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White Paper on the Province's proposed Global Adjustment Smoothing Account

Below is a summary of IESO's preliminary views on the implementation of the Province's proposed Global Adjustment Smoothing Account.

Understanding that the finalization of the legal terms, the financing structure and other detailed terms will take several months and will involve collaboration between legal counsel, parties involved and other stakeholders, this letter is intended to provide the guideline and framework which could form the foundation of the plan.

Issues being considered in this document are:

Issue #1: Can the IESO recognize deferral or variance accounts related to the annual Global Adjustment Smoothing Account as a regulatory asset on its statement of financial position?

Issue #2: Can the IESO derecognize the deferral or variance accounts related to the Global Adjustment Smoothing Account upon sale to the OPG Trust?

1. Recognition of regulatory assets (deferral and variance accounts)

Background and Assumptions for issue #1

The facts, circumstances, and assumptions relevant to the specific transactions are as follows:

1. The IESO's legal status is a not-for-profit, non-taxable, corporation established pursuant to Part II of the *Electricity Act, 1998*. IESO is classified as an Other Governmental Organization and prepares its financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards (PSAB).
2. IESO is rate regulated by the OEB in accordance with the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board ("OEB") Act, 1998 but currently does not recognize the economic impacts of rate regulation in its general purpose financial statements.
3. The IESO is required to obtain approval from the OEB under s. 25(1) of the Electricity Act, 1998 for the approval of its own expenditures, revenue requirement and fees. The last rate approval was obtained on December 29, 2016[1].
4. The OEB issued a Decision and Order on March 28, 2013 that permits IESO to recover the MDMR costs (the Smart Metering Charge) (see Appendix A). *(i.e. Costs incurred in the past will be fully recovered through future rates)*
5. Furthermore, in accordance with the *Electricity Act, 1998* and the *OEB Act, 1998*, the IESO has approved variance accounts to record all amounts payable or receivable by it in connection with the amounts paid to generators, the Financial Corporation, distributors and to entities with whom the IESO has a procurement contract. (i.e. costs incurred in the past will be fully recovered through future rates)
6. The province is contemplating deferring the recovery of a portion of the annual Global Adjustment Smoothing Account (comprised primarily of the electricity costs paid to the generators) over a period of 25-30 years, so that costs incurred would be fully recovered through future rates.
7. The *Electricity Act, 1998* and the *OEB Act, 1998* would be amended through legislation to require the deferral of the recovery of the Global Adjustment Smoothing Account and the future recovery in rates charged to customers.

[1] http://www.rds.ontarioenergyboard.ca/webdrawer/webdrawer.dll/webdrawer/rec/556699/view/Dec_Order_IESO 20161229.PDF

8. The OEB would grant generic deferral or variance accounts to capture the difference between the amounts paid to generators and others, and the amounts collected in rates. Furthermore, the interest and ancillary costs related to the contemplated transaction would also be included in future rates charged to customers. In summary, the legislation would create a right to collect the incurred cost.
9. The IESO would change its accounting policies to permit the recognition of the economic impacts of rate regulation as from the 2016 financial year. IESO would adopt the guidance of ASC 980 *Regulated Operations* to better reflect the economic substance of its operations and enhance the transparency and accountability of its financial reporting.

Appropriate Accounting Principle for issue #1

ASC 980 Regulated Operations

- 980-10-15-2 *"The guidance in the Regulated Operations Topic applies to general-purpose external financial statements of an entity that has regulated operations that meet all of the following criteria:*

  (a) The entity's rates for regulated services or products provided to its customers are established by or are subject to approval by an independent, third-party regulator or by its own governing board empowered by statute or contract to establish rates that bind customers.

  (b) The regulated rates are designed to recover the specific entity's costs of providing the regulated services or products. This criterion is intended to be applied to the substance of the regulation, rather than its form. If an entity's regulated rates are based on the costs of a group of entities and the entity is so large in relation to the group of entities that its costs are, in essence, the group's costs, the regulation would meet this criterion for that entity.

  (c) In view of the demand for the regulated services or products and the level of competition, direct and indirect, it is reasonable to assume that rates set at levels that will recover the entity's costs can be charged to and collected from customers. This criterion requires consideration of anticipated changes in levels of demand or competition during the recovery period for any capitalized costs."

