
THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE

Annual Report April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026

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Message from the Consumer Advocate

Pursuant to the requirements applicable to a Category 3 entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, this Annual Report of the Consumer Advocate is submitted for the period April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026.

The Consumer Advocate represents the interests of ratepayers in matters affecting utility rates and regulatory oversight. This mandate includes participation in proceedings before the Public Utilities Board, review of rate and capital applications, and advocacy for accountability, transparency, and affordability. The Consumer Advocate also represents ratepayers in ensuring prudent long-term planning in utility infrastructure and system reliability.

This report is submitted by the Interim Consumer Advocate, appointed on January 26, 2026. Unless otherwise noted, the activities described for the 2025-26 fiscal year were undertaken under the direction of the previous Consumer Advocate, Dennis Browne, K.C.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adrienne Ding', with a stylized, cursive script.

Adrienne Ding

Interim Consumer Advocate

Overview

Under section 117 of the **Public Utilities Act** (the 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 Act. This means representing domestic and general service electricity customers before the PUB, in accordance with the 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

Highlights and Accomplishments

Throughout the period of April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026, the Consumer Advocate reviewed and made submissions on: the Newfoundland Power 2026 Capital Budget Application; the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro (Hydro) 2026 Capital Budget Application; and Hydro's Fast Charger – Phase 2 Application.

The Consumer Advocate also contributed substantial work to Newfoundland Power's 2025-2026 General Rate Application (GRA) proceedings and Hydro's Cost of Service Methodology Application proceedings. In addition, the Consumer Advocate worked on Hydro's Reliability and Resource Adequacy Study, which produced a settlement agreement in March 2025 on reliability criteria, load forecast methodology, and the need for capacity additions.

Between January 26, 2026, and March 31, 2026, the Interim Consumer Advocate met with all major stakeholders, including the executive of Hydro, Newfoundland Power and the Public Utilities Board.

Shortly after appointment, the Interim Consumer Advocate took part in a settlement conference on Hydro's application for Additional Early Execution funding for the proposed Avalon Combustion Turbine project. A settlement agreement was reached at the beginning of fiscal year 2026-27.

Report on Performance

The representation of consumer interests when utility applications are received by the Public Utilities Board is determined by the nature of that application. Not every application before the Public Utilities Board requires participation of the Consumer Advocate. However, the Consumer Advocate may intervene on behalf of ratepayers regarding applications pertaining to expenditures and rates.

In developing appropriate responses to utility applications, the Consumer Advocate solicits advice from consultants. This team approach ensures ratepayers have the benefit of informed representation. Consultants with expertise in energy supply, regulatory practice and principles, and cost of capital/finance are invaluable when assessing applications before the PUB.

The continuing priority for the Consumer Advocate is to work with consumers, utilities, industrial customers, the Public Utilities Board and Government, ensuring that continued rate mitigation efforts deliver affordable electricity for consumers.

Issue 1: Representation of Consumer Interests

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

Indicators	Actual Results
Represent consumers at regulatory processes.	The Consumer Advocate represented ratepayers at regulatory processes throughout 2025-26. This included the Newfoundland Power 2026 Capital Budget Application; the Hydro (Hydro) 2026 Capital Budget Application; Hydro's Fast Charger – Phase 2 Application; Newfoundland Power's 2025-2026 GRA; Hydro's Cost of Service Methodology Application; and Hydro's Reliability and Resource Adequacy Study.
Attend pre-hearing conferences and meetings and public hearings as required.	The Consumer Advocate attended pre-hearing conferences and public hearings for the above matters as required.
Prepare and deliver submissions to the Public Utilities Board on emerging issues.	The Consumer Advocate prepared and delivered submissions to the Public Utilities Board on emerging issues as required to represent ratepayers. This included the Newfoundland Power 2026 Capital Budget Application; the Hydro (Hydro) 2026 Capital Budget Application; Hydro's Fast Charger – Phase 2 Application; Newfoundland Power's 2025-2026 GRA; Hydro's Cost of Service Methodology Application; and Hydro's Reliability and Resource Adequacy Study.

