



Ontario
Energy
Board | Commission
de l'énergie
de l'Ontario

DECISION AND ORDER

EB-2021-0123

ALECTRA UTILITIES CORPORATION

Application for Electricity Distribution Licence Amendment

BY DELEGATION, BEFORE: Brian Hewson

Vice President,

Consumer Protection & Industry Performance

March 31, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Through this Decision and Order, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) is amending electricity distribution licence, ED-2016-0360, of Alectra Utilities Corporation (Alectra), to temporarily exempt it from compliance with section 5.1.3 (b) of the Distribution System Code (DSC). The exemption applies to Alectra's entire distribution service area until December 31, 2021. With respect to those customers located in Alectra's Guelph Rate Zone, the exemption will remain in effect until July 30, 2022.

This Decision and Order is being issued by the Delegated Authority, without holding a hearing pursuant to section 6(4) of the OEB Act.

BACKGROUND

Section 5.1.3 (b) of the DSC came into force on May 21, 2014. It required distributors to install a Metering Inside Settlement Time (MIST) meter on any existing customer facilities where the customer had a monthly average peak demand during a calendar year of over 50 kW (GS>50 kW customers) by no later than August 21, 2020. Once installed, the distributor would then be required to use the MIST meter data to bill its customers.

On July 23, 2020, the OEB issued a Decision and Order (EB-2020-0187) amending the licences of all electricity distributors to exempt them from having to comply with section 5.1.3 (b) of the DSC until March 31, 2021. In that decision, the OEB acknowledged that the operational challenges related to the COVID-19 emergency could reasonably lead to an unavoidable delay in meeting the August 21, 2020 deadline by many distributors. The OEB also stated that, if any distributor required an extension beyond March 31, 2021, it would need to make a separate application.

APPLICATION

On March 24, 2021, Alectra filed an application with the OEB for an extension of the temporary exemption from section 5.1.3 (b) of the DSC to December 31, 2021, and for Guelph Rate Zone customers to July 30, 2022.

Alectra submits that it will not be able to comply with section 5.1.3 (b) of the DSC by the March 31, 2021 deadline. Alectra states that despite its diligent efforts to meet the

requirements of section 5.1.3 (b) of the DSC, there are approximately 1,000 meters remaining to be replaced, and approximately 2,000 GS>50 accounts where communications infrastructure requires an upgrade in order to use the MIST meter data for billing purposes.

Alectra states that throughout 2020 it encountered many challenges, mostly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, that prevented the utility from completion of its MIST meter installations, including the following key factors:

- delays in the delivery of meters by suppliers caused Alectra's installation program to stall for a period of time throughout 2020;
- Alectra experienced a shortage of field staff necessary to execute the installation program, due to stay at home orders and safety concerns; and
- the program rollout was impacted by safety measures that limited access to customers' premises and by limitations placed on the type of field work that could be accomplished due to enacted municipal policies and controls.

Alectra submits that, with respect to the Guelph Rate Zone, it requires a longer extension in order to comply with section 5.1.3 (b) of the DSC. Alectra states that although all MIST meters have been installed in the Guelph Rate Zone, the legacy Customer Information System (CIS) for that rate zone is not capable of using MIST meter data for billing. Currently, Alectra is in the process of migrating the Guelph Rate Zone customers onto Alectra's Customer Care & Billing system and expects to complete this by July 2022.

FINDINGS

The OEB finds that Alectra has reasonably justified its request for an exemption from section 5.1.3 (b) of the DSC due to the ongoing challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The OEB also finds that Alectra has justified its request for the extended exemption period for the GS>50 customers located in the Guelph Rate Zone due to the transition of these customers to Alectra's Customer Care & Billing system. The OEB therefore grants the application and approves the requested amendments to Alectra's licence.

IT IS ORDERED THAT:

1. Alectra Utilities Corporation's Electricity Distribution Licence ED-2016-0360, specifically Schedule 3 "List of Code Exemptions", is amended to include an exemption from section 5.1.3 (b) of the Distribution System Code.
2. The exemption referred to in paragraph 1 above shall apply to the licensee's entire distribution service area, and expires on December 31, 2021.
3. Notwithstanding paragraph 2 above, the exemption referred to in paragraph 1 above shall apply to customers located in the in licensee's Guelph Rate Zone until July 30, 2022.

DATED at Toronto, March 31, 2021

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD

Original Signed By

Brian Hewson
Vice President, Consumer Protection & Industry Performance