
THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE
ACTIVITY PLAN 2026-29

Message from the Consumer Advocate

Pursuant to section 7 of the **Transparency and Accountability Act** (the Act), I am pleased to present the Activity Plan for the Consumer Advocate which outlines objective for the three-year period commencing April 1, 2026 and ending March 31, 2029.

The Consumer Advocate is categorized as a Category 3 Government Entity under the Act and is required to prepare an Activity Plan that takes the strategic directions of Government, as communicated by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, into consideration. Any such strategic objectives are consistent with the appointment of the Consumer Advocate and the Terms and Conditions relating to that appointment.

This Activity Plan was prepared under my direction as the Interim Consumer Advocate, in accordance with the provisions of the Act. I am accountable for the preparation of this Activity Plan and the achievement of its objectives.



Adrienne Ding
Interim Consumer Advocate

Overview

Under section 117 of the **Public Utilities Act**, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council may appoint a Consumer Advocate to represent residential and general service electricity customers when public utilities file applications. The Consumer Advocate's primary clients are the consumers and ratepayers in the Province, representing them in applications and hearings before the Newfoundland and Labrador Board of Public Utilities (PUB).

Public utilities in Newfoundland and Labrador must ask the PUB to approve any proposed rate changes. They also submit applications for PUB approval of proposed projects and annual capital budget applications. The Consumer Advocate may also represent consumers on other general matters related to electricity service. All of these applications can affect the electricity rates paid by consumers. For that reason, the Consumer Advocate may work with experts to determine how these applications affect consumers. The Consumer Advocate may consult with experts in areas such as energy supply, regulatory practice, capital costs, and finance when reviewing utility applications.

When a utility files an application with the PUB, the Consumer Advocate prepares a budget for approval by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. This allows consumers to be represented in the application process. Once the budget is approved and the work is completed, the Consumer Advocate submits statements of account to the PUB for processing. Costs paid through the PUB are included as a separate line item in the PUB's budget, and all Consumer Advocate invoices follow PUB accounting practices. The Consumer Advocate may also be appointed to participate in specific PUB hearings. The Consumer Advocate does not have any dedicated staff.

Mandate

The Consumer Advocate has one main line of business: to carry out the mandate set out in the appointment under section 117 of the **Public Utilities Act**. This means representing domestic and general service electricity customers before the PUB, in accordance with the **Public Utilities Act** and related regulations. This work may include reviewing utility applications and supporting evidence, preparing questions for utilities, hiring and instructing experts when needed, taking part in pre-hearing and settlement processes, attending public hearings, questioning witnesses, and making final submissions.

Vision

A regulatory environment in which consumers are well-served and are afforded fair and reasonable treatment in accordance with the legislation, provincial policy, and sound public utility practices that balance the interests of consumers and utilities as appropriate.

Primary Clients

The Consumer Advocate represents domestic and general service customers on terms approved by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Contact

Consumers and ratepayers can contact the Consumer Advocate office at:

Website: www.nlconsumeradvocate.ca

Phone: 709-853-5530

Email: consumeradvocate@odeaearle.ca

Strategic Issue

The strategic directions as communicated by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety have been considered. The following area has been identified as the key priority of the Consumer Advocate.

Issue 1: Representation of Consumer Interests

The Consumer Advocate represents consumer interests when applications from public utilities are received by the PUB. The scope of this work is determined by the nature of the application. Given that the role of the Consumer Advocate is to act as intervenor on matters for which the Consumer Advocate is appointed, it is not possible to anticipate which matters occurring over the three-year planning period will involve the Consumer Advocate. For example, utility applications before the PUB may request a rate increase, a pricing restructuring, approval for building capital assets, or an increase in return on investment through capital expenditures. The Consumer Advocate requests advice from experts and consultants with respect to the information contained in an application to make informed representation. Consultants with an expertise in energy supply, regulatory practice and principles and cost of capital/finance are invaluable when assessing applications from electrical utilities.

The Consumer Advocate will continue to work with consumers, utilities, industrial customers and the PUB to devise a plan to address the cost of power resulting from the Muskrat Falls project and other capital investments over the next three years of this planning period. The Consumer Advocate will work on behalf of consumers in coping with rate pressures related to electricity service. The objective is to represent consumers and ensure affordable electricity.

The focus of the Consumer Advocate is consistent over the three years of this Activity Plan, which are April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2029. Each year the Consumer Advocate will report on the results of the following objective.

Objective: By March 31, 2027, upon appointment, the Consumer Advocate will have represented the interests of electricity consumers in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Indicators:

- Represent consumers at regulatory processes;
- Attend pre-hearing conferences and meetings and public hearings as required; and,
- Prepare and deliver submissions to the Public Utilities Board on emerging issues.