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

The Consumer Advocate will continue to represent the interests of ratepayers before the Public Utilities Board. Every utility expenditure application must be scrutinized and justified. This is especially so given the heavy regulatory schedule in 2026-27, which includes the Avalon Combustion Turbine and Bay D’Espoir Unit 8 major build applications, as well as Hydro’s 2026 GRA, which is their first GRA since 2017. This GRA sets electricity rates post–Muskrat Falls coming fully online. Rate Mitigation remains in place to ensure electricity is affordable for consumers. However, the costs associated with grid infrastructure and maintaining reliability remain a significant challenge for ratepayers. These are issues the Consumer Advocate will continue to address before the Public Utilities Board. The Consumer Advocate will continue to focus on issues relating to utility spending and to maintaining transparency, openness, and accountability in the regulatory process.

Financial Statements

Upon appointment, the Consumer Advocate prepares a budget for approval by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety in matters pertaining to electricity. After the budget has been approved, the Consumer Advocate, in matters of electricity, renders detailed statements of account to the Public Utilities Board, which pays the account. Separate audited financial statements are not required of the Consumer Advocate. Expenses paid through the Public Utilities Board are included as a separate line item in its budget, which is audited by a private auditor.

1. Reference to NL Hydro – Build Application

Invoice No. 20569 (April 3, 2025 – June 13, 2025)

i)	Professional Fees of the Consumer Advocate	\$810.00
ii)	Professional Fees of Legal Counsel to Consumer Advocate	\$8,010.00
iii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$30,590.50
iv)	HST (i), (ii), & (iii)	\$3,699.08
	Total	\$43,109.58

2. Reference to Newfoundland Power Inc., 2026 Capital Budget Application

Invoice No. 20933 (July 1, 2025 – November 6, 2025)

i)	Professional Fees of the Consumer Advocate	\$2,137.50
ii)	Professional Fees of the Legal Counsel to Consumer Advocate	\$5,107.50
iii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$43,801.13
iv)	HST (i), (ii), & (iii)	\$3,869.42
	Total	\$54,915.55

3. Reference to NL Hydro – Build Application

Invoice No. 20934 (October 15, 2025 – October 30, 2025)

i)	Professional Fees of the Consumer Advocate	\$1,170.00
ii)	Professional Fees of Legal Counsel to Consumer Advocate	\$1,305.00
iii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$61.88
iv)	HST (i), (ii), & (iii)	\$380.53
	Total	\$2,917.41

4. Reference to NL Hydro – 2026 Capital Budget Application

Invoice No. 20935 (July 23, 2025 – October 24, 2025)

i)	Professional Fees of Legal Counsel to Consumer Advocate	\$945.00
ii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$31,343.63
iii)	HST (i) & (ii)	\$1,993.29
	Total	\$34,281.92

5. Reference to NL Hydro – 2026 Capital Budget Application

Invoice No. 21129 (November 13, 2025 – December 3, 2025)

i)	Professional Fees of the Consumer Advocate	\$3,768.75
ii)	Professional Fees of Legal Counsel to Consumer Advocate	\$1,912.50
iii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$9,212.03
iv)	HST (i), (ii) & (iii)	\$1,483.99
	Total	\$16,377.27

6. Reference to Newfoundland Power Inc., 2025 – 2026 General Rate Application

Invoice No. 21146 (February 25, 2025 – May 1, 2025)

i)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$1,750.00
	Total	\$1,750.00

7. Reference to NL Hydro – Build Application

Invoice No. 21164 (November 17, 2024 – January 26, 2026)

i)	Professional Fees of the Consumer Advocate	\$2,137.50
ii)	Professional Fees of the Legal Counsel to Consumer Advocate	\$562.50
iii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$8,567.50
iv)	HST (i), (ii), & (iii)	\$827.63
	Total	\$12,095.13

8. Reference to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro – Installation of Ultra-Fast Charging Electric Stations

Invoice No. 21221 (August 14, 2025 – December 10, 2025)

i)	Professional Fees of the Consumer Advocate	\$2,047.50
ii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$8,571.19
iii)	HST (i) and (ii)	\$842.81
	Total	\$11,461.50

9. Reference to Newfoundland Power Inc., 2026 Capital Budget Application

Invoice No. 21162 (January 19, 2026 – January 30, 2026)

i)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$3,993.75
ii)	Professional Fees of the Legal Counsel to Consumer Advocate	\$562.50
iii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$113.91
iv)	HST (i), (ii), & (iii)	\$700.53
	Total	\$5,370.69

10. Reference to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro – Cost of Service Methodology

Invoice No. 21419 (September