

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 most of the water and wastewater utilities in Manitoba, excluding 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 conducts public hearings and reports to the government on Payday Loans & Government Cheque Cashing, hears appeals of Water Services Board decisions and from individuals who have been disconnected from water and wastewater utilities or from natural gas or propane service.

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 to stakeholders.

The PUB will:

- 1.1. Continue to refine the pre-hearing and hearing processes.
- 1.2. Continue 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 improve the efficiency of hearings, including guidelines for providing required information and setting out a hierarchy of the importance of information.
- 1.5. Increase the use of risk-based approaches 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 government organizations that have related mandates, such as the Municipal Board and the Office of the Fire Marshall, to make processes more efficient and effective.
- 2.3. Proactively engage the responsible Minister or Ministers with related responsibilities, through regular meetings to discuss PUB issues.
- 2.4. Advise the responsible Minister and/or senior provincial officials of results following major hearings and on other Orders as necessary.
- 2.5. Hold ongoing discussions with utilities, while maintaining independence, to build on mutual understanding of issues.
- 2.6. 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 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 Manage 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.

4.3 A strategic plan for PUB 2025.

Operational priorities for 2019-2020

External priorities:

1. Address rate applications from major utilities (Manitoba Hydro, Centra Gas, Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation).
2. Develop strategies and practical processes to improve the water and wastewater rate review system.
3. Increase the use of the simplified filing process for water and wastewater applications through awareness building and support to eligible Utilities.
4. Continue to work with stakeholders to develop and implement policies and processes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the pre-hearing and hearing processes.
5. Continue to follow up on directives from prior PUB Orders and to address outstanding compliance issues.
6. Upon direction of the responsible Minister, prepare to conduct public hearings on Payday Loans & Government Cheque Cashing and to report the results to the Government.
7. Review the revised policy to deal with the granting of status and the funding of interveners in PUB processes and implement changes as required.
8. Develop and implement a process for dealing with Commercially Sensitive Information.
9. Promote technology solutions to encourage distance participation of witnesses and the public in PUB processes.
10. Meet with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and with other stakeholders as required, to build better mutual understanding with members.
11. Review the Regulations to the Efficiency Manitoba Act to understand their implications for the PUB, and prepare to implement their requirements.

Internal priorities:

1. Revise the succession plan for PUB staff.
2. Develop an inventory of issues and report on the status of each area of PUB responsibility to the Board on a regular basis.
3. Identify and monitor the status of PUB directives to Utilities, and report to the Board on a regular basis.
4. Monitor the succession plan for and performance of PUB advisers.