

Order No. 127/24

**CENTRA GAS MANITOBA INC.
SECOND PROCEDURAL ORDER
2024/25 GENERAL RATE APPLICATION**

October 30, 2024

**BEFORE: Marilyn Kapitany, B.Sc.(Hon), M.Sc., Panel Chair
Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA, Member
Jim Hrichishen, B.A. (Hon.), M.A, Member
Susan Nemec, FCPA, FCA, Member
Kurt Simonsen, BSc., M.N.R.M., Member**

Table of Contents

1.0	Executive Summary.....	3
2.0	Procedural History.....	4
3.0	Intervener Status and Hearing Scope.....	6
3.1	Consumers' Association of Canada (Manitoba) Inc.....	6
3.2	Manitoba Industrial Gas Users Group	10
3.3	Koch Fertilizer Canada	15
3.4	Environmental Defence & Manitoba Eco-Network.....	15
4.0	Interim Cost Awards	19
5.0	Access to Commercially Sensitive Information by CAC's Legal Counsel and Consultants	20
5.1	Background	20
5.2	CAC's Position.....	20
5.3	Centra's Position	20
5.4	Board Findings	21
6.0	IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:.....	23
	APPENDIX — Hearing Timetable	24

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the second procedural order in Centra Gas Manitoba Inc.'s ("Centra") 2024/25 General Rate Application. In this Order, the Board:

- approves intervener status for the following applicants:
 - Consumers' Association of Canada (Manitoba) Inc.,
 - Industrial Gas Users, and
 - Koch Canada Fertilizer ULC;
- sets conditions and restrictions on the approved interventions;
- denies intervener status for Environmental Defence & the Manitoba Eco-Network, but encourages them to appear before the Board as a presenter in this hearing, and to apply for intervener status in future hearings before the Board in which long-term energy transition planning is in issue;
- declines a request by the Consumers' Association to direct Centra to make commercially sensitive information available without the need for that intervener's legal counsel and consultants to sign a personal risk assessment; and
- establishes a hearing timetable for the orderly exchange of evidence and the completion of pre-hearing steps.

2.0 PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On October 7, 2024, Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. (“Centra”) filed its 2024/25 General Rate Application with the Public Utilities Board (“Board”). Among other things, the application seeks approval of a 4.5% general revenue increase effective November 1, 2024. In Order 125/24, the Board approved this relief on an interim basis. Consistent with previous applications, Centra’s application also contains a request for the Board to receive portions of the application in confidence.

This is the second procedural order in Centra’s general rate application. In the Board’s first procedural order (Order 6/24), the Board:

- confirmed that it had retained Elenchus Research Associates Inc. as an independent expert consultant to review Centra’s cost of service model for compliance with Order 109/22;
- directed Centra to
 - make an Excel version of its cost of service model available to those interveners at the general rate application who are entitled to receive commercially sensitive information, and
 - make a redacted proxy model available to other interveners;
- confirmed that it had retained Deloitte LLP as an independent expert consultant to review Centra’s Integrated Cost Allocation Methodology; and
- confirmed that the Board agreed to receive certain financial information in confidence.

On October 9, 2024, the Board sent a letter to past interveners of record in Centra’s rate proceedings advising that applications for intervener status would be due on October 16, 2024, and that the Board would hold a pre-hearing conference on October 24, 2024.

Centra published a public notice of its application on October 12, 2024.

Board counsel consulted with proposed interveners on a draft hearing timetable throughout October 2024.

The Board received four applications for intervener status, as described in section 3.0 below. On October 23, 2024, Manitoba Hydro provided the Board with written responding submissions to the applications for intervener status.

On October 24, 2024, the Board also received a written submission from legal counsel for the Consumers' Association of Canada (Manitoba) Inc. on the issue of access to commercially sensitive information and a submission from legal counsel for the Manitoba Industrial Gas Users Group on the admissibility of evidence prepared by its proposed expert Dale Friesen.

The Board held a pre-hearing conference in this matter on October 24, 2024. This order results from the pre-hearing conference.

