



October 24, 2017

Sent via email

**Letter L-27-17**

FortisBC Customer

**Re: FortisBC Inc. – Anonymous Customer Complaint – Service Reliability in the West Kootenay region, specifically on the east shore of Kootenay Lake**

Dear FortisBC Customer:

On November 19, 2015, the British Columbia Utilities Commission (Commission) received a complaint from a FortisBC customer regarding frequent and lengthy power outages in the West Kootenay region, specifically on the east shore of Kootenay Lake (Region). Through the Commission's customer complaints process, the Commission received responses from FortisBC on December 8, 2015, December 14, 2015, November 12, 2016, and March 13, 2017.

When reviewing such matters, the Commission's role is to balance the interests of the customer (to receive safe, reliable and non-discriminatory energy services at fair rates) with the interest of the utilities (so that they are afforded a reasonable opportunity to earn a fair return on their invested capital). Also, the Commission sets rates that are just and reasonable. This includes ensuring that a public utility recovers costs necessary to provide a reasonable level of service to customers.

In this Complaint, while the Commission recognises the Customer's concerns regarding the reliability of the service in the Region as being genuine, the Commission has determined there is no appropriate action that can be taken at this time. When evaluating the reasonableness of service provided by a public utility, it is important to factor in many considerations such as remoteness, geography, and weather. A utility must make reasonable efforts to provide reasonable service and the Commission reviews operating and maintenance budgets during rate setting proceedings. Given that various factors can complicate the delivery of service, the Commission must take into account these factors and correspondently, the reasonability of costs to mitigate disruptions- as such costs are borne by all customers. In this instance, the Commission is aware that the location of the customer does complicate and challenge the delivery of service. For the Complainant, remoteness, geography and significant weather events create elevated challenges in providing reliable service. For example, it will be more difficult for the public utility to identify the cause of outages and restore service for the Customer during periods of significant snowfall that it might be to do so in a less isolated setting. As such, at this time, based on the information received on this matter, the Commission is not persuaded that the public utility has acted unreasonably in its efforts to provide service to the Customer nor can the Commission conclude that the service provided to the customer is unreasonable given the location of the Customer.

However, the Commission wishes to monitor the reliability of service to the Region including the frequency and duration of power outages in the Region. Therefore the Commission requests that FortisBC file a report in March 2018 and March 2019 that provides comparative and benchmark information on the service reliability metrics of the Region, alongside an update on implementation of any initiatives to improve service reliability for its customers in the Region. This information is to be filed with the Commission Secretary.

Your file is now closed.

Thank you again for contacting the Commission.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by:*

Patrick Wruck  
Commission Secretary

KN/kbb

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