- 980-10-20 Glossary, Definition of incurred costs *"A cost arising from cash paid out or obligation to pay for an acquired asset or service, a loss from any cause that has been sustained and has been or must be paid for."*
- 980-10-05-8 "*Unless an accounting order indicates the way a cost will be handled for rate-making purposes, it causes no economic effects that would justify deviation from the GAAP applicable to business entities in general. The mere issuance of an accounting order not tied to rate treatment does not change an entity's economic resources or obligations. In other words, the economic effect of regulatory decisions—not the mere existence of regulation—is the pervasive factor that determines the application of GAAP. 980-340 – Other Assets and Deferred Costs."*
- 980-340-25-1 "*Rate actions of a regulator can provide reasonable assurance of the existence of an asset. An entity shall capitalize all or part of an incurred cost that would otherwise be charged to expense if both of the following criteria are met:*

  (a) It is probable (as defined in Topic 450) that future revenue in an amount at least equal to the capitalized cost will result from inclusion of that cost in allowable costs for rate-making purposes.

  (b) Based on available evidence, the future revenue will be provided to permit recovery of the previously incurred cost rather than to provide for expected levels of similar future costs. If the revenue will be provided through an automatic rate-adjustment clause, this criterion requires that the regulator's intent clearly be to permit recovery of the previously incurred cost.

  A cost that does not meet these asset recognition criteria at the date the cost is incurred shall be recognized as a regulatory asset when it does meet those criteria at a later date."

- 980-340-40-1: "*If at any time an entity's incurred cost no longer meets the criteria for the capitalization of an incurred cost (see paragraph 980-340-25-1), that cost shall be charged to earnings."*

- 980-350-50-1: "*In some cases, a regulator may permit an entity to include a cost that would be charged to expense by an unregulated entity as an allowable cost over a period of time by amortizing that cost for rate-making purposes, but the regulator does not include the unrecovered amount in the rate base. That procedure does not provide a return on investment during the recovery period. If recovery of such major costs is provided without a return on investment during the recovery period, the entity shall disclose the remaining amounts of such assets and the remaining recovery period applicable to them.*"
- 980-340-55-2: "*In some cases, a regulator may approve rates that are intended to recover an incurred cost over an extended period without a return on the unrecovered cost during the recovery period.*"
- 980-340-55-3: "*The regulator's action provides reasonable assurance of the existence of an asset (see paragraph 980-340-25-1). Accordingly, the regulated entity would capitalize the cost and amortize it over the period during which it will be allowed for rate-making purposes. That cost would not be recorded at discounted present value. An exception to this general rule is provided for costs of abandoned plants.*"

Issue #1: Can the IESO recognize deferral or variance accounts related to the annual Global Adjustment Smoothing Account as a regulatory asset on its statement of financial position?

US GAAP includes special accounting provisions that are applicable to entities with activities that are subject to rate regulation (see White Paper - Adoption of the Guidance in ASC 980 Regulated Operations). The result is that rate regulated entities are required to recognize regulatory assets and liabilities provided the following three criteria are met:

Criteria	Comment	Evaluation
The entity's rates for regulated services or products provided to its customers are established by or are subject to approval by an independent, third-party regulator or by its own governing board empowered by statute or contract to establish rates that bind customers.	IESO has unrecognized variance accounts related to the MDMR (smart meters), that have been approved by the OEB in accordance with the Electricity Act and the OEB Act (see Appendix A). It is important to note that Hydro One and OPG are both consolidated into the province's books, are both regulated by the OEB and their respective regulatory assets and liabilities are reported in the province's books.	Met
The regulated rates are designed to recover the specific entity's costs of providing the regulated services or products.	Currently, the rates approved by the OEB are designed to recover the IESO's costs of providing the regulated services and the pass-through related to the energy purchased from the generators. The contemplated transaction is based on the fact that the OEB would grant generic deferral or variance accounts to capture the difference between the amounts paid to generators and others, and the amounts collected in rates. Furthermore, the interest and ancillary costs related to the contemplated transaction would also be included in future rates charged to customers. In summary, the legislation would create a right to collect the incurred costs.	Met

In view of the demand for the regulated services or products and the level of competition, direct and indirect, it is reasonable to assume that rates set at levels that will recover the entity's costs can be charged to and collected from customers. This criterion requires consideration of anticipated changes in levels of demand or competition during the recovery period for any capitalized costs."	Since the deferral or variance accounts would be sold to the OPG Trust at least on a monthly basis and cash would be received on the same day, this criteria would be met. This criteria would need to be monitored on a yearly basis to ensure that IESO and the OPG Trust would be able to recover the future deferred amount taking into account the levels of demand or competition during the recovery period.	Met
Conclusion: The three criteria would be met.		