3.0 INTERVENER STATUS AND HEARING SCOPE

3.1 Consumers' Association of Canada (Manitoba) Inc.

3.1.1 Application for Intervener Status

The Consumers' Association of Canada (Manitoba) Inc. ("CAC") is a volunteer, non-profit, independent organization working to inform and empower consumers, and to represent the consumer interest in Manitoba. Formed in 1947, the organization is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, elected annually at a general meeting of the organization's membership. CAC Manitoba is a branch of the Consumers' Association of Canada but is financially separate and separately incorporated.

CAC has a long history of intervening in energy matters before the Board, including in hearings involving Centra. It submits that natural gas costs, rates, billing, and Centra's operations have a significant impact on many residential consumers in Manitoba. The organization points out that consumers pay not only their own energy bills, but also contribute to the energy bills of producers, processors and retailers of the products they purchase.

CAC expects to primarily focus its intervention on the following issues in Centra's application:

- Centra's request for an overall 4.5% interim general revenue increase on November 1, 2024;
- the reasons for the proposed general revenue increase;
- Centra's mid- to long-term financial outlook;
- the prudence of Centra's debt management strategy;
- the review of Centra's integrated cost allocation methodology;
- the prudence and reasonability of the increase in Centra's operating and administrative expense since the 2019/20 General Rate Application;

- Centra's capital expenditure plan and plant additions to rate base since the 2019/20 General Rate Application;
- a review of the implementation of Centra's cost of service methodology;
- the reasonableness of the results of Centra's 2024/25 cost of service study;
- Centra's proposed rate design, bill impacts, and whether a zone of reasonableness is appropriate.

CAC proposes to retain four expert consultants, as set out below.

Darren Rainkie

Mr. Rainkie is a financial consultant on rate regulation and regulatory policy and strategy who expects to provide testimony on Centra's interim rate increase, changes in the utility's financial assumptions and metrics, reasons for the proposed rate increase, rate path scenarios, finance expense and debt management, and operating & administrative expenses.

Kelly Derksen

Ms. Derksen is a financial consultant with particular expertise in cost of service and rate design matters who expects to provide evidence on Centra's integrated cost allocation methodology, the implementation of Centra's cost of service methodology, the results of Centra's 2024/25 cost of service study and minimum system study, rate design, a potential zone of reasonableness and rate structure, and the proposed rates and bill impact of those rates.

Midgard Consulting Inc.

Midgard is an engineering firm that provides utility consulting services. CAC proposes to retain Midgard as an asset management expert to review Centra's asset management policy and strategic asset management plan and its natural gas capital expenditure plan & capital plant additions.

Gas Supply Expert

Lastly, CAC proposes to retain an expert to review Centra's gas supply arrangements. As of the date of the pre-hearing conference, CAC was still evaluating who that expert would be. CAC notes that there have been changes to Centra's gas supply arrangements and points to an increase in capacity on the Nova Gas Transmission Line.

3.1.2 Centra's Position

Centra does not object to CAC being admitted as an intervener. However, the utility submits that Manitoba Hydro's overall integrated asset management approach was extensively reviewed and tested by the Board during Manitoba Hydro's 2023/24 & 2024/25 General Rate Application. As such, it considers CAC's proposed review by an asset management expert to be duplicative and objects to the retainer of an expert on that issue. Centra similarly objects to the retainer of a gas supply expert, noting that the utility's transportation and storage portfolio has remained substantially unchanged since the 2019/20 General Rate Application.

3.1.3 Board Findings

The Board approves CAC as an intervener for the hearing of Centra's 2024/25 General Rate Application. CAC has consistently represented the interests of residential consumers in natural gas hearings, and the Board finds that it is important for those interests to be represented.

With respect to the consultants proposed by Centra, the Board's ruling is set out below.

Darren Rainkie

The Board approves the retainer of Mr. Rainkie as an expert witness as proposed by CAC, subject to the following restrictions:

- the following issues are to be left to the Industrial Gas Users' expert Patrick Bowman, and Mr. Rainkie is to avoid duplication of those issues:
 - Centra's strategy, operations and risk management, and

- Centra's depreciation study and depreciation rates;
- on the issue of operating & administrative expenditures, Mr. Rainkie is to take reasonable steps to
 - prevent duplication of his evidence provided in Manitoba Hydro's recent general rate application on issues involving the utility's integrated operations, and
 - avoid a focus on issues beyond Centra's reasonable control, such as collective agreements and the resulting salary levels; and
- on the issue of Centra's integrated cost allocation methodology, Ms. Derksen is to take the lead and Mr. Rainkie is to avoid duplication of those issues.

