

# **Manitoba Public Utilities Board**

## **Strategic Plan**

**2017-2020**

The Manitoba Public Utilities Board (the PUB) is an independent quasi-judicial administrative tribunal operating under the authority of the Manitoba Legislature. The PUB regulates utility sectors to protect the interests of Manitobans where competitive market forces do not exist. The stakeholders of the PUB are consumers of services of the utilities the PUB regulates as well as utilities and governments. While the current *Public Utilities Board Act* was passed in 1959, the PUB has regulated services under other legislation since 1913.

### **Purpose**

The PUB has a specific mandate based on its enabling legislation. It acts as a rate-setting tribunal for various public utilities. It establishes just and reasonable rates for the provision of electricity by Manitoba Hydro, for natural gas supplied by Centra Gas, for propane supplied by Stittco Utilities Ltd, for rate bases and premiums charged for compulsory driver and Basic vehicle insurance provided by Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation and for rates charged by water and wastewater utilities outside the City of Winnipeg. In each rate application the PUB balances the interest of the rate payers and the financial health of the utility.

The PUB regulates private natural gas brokers and monitors the construction and operation of gas pipelines that are subject to provincial jurisdiction.

As a quasi-judicial administrative tribunal, the PUB hears appeals of the Highway Traffic Board and the Water Services Board decisions and from individuals who have been disconnected from water and wastewater utilities or from natural gas or propane service, other than in the winter.

The PUB also undertakes other reviews as may be assigned to it from time to time by Orders-in-Council of the Government.

## **Vision, mission and values**

**Vision:** The Manitoba Public Utilities Board is a trusted, respected regulator that contributes to fair rate determinations and long-term, reliable utility services for Manitobans.

**Mission:** The Public Utilities Board makes decisions based on efficient, transparent regulatory processes and communicates its decisions in a timely manner.

**Values:** The Public Utilities Board is independent, impartial and objective, transparent, accessible to all Manitobans, supports a respectful work environment and focuses on the public interest.

## **Priorities**

Strategic priorities will guide the work of the Public Utilities Board from 2017 to 2020. Operational priorities will be developed each year to implement the strategic priorities.

The strategic priorities are:

1. Excellence in the provision of regulatory decisions;
2. Effective communications and relationships;
3. Efficient internal operations; and
4. PUB 2020 and beyond.

## **Strategic priorities for 2017-2020**

1. Excellence in the provision of regulatory decisions.

The Public Utilities Board employs a continuous improvement philosophy and an innovation mindset to enhance its decision-making and its responsiveness.

The PUB will:

- 1.1. Develop a more streamlined and effective pre-hearing and hearing process.
- 1.2. Undertake more comprehensive oversight, including the use of sanctions and/or penalties to ensure that orders are carried out.
- 1.3. Develop or adopt ways to handle commercially sensitive information that considers the interests of all affected parties.
- 1.4. Implement processes to receive information from utilities on a timely basis.
- 1.5. Implement processes to improve the efficiency of hearings, including guidelines for providing required information and setting out a hierarchy of the importance of information.
- 1.6. Develop a risk-based approach to reviewing and processing applications, including evaluating opportunities to eliminate the need for applicants to file routine, low-risk applications.

## 2. Effective communications and relationships with stakeholders.

The Public Utilities Board maximizes the public's trust as a regulator by demonstrating that it is independent, impartial, competent, transparent and responsive. It ensures that its communications are clear and it builds and maintains effective relationships.

The PUB will:

- 2.1. Retain the necessary expertise, enhance public notification and education, and seek new methods to facilitate participation in PUB processes.
- 2.2. Continue to develop communications among related organizations that have overlapping mandates to make processes more efficient.
- 2.3. Advise the responsible Minister and senior provincial staff(s) on PUB issues and of results following major hearings.
- 2.4. Hold ongoing discussions with utilities, while maintaining independence, to build on mutual understanding of issues.
- 2.5. Develop a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of, and the relationships between, PUB and key stakeholders and related organizations to ensure an integrated approach to our respective mandates.

## 3. Efficient internal operations.

The Public Utilities Board continues to look for operational efficiencies to make the best possible use of resources in fulfilling its mandate, and delivering on its vision and mission.

The PUB will:

- 3.1 Review and update the cross-training and succession plan for senior staff and the succession plan for professional advisers.
- 3.2 Continue to take advantage of technology to introduce more efficiency in information sharing and communications.
- 3.3 Continue to update the Board governance model to ensure a strategic focus.
- 3.4 Analyze PUB resources to ensure they are aligned with fulfilling the PUB's mandate.

## 4. PUB 2020 and beyond.

To deliver on its vision the Public Utilities Board takes a long-term view to ensure capacity and fairness for future generations.

The goals are:

- 4.1 A revised and modernized *Public Utilities Board Act*.
- 4.2 Adequate resources for the PUB to carry out its mandate.

## **Operational priorities for 2017-18**

While this plan is intended to guide PUB work until 2020, there is also a need to identify short-term priorities.

### External priorities:

- Address rate applications from major utilities (Manitoba Hydro, Centra Gas, Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation).
- Improve water and wastewater applications through the development and implementation of a revised and streamlined process.
- Work with stakeholders to develop and implement policies and processes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the pre-hearing and hearing processes.
- Follow up on directives from prior PUB Orders and address outstanding compliance issues.
- Review the Bill Affordability initiative and take action as required.
- Develop and implement a policy to deal with the granting of status and the funding of interveners in PUB processes.
- Develop and implement a process for dealing with Commercially Sensitive Information.
- Develop technology solutions to encourage distance participation of witnesses and the public in PUB processes.
- Meet with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and with other stakeholders as required, to build better mutual understanding with members.
- Review the Efficiency Manitoba Act to understand its implications for the PUB, and prepare to implement its requirements.

### Internal priorities:

- Develop a communications plan to better inform the public about the PUB and the issues before it.
- Develop an inventory of PUB issues and indicate the status of each area of PUB responsibility.
- Revise the succession plan for senior PUB staff and PUB advisers.