Conclusion: Based on the assumptions mentioned above, IESO should be able to recognize a regulatory asset for the deferral of the annual Global Adjustment Smoothing Account. As mentioned in the ASC 980 guidance above, it is important that an accounting order be issued by the OEB which indicates the way the incurred costs would be handled for rate-making purposes as the OEB's action provides reasonable assurance of the existence of a regulatory asset.

2. Derecognition of regulatory assets (deferral and variance accounts)

Background and Assumptions for issue #2

The facts, circumstances, and assumptions relevant to the specific transactions are as follows:

1. The annual Global Adjustment Smoothing Account that would be deferred in the deferral or variance accounts (the "Asset") would be significant.
2. The IESO does not currently have the financial capability to finance the Asset and is contemplating selling the Asset to a Trust to be set-up by OPG (the "OPG Trust").
3. The OPG Trust would be consolidated by OPG.
4. Proposed terms of the sale agreement between the IESO and the OPG Trust:
   - The sale contract would be structured as an absolute sale, which would assign future economic benefits or cash flows related to the Asset exclusively to the OPG Trust.
   - The arrangement would be structured whereby there is no recourse or obligations remaining of IESO related to the Asset.
   - The arrangement is not considered to be a financing transaction as IESO would have no obligations to the OPG Trust after the Asset is sold to the OPG Trust.
   - IESO would not retain any rights or benefits from the Asset.
   - IESO would not have any rights to interest or penalties on the Asset once it has been transferred to the OPG Trust.
   - The contract would be clear that IESO cannot pledge the Asset as collateral to obtain future cash flows or financing.
   - IESO would continue to collect related cash flows on the OPG Trust's behalf and remit those cash flows to the OPG Trust without material delay. In addition, IESO would not be entitled to reinvest such cash flows, except for investments in cash or cash equivalents during the short settlement period from the collection date to the date of required remittance to the OPG Trust, and interest earned on such cash and cash equivalents is passed to the OPG Trust. The contract would define IESO's role strictly as that of agent, under a pass-through arrangement.
   - Servicing, origination, and arrangement fees, would be collected by IESO in rates charged to ratepayers as part of its market dealings.
   - The Asset would be sold to the OPG Trust at least, on a monthly basis and cash would be received on the same day.

Appropriate Accounting Principles for issue #2

Public Sector Accounting Standard ("PSAS") 3210, *Assets*, defines an asset as "*…economic resources controlled by a government as a result of past transactions or events and from which future economic benefits are expected to be obtained.*" [par. 3]

.04 *"Assets have three essential characteristics:*

> *(a) they embody future economic benefits that involve a capacity, singly or in combination with other assets, to provide goods and services, to provide future cash inflows, or to reduce cash outflows;*
>
> *(b) the public sector entity can control the economic resource and access to the future economic benefits; and*
>
> *(c) the transaction or event giving rise to the public sector entity's control has already occurred."*

.22 *"Control of an economic resource and of access to the future economic benefits are essential characteristics of an asset, whereas possession or ownership is not."*

.24 *"A public sector entity may act as trustee when it administers trusts on behalf of the beneficiaries specified in the agreement or statute. As trustee, the public sector entity merely administers the assets, following the terms* *and conditions set out in the agreement. It does not control the asset because it does not have access to the future economic benefits. Those benefits flow to the beneficiaries."*

As noted in PS1000 Financial statement concepts:

.37 *"An item is not an asset of a government if it lacks one or more of the essential characteristics listed in the preceding paragraph. Thus, for example, an item does not qualify as an asset of a government if the item involves:*

(a) no future economic benefit;

(b) future economic benefit, but the government cannot obtain it; or

(c) future economic benefit that the government may obtain, but the events or circumstances that give the government control of the benefit have not yet occurred."