Kelly Derksen

The Board approves the retainer of Ms. Derksen on matters of rate design, Centra's integrated cost allocation methodology, proposed cost of service changes since Order 109/22, and Centra's minimum system study.

The following issues are not approved as part of Ms. Derksen's retainer:

- the appropriateness of Centra's cost of service methodology approved in Order 109/22;
- demand-side management arrangements; and
- gas supply arrangements.

Midgard Consulting Inc.

The Board approves the retainer of Midgard on the issue of capital additions and Centra's capital expenditure plan, but not on the issue of asset management.

The Board agrees with Centra's submission that Manitoba Hydro's asset management framework was extensively canvassed at the recent Manitoba Hydro general rate application. Since Centra is functionally integrated with Manitoba Hydro, the Board does not see a need for intervener expert evidence on the same issue in this proceeding.

In contrast, the Board notes that Centra's capital additions have not been reviewed for five years, and that the reasonableness and prudence of those additions, as well as Centra's planned additions, should be explored in the hearing. The Board sees merit in Midgard providing evidence on that issue and approves the firm's retainer for that purpose.

Gas Supply Expert

The Board denies CAC's request to retain a gas supply expert for the hearing. The Board accepts Centra's argument that the utility's gas supply arrangements remain substantially unchanged and does not see transportation and gas supply as an issue justifying an intervener expert. The Board notes that the expansion of capacity on the Nova Gas Transmission Line was anticipated in the 2019/20 General Rate Application.

3.2 Manitoba Industrial Gas Users Group

3.2.1 Application for Intervener Status

The IGU is an informal association of large industrial gas users in the High Volume Firm, Main Line Firm, and Special Contract rate classes with shared interests in natural gas rates for service provided by Centra. This includes Sales Service, Western Transportation Service, and Transportation Service. As an informal association, IGU does not utilize a governing body or pass resolutions. IGU members participating in the proposed intervention include Roquette, Amsted, HyLife, Maple Leaf, Cenovus (Husky), Simplot, Gerdau, and Koch Fertilizer.

IGU has participated in several hearings before the Board and notes that it represents a majority share of industrial gas consumption in Manitoba, and that Centra's application proposes material changes in rates that will affect industrial consumers.

IGU proposes to retain three expert consultants, as set out below.

Patrick Bowman

Patrick Bowman is a utility regulation and rate consultant who has extensively testified before the Board and before other utility regulators. His proposed areas of testimony

involve strategy, operations, risk, cost of service, cost allocations, general rate matters, depreciation, high volume (transmission) extension planning, unaccounted for gas, and franchise expansions.

Dale Friesen

Dale Friesen is an engineering consultant with InterGroup. His proposed areas of testimony involve strategy, operations, risk, cost allocations, rate design, cost coverage, bill impacts, consumption behaviour, rate classifications, terms and conditions of service.

With respect to the issue of Mr. Friesen's admissibility as an expert witness discussed in section 3.2.2, IGU submits that the Board should not follow its decision in Order 130/22, in which it found that Mr. Friesen should not testify as an independent expert because he served as a representative of the Manitoba Industrial Power Users Group. IGU agrees that the case of *White Burgess Langille Inman v. Abbott and Haliburton*, 2015 SCC 23 ("*White Burgess*"), which the Board cited in Order 130/22, is a leading authority on the issue. However, IGU submits that the Board needs to apply a two-part test as set out in *White Burgess*. In the first part of the test, the Board must determine whether the proposed witness is unable or unwilling to comply with the duty to provide fair, objective, and non-partisan evidence. The concept of apparent bias is not relevant to that question. IGU argues that a signed acknowledgment of expert's duty is generally sufficient to meet the threshold test, and that an exclusion at the threshold stage of the *White Burgess* test should only occur in very clear cases. In the second part of the test, the Board must weigh the potential risks against the benefit of admitting the evidence and determine how much weight to give to the evidence.

