



January 3, 2017

Re : Reminder of Disconnection Rules

With the onset of winter weather and the difficulty that some electricity customers are having paying their bills, I am writing to remind all Ontario utilities of the rules that they must follow regarding disconnecting and reconnecting a service.

I ask that you review the OEB's disconnection rules with your employees to ensure that they are being strictly followed. This includes providing the necessary minimum advance notice, making every effort to contact the customer by phone or in person at least 48 hours before the date of disconnection, your obligation to offer repayment options, and the requirement to reconnect within 2 business days of receiving a payment or of the consumer entering into a repayment arrangement.

I would also ask that you make every effort to inform your customers on the home page of your website and in bill inserts of the rules and their rights. In particular, I believe that your customers should be aware that:

- They must be offered repayment options;
- They cannot be disconnected if they agree to a repayment arrangement and follow that arrangement;

- A low-income customer may be eligible for the following special rules:
 - o The right to request equalized billing without paying by automatic withdrawal;
 - o The utility must suspend a disconnection process for 21 days once it has been advised that a customer may be eligible for emergency financial assistance; and,
 - o A customer that has agreed to a repayment plan has more time to pay outstanding balances to the utility.
- Help is available for low-income consumers through programs including:
 - o Ontario Electricity Support Program, which is now helping 163,500 low-income Ontarians pay their electricity bills;
 - o Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), which provides emergency financial assistance to help pay overdue electricity bills; and,
 - o Consumers can learn about these programs at OntarioEnergyBoard.ca/BillHelp.
- They can call the OEB at 1-877-632-2727 or visit our website at www.ontarioenergyboard.ca if they feel that the rules have not been followed or have other concerns or questions.

I am certain that you share the OEB's commitment to protecting your customers and will ensure that the rules on disconnections and reconnections are strictly followed.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Brian Hewson

Vice President, Consumer Protection & Industry Performance