause or to suggest alternative implementation options. The AUC received nearly 600 stakeholder submissions and thanks those who responded to the AUC's request. The responses received were comprehensive and thoughtful, and assisted the AUC in determining the appropriate next steps.

Based on its interpretation of the [Generation Approvals Pause Regulation](#), and having regard to the feedback received, the AUC will continue to process existing applications (applications that were filed before August 3, 2023) and new applications (applications that are filed between August 3, 2023, and February 29, 2024) as described below.

The AUC will continue to apply the current version of [Rule 007: Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines](#) to all existing applications and all new applications. However, in parallel with the inquiry, the AUC will supplement Rule 007 with new, interim information requirements relating to such issues as agricultural land, viewsapes and reclamation security.

New applications

The AUC will continue to accept and process applications for new hydro developments and power plants that produce renewable electricity that are greater than one megawatt. Applicants will be required to satisfy the existing information requirements in Rule 007, as well as additional interim information requirements described above that will be issued shortly. The AUC will develop the records for these proceedings to the greatest extent possible while the pause is ongoing, but no approvals will be issued until the pause period expires.

Existing applications

The AUC will continue to process existing applications for new hydro developments and power plants that produce renewable electricity that are greater than one megawatt. As part of its review of these applications, the AUC may require applicants to respond to the same interim information requirements that will apply to new applications. The AUC will issue

correspondence on the record of each existing application confirming the next steps in the proceeding. The AUC will also develop the records for these proceedings to the greatest extent possible while the pause is ongoing, but no approvals will be issued until the pause period expires.

Applicants who prefer not to continue developing the record of their existing application(s) while the pause period is ongoing may request that the AUC place their application(s) in abeyance until the pause period expires.

Next steps

Many stakeholders proposed that the AUC adopt a “module” approach to addressing the issues identified in the terms of reference for the inquiry. The AUC finds that adopting a module approach has considerable merit and is in the process of finalizing the process schedule for each module. The AUC intends to issue its process directions shortly.

The AUC will publish all feedback received on implementing the approval pause here: https://www.auc.ab.ca/regulatory_documents/consultations-library/

Background

The AUC was directed through an [order-in-council](#) to inquire and report to the Minister of Affordability and Utilities on the ongoing economic, orderly and efficient development of electricity generation.

The [Generation Approvals Pause Regulation](#) was enacted through a concurrent [order-in-council](#). The regulation prohibits the AUC from issuing approvals from August 3, 2023, to February 29, 2024, for new hydro developments or power plants that produce renewable electricity, subject to certain exceptions for small power plants, isolated generating units and micro-generation. The regulation does not affect amendment applications, letters of enquiry, time extensions, approval transfers or final project updates for previously-approved projects.

The AUC is satisfied that this approach provides regulatory clarity to stakeholders, while continuing the orderly and comprehensive consideration of all applications before it.

Specific inquiries about the application implementation approach can be directed to Rita Chan, director of generation, at rita.chan@auc.ab.ca.

General stakeholder questions can be directed to info@auc.ab.ca.

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Chair