IGU emphasizes that Mr. Friesen has signed an acknowledgment of expert's duty as required by the Board. IGU also emphasizes that Mr. Friesen is retained on behalf of IGU for the purpose of this hearing and is not a general representative of IGU for other matters. The group disagrees with Centra's characterization of Mr. Friesen as an "executive director" of IGU and submits that the mere existence of a relationship or connection does not mean that the expert has a closed mind and should be excluded.

Chris Ferris

Chris Ferris is an economist and a consultant with InterGroup. His proposed areas of testimony are economic analysis, financial outlooks, forecasts, operating and maintenance expenditures, and capital expenditures.

3.2.2 Centra's Position

Centra does not object to IGU being granted intervener status but opposes the retainers of Dale Friesen and Chris Ferris of InterGroup.

With respect to Mr. Friesen, Centra submits that he is the representative for IGU's organization and acts for the group on on-going utility matters outside Centra's application. According to Centra, his role more closely resembles that of an executive director or coordinator on behalf of the IGU companies than an independent expert. Centra points to Order 130/22 of the Board, in which the Board found that Mr. Friesen's similar involvement on behalf of the Manitoba Industrial Power Users Group meant that he should not file independent expert evidence in Manitoba Hydro's recent general rate application.

Centra also argues that Mr. Friesen's proposed evidence is duplicative of the areas identified for Mr. Bowman, as well as Mr. Rainkie and Ms. Derksen. Those areas include strategy, operations, risk, cost allocations, and general rate matters. In addition, Centra submits that other proposed areas of his testimony are too broad and general.

With respect to Mr. Ferris, Centra argues that he lacks the necessary experience on the matters on which he intends to file evidence in the context of a natural gas distribution company, and that his proposed sphere of evidence overlaps significantly with the proposed evidence of Mr. Rainkie.

Centra also submits that, before issuing a cost award to IGU, the Board must consider clause 43(c) of its *Rules of Practice and Procedure*, which authorizes cost awards only if an intervener has insufficient financial resources to present the case adequately without an award of costs. Centra argues that IGU is an informal association of several large,

industrial gas users who all individually have the ability to pay. While Centra acknowledges the Board's Intervener Costs Policy for General Rate Applications as posted on the Board's website, which does not list insufficient financial resources as a criterion for a cost award, the utility submits that the Board cannot ignore a provision of its rules in favour of a policy.

3.2.3 Board Findings

The Board approves IGU as an intervener for the hearing of Centra's 2024/25 General Rate Application. IGU has consistently represented the interests of industrial ratepayers in natural gas hearings, and the Board finds that it is important for those interests to be represented.

With respect to the consultants proposed by IGU, the Board's ruling is set out below.

Patrick Bowman

The Board approves the retainer of Mr. Bowman as an expert witness as proposed by IGU. This includes Mr. Bowman's proposed testimony on issues of Centra's operations, strategy and risk, as well as depreciation matters.

Dale Friesen

The Board similarly approves the retainer of Mr. Friesen. However, Mr. Friesen is directed to avoid duplication with Mr. Bowman's evidence on issues of Centra's operations, strategy and risk. The Board notes that Order 109/22 left issues of rate design and bill impacts to be decided at the next general rate application and considers those issues, including the terms and conditions of service applicable to industrial customers, to be relevant issues in the hearing.

With respect to the issue of admissibility, the Board accepts IGU's clarification that Mr. Friesen is not an executive director or representative of IGU and that he has signed an acknowledgment of expert's duty. The Board is persuaded that this means his testimony should not be excluded under the first part of the *White Burgess* test and notes that any

issues relating to the weight the Board is to give to his evidence can be addressed in closing submissions.

Chris Ferris

The Board denies the retainer of Chris Ferris. The Board finds that the proposed evidence of Mr. Ferris would significantly overlap with the approved scope of Mr. Rainkie on financial issues and operating & maintenance expenditures, as well as the approved scope of Midgard on capital expenditure issues. While the Board acknowledges that there may be capital expenditure issues uniquely relevant to industrial customers, the Board observes that the scope of Mr. Bowman's testimony already includes issues of operations and risk.

