

Board Staff Interrogatories

Algoma Power Inc.

**Application for Exemption from Certain Sections
of the Distribution System Code & Mandated Date
for Time-of-Use Pricing for Certain Customers**

EB-2015-0199

July 24, 2015

PREAMBLE

Algoma Power Inc. has applied for an exemption from certain sections of the Distribution System Code (DSC) which relate to estimated billing and billing accuracy. The exemption would apply to 191 of the utility's "hard to reach" customers. Algoma Power requests that the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) grant this exemption effective April 15, 2015 until December 31, 2019.

In addition, Algoma Power has requested an extension to the exemption to its mandated date for Time-of-Use (TOU) Pricing for certain hard to reach customers. Algoma Power requests that the exemption be effective from July 1, 2015 until December 31, 2019. Algoma Power's requested TOU pricing date extension in this proceeding would apply to approximately 350 hard to reach customers for which the utility received an extension in OEB proceeding EB-2013-0056. The extension granted in that proceeding is in effect until July 1, 2015.

Algoma Power states it is not possible for it to economically connect its remaining meters to its Advanced Metering Infrastructure network or to make all meters communicate reliably enough to issue regular TOU bills based on actual meter readings. Algoma Power states that the costs associated with the options available to connect more meters and make meters reliable are excessively high and would result in upward pressure on rates.

QUESTIONS

1. Algoma Power has proposed to eliminate the exemption reporting schedule. If Algoma Power is granted a five year exemption what reporting measures would be appropriate for it to report its progress to the Board regarding both requested exemptions?
2. Is Algoma Power communicating or working with Hydro One or any other utilities to deal with the technological constraints? If not, why not?

3. How many new hard-to-reach customers are projected to be connected to Algoma Power's service area during the course of the exemption period?
4. Please provide specific details of Algoma Power's plans to ensure that any customers unsuccessfully converted to TOU pricing do not receive consecutive, multiple or persistent estimated bills.
 - a. Please explain how Algoma Power intends to treat any TOU customers who receive large true-ups, multiple bills, and large withdrawals from bank accounts as a result of estimated bills.
 - b. Please provide details of Algoma Power's proposed communications plan to update TOU customers on their status and transition to two-tier pricing.
5. Please provide specific details, including costs and timelines, of Algoma Power's plans to:
 - a. improve communication reliability of its smart meter network;
 - b. monitor the availability of commercial cellular network coverage for those affected customers that do not currently have available cellular network coverage; and
 - c. adapt to technology changes in cellular network coverage across the province.