As noted in PS3450, derecognition of a financial liability:

.042 *"A government should remove a financial liability (or part of a financial liability) from its statement of financial position when, and only when, it is extinguished (i.e., when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged or cancelled, or expires)."*

.043 *"A financial liability (or part of a financial liability) is extinguished when the debtor either:*

(a) discharges the liability (or part of it) by paying the creditor, normally with cash, other financial assets, goods or services; or

(b) is legally released from primary responsibility for the liability (or part of it) either by process of law or by the creditor. (When the debtor has given a guarantee, this condition may still be met.)"

.046 *"Payment to a third party, including a trust (sometimes called "in-substance defeasance"), does not, by itself, relieve the debtor of its primary obligation to the creditor in the absence of legal release."*

.047 *"If a debtor pays a third party to assume an obligation and notifies its creditor that the third party has assumed its debt obligation, the debtor does not derecognize the debt obligation, unless the condition in paragraph PS 3450.043(b) is met. If the debtor pays a third party to assume an obligation and obtains a legal release from its creditor, the debtor has extinguished the debt. However, if the debtor agrees to make payments on the debt to the third party or direct to the original creditor, the debtor recognizes a new debt obligation to the third party."*

Issue #2: Can the IESO derecognize the deferral or variance accounts related to the annual Global Adjustment Smoothing Account upon sale to the OPG Trust?

PS3210 does not specifically address the derecognition of a regulatory asset as the concept of a regulatory asset does not exist under PSAS.

As mentioned above, regulatory assets do not meet the definition of intangible asset or financial asset. Specifically, regulatory assets do not meet the definition of financial asset because they are imposed on customers through the tariff (i.e., imposed by the OEB) and do not represent a right to receive payments from another party as a result of a contract.

More generally, PSAS.3210.37 suggests that an asset would no longer be recognized when it fails to meet the definition of an asset.

Based on PS1000.37(b), an item does not qualify as an asset of a government if the item involves future economic benefit, but the government cannot obtain it.

Based on the assumptions mentioned above, the legal title of the Asset would be transferred to the OPG Trust, as well as, ALL risks and rewards, including the following:

- the contract would define IESO's role strictly as that of agent, under a pass-through arrangement;
- all cash flows related to the Asset would be transferred without material delay to the OPG Trust;
- rights to interest or penalties on the Asset would be for the benefits of the OPG Trust;
- IESO cannot pledge the Asset; and
- no recourse or obligations remaining of IESO related to the Asset.

IESO should also evaluate whether the sale of the Asset should in fact be considered as a borrowing arrangement. In the absence of detailed guidance on this subject, we can analogize to the guidance in PS3450 *Financial Instruments* for the derecognition of a financial liability. Par. 43 states that *"A financial liability (or part of a financial liability) is extinguished when the debtor is legally released from primary responsibility for the liability (or part of it) either by process of law or by the creditor. (When the debtor has given a guarantee, this condition may still be met.)"* Based on the assumptions mentioned above, since the legal title of the Asset would be transferred to the OPG Trust, as well as, ALL risks and rewards, it can be concluded that the sale of the Asset is not a borrowing arrangement.

Conclusion: Based on the proposed terms of the sale agreement between the IESO and OPG Trust mentioned above, the deferral or variance accounts would be derecognized at the point where the IESO would derive no future economic benefit from it. This would occur where the IESO ultimately transfers the rights, risk and rewards related to those deferral or variance accounts to the OPG Trust. This would occur on the receipt of cash from the OPG Trust.

Appendix A:

Extract from the "DECISION and ORDER issued by the OEB on March 28, 2013" available on the IFRS website

Proceeding on the Ontario Energy Board's own motion to review the options for and ultimately determine the appropriate allocation and recovery of the Smart Metering Charge pursuant to section 19 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

THE BOARD ORDERS THAT:

Effective May 1, 2013, the Smart Metering Entity charge to be levied and collected by the Smart Metering Entity from all Distributors identified in the Board's annual Yearbook of Electricity Distributors shall be $0.788 per month for each Residential and General Service <50kW customers for each distributor. The Smart Metering Entity charge shall be in effect from May 1, 2013 to October 31, 2018. The number of Residential and General Service <50kW customers to which the Smart Metering Entity charge will be applied to shall be in accordance with the methodology set forth in the Settlement Agreement attached as Appendix A.

http://www.ontarioenergyboard.ca/oeb/_Documents/EB-2012-0100/dec_order_IESO-SME_20130328.pdf