Admissibility for a Cost Award

With respect to Centra's argument that the Board is bound by the criterion set out in clause 43(c) of the Board's *Rules of Practice and Procedure*, the Board notes it adjudicates applications for an award of costs on their specific facts. Under section 56 of *The Public Utilities Board Act*, costs are in the discretion of the Board and the Board may order by whom, and to whom, costs are to be paid. It is the practice of the Board to issue intervener-specific cost award orders following the conclusion of a hearing. Subsection 3(2) of the Board's *Rules of Practice and Procedure* further allows the Board to dispense with, vary or supplement any provision of the Rules. By way of guidance to the parties, the Board confirms that its Intervener Costs Policy for General Rate Applications as posted on the Board's website, which does not include insufficient financial resources as a precondition for an award of costs, remains the Board's current policy.

3.3 Koch Fertilizer Canada

3.3.1 Application for Intervener Status

Koch is a large industrial customer of Centra who represents the Special Contract class. Koch intends to address changes to Centra's costs and cost allocations affecting the Special Contract class, including unaccounted for gas, the franchise expansion adjustments, and depreciation rates affecting transmission assets.

Koch intends to utilize Patrick Bowman as a consultant and have its matters subsumed in Mr. Bowman's evidence. The company does not intend to seek costs.

3.3.2 Centra's Position

Centra does not object to Koch's intervention.

3.3.3 Board Findings

The Board approves Koch's intervention as proposed. The Board notes that Order 109/22 approved significant changes affecting the Special Contract class and finds it appropriate for an entity to specifically represent the interests of that class in this hearing.

3.4 Environmental Defence & Manitoba Eco-Network

3.4.1 Application for Intervener Status

Environmental Defence and the Manitoba Eco-Network intend to intervene as an environmental coalition to address issues relating to the energy transition, in particular how to protect the interests of gas customers in light of expected declines in gas demand as a result of decarbonization.

Environmental Defence is a Canadian environmental advocacy organization that works with government, industry, and individuals to defend clean water, a safe climate, and healthy communities. It has acted as an advocacy organization for over 35 years. The coalition notes that Environmental Defence was a leading intervener in a recent Ontario Energy Board proceeding that extensively explored the impacts of the energy transition on the gas sector in Ontario.

The Manitoba Eco-Network was founded in 1984 as a grassroots organization of environmentalists, incorporated in 1988, and registered as a charitable organization in 1992. Its mission is to promote positive environmental action, provide good environmental governance, support, and capacity, advocate for environmental justice, and act as a bridge between environmental organizations, the public, and all levels of government.

The environmental coalition intends to focus its intervention on issues such as the proposed level of capital spending and rate base additions, ratepayer funding for new gas connections in the context of the energy transition, non-pipeline alternatives to capacity expansions, measures taken to minimize pipeline replacement costs, the potential for accelerated depreciation rates, the incentive structures facing Centra, the reduction of risk, and the avoidance of cross-subsidization by electric ratepayers.

The environmental coalition proposes to retain two expert consultants, as set out below. Following the pre-hearing conference, this proposed intervener's legal counsel wrote to the Board on October 28, 2024 to further clarify the scope of the proposed consultants.

Chris Neme

Mr. Neme is an energy consultant who specializes in issues of energy efficiency, demand response, renewable energy, and strategic electrification measures. Mr. Neme would address the likelihood of a decline in Centra's revenues as part of the energy transition and provide high-level recommendations regarding immediate steps required to mitigate risk. Mr. Neme would also include a jurisdictional review regarding studies and proceedings that explore the impact of the energy transition on the gas sector.

Wesley Stephens

Mr. Stephens is an economist and financial analyst. He would model the impact of energy transition changes on Centra's rates and adduce evidence on whether Centra can wait to take action in response to such changes. Mr. Stephens has explored this issue in multiple jurisdictions, particularly before state regulators in the United States. Environmental Defence & the Manitoba Eco-Network submit that their witnesses would complement those of IGU and result in minimal duplication. They also submit that while either Mr.

Neme or Mr. Stephens may make recommendations regarding accelerated depreciation, this would not result in a material cost increase for the intervention, as they are not proposing to prepare a depreciation study.

3.4.2 Centra's Position

While Centra acknowledges that the issues raised by the environmental coalition are important, it submits that it is premature for the Board to explore these issues. Accordingly, Centra opposes the coalition's proposed intervention in this proceeding.

Centra reiterates that the utility and its parent company Manitoba Hydro are considering the financial and regulatory integration of the two entities and that this will enable more informed management of the energy transition. Centra also points out that Manitoba Hydro is currently working on its second integrated resource plan, and that this plan will further detail the corporation's approach to the energy transition. Centra submits that this information was not included in Centra's one-year general rate application, and that the issues should either be addressed by way of a collaborative process outside a regulatory hearing, or in a future regulatory process.

3.4.3 Board Findings

The Board denies Environmental Defence & the Manitoba Eco-Network's application for intervener status.

While the Board agrees with the coalition's submission that energy transition issues will have a major effect on natural gas utilities, and that utilities must plan for the transition, the Board also agrees with Centra that it is premature to address those issues in Centra's current one-year general rate application. The Board is mindful of the need for regulatory efficiency in the review of Centra's application and finds that it would be counterproductive to use Centra's one-year general rate application as a long-term planning exercise for the energy transition.

Despite the Board's denial of the coalition's application for intervener status in the current hearing, the Board expects the coalition to be able to offer a valuable perspective in a

setting more suitable to explore the issues. The Board encourages the coalition to apply for intervener status in future hearings before the Board that focus on energy transition issues.

The Board also reminds the coalition of the ability to appear before the Board as a presenter and encourages the coalition, or each of its member organizations, to make a presentation in the current hearing.

4.0 INTERIM COST AWARDS

In CAC's submission at the pre-hearing conference, it raised the need for interim cost awards so consultants would not be required to carry, and pay taxes on, work in progress for a period of close to one year until the conclusion of the hearing.

The Board draws the attention of the interveners approved in this order to the Board's Intervener Costs Policy for General Rate Applications as posted on the Board's website. Section 4.0 of the policy sets out a mechanism for interveners to seek an advance of funds. The Board adjudicates such requests on their specific facts and, if approved, may direct a holdback to apply.

For the purposes of Centra's 2024/25 General Rate Application, the Board intends to apply the Intervener Costs Policy in its current form.

5.0 ACCESS TO COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE INFORMATION BY CAC'S LEGAL COUNSEL AND CONSULTANTS

5.1 Background

On October 24, 2024, CAC's legal counsel wrote to the Board to object to a requirement imposed by Centra before CAC's legal counsel and consultants could receive access to commercially sensitive information. The requirement relates to a document Centra calls a "personal risk assessment" or "PRA". The PRA requires the applicant to provide two pieces of valid identification and agree to a criminal background check. It also authorizes Manitoba Hydro's security department to perform a background investigation and requires the applicant to waive any right of action against Manitoba Hydro for the harmful use of the information.

Centra and CAC have not been able to resolve the issue and have requested a ruling from the Board.

5.2 CAC's Position

CAC's legal counsel objects to the new requirements and notes that both he and CAC's proposed consultants are regulated professionals subject to oversight by their respective regulatory bodies. He also points out that interveners in other jurisdictions are not required to submit to such a background check, and that most other utility regulators simply require an undertaking of confidentiality. CAC also notes that neither members of the Board nor the Board's advisors are required to sign a PRA.

5.3 Centra's Position

Centra spoke to the requirement for a PRA at the pre-hearing conference. Its legal counsel advised that it is the utility's corporate policy to require a PRA for everybody receiving access to confidential information on Manitoba Hydro's SharePoint system. Centra points out that confidential information is no longer provided on blue paper, but that parties are receiving electronic access to Manitoba Hydro's system instead. It points

to increased cybersecurity concerns as raised by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC).

Centra also submits that it reached out to CAC's legal counsel in June 2024 to advise of the requirement for a PRA and followed up on October 9, 2024. Centra emphasizes that it only received an objection on October 16 and that CAC did not raise the issue in writing until its October 24, 2024 letter.

5.4 Board Findings

For the purpose of Centra's 2024/25 General Rate Application, the Board upholds Centra's requirement for a PRA and is not prepared to issue an order overriding or dispensing with that requirement. However, for certainty, the Board's approval of CAC's intervention as set out in section 3.1 of this order is not contingent on whether or not CAC chooses to obtain access to commercially sensitive information.

Criminal record and background checks have become common in many industries. The Board accepts Centra's submission that the utility applies the policy to all external parties receiving electronic access to Manitoba Hydro's and Centra's network. While the Board recognizes that legal counsel and accountants are regulated professionals subject to oversight from their respective regulatory bodies, the Board finds that it would be inappropriate to order an exemption from Centra's corporate requirement on an *ad hoc* basis for a specific party or a specific profession.

While CAC's correspondence alludes to the fact that members of the Board have not been required to sign a PRA, the Board notes that it would likely be inappropriate for a regulated utility to impose conditions on access to information by its regulator and conduct background checks on appointed tribunal members. In the Board's view, the same rationale does not apply to interveners appearing before the Board, as their appearance is discretionary.

The Board intends to explore the issue of access to commercially sensitive information as part of the modernization of the Board's *Rules of Practice and Procedure* and intends to consult with regulated entities and interveners of record on appropriate safeguards.

As a result of this ruling, CAC's legal counsel and its proposed experts will have a choice to sign a PRA and receive access to commercially sensitive information or to base CAC's intervention on only the public aspects of Centra's application.

6.0 IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. Intervener status for Centra's 2024/25 General Rate Application **BE AND HEREBY IS APPROVED** for the following entities, subject to the conditions and restrictions imposed on each intervener as set out in section 3.0 of this order:
 - a) Consumers' Association of Canada (Manitoba) Inc.;
 - b) Industrial Gas Users; and
 - c) Koch Canada Fertilizer.
2. Intervener status for Environmental Defence & the Manitoba Eco-Network **BE AND HEREBY IS DENIED**.
3. Approved interveners must provide the Board with a budget for their intervention by November 15, 2024.
4. The hearing timetable in the attached Appendix is established for the orderly exchange of evidence and the completion of pre-hearing steps in Centra's 2024/25 General Rate Application.


Board decisions may be appealed in accordance with the provisions of Section 58 of *The Public Utilities Board Act*, or reviewed in accordance with Section 36 of the Board's Rules of Practice and Procedure. The Board's Rules may be viewed on the Board's website at www.pubmanitoba.ca.

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD

"Marilyn Kapitany, B.Sc.(Hon), M.Sc."
Panel Chair

"Rachel McMillin, B.Sc., MPA"
Associate Secretary

Certified a true copy of Order No. 127/24
issued by The Public Utilities Board


Associate Secretary

APPENDIX — HEARING TIMETABLE

Procedural Step	Date
Release of independent expert consultant (IEC) Reports	October 31, 2024
Motions (if any) to provide commercially sensitive information (CSI)	November 15, 2024
Intervener budgets	November 15, 2024
Response to intervener budgets (Centra)	November 29, 2024
Round 1 information requests from the Public Utilities Board to Centra	December 8, 2024
Round 1 information requests from interveners to Centra	December 16, 2024
Information requests to independent expert consultants (all parties)	December 20, 2024
Round 1 information request responses from Centra	January 27, 2025
Information request responses from independent expert consultants	January 27, 2025
Round 2 information requests to Centra (all parties)* *Questions to be limited to follow-up on Round 1 information requests	February 12, 2025
Round 2 information request responses from Centra	March 7, 2025
Intervener evidence	March 24, 2025
Information requests to interveners (all parties)	April 7, 2025
Information request responses from interveners	April 25, 2025
Gas cost update (Centra)	May 2, 2025
Updated interest rate forecast (Centra)	May 2, 2025
Rebuttal Evidence (Centra)	May 2, 2025
Oral Hearing* *Hearing dates and schedule to be confirmed	May 12 – June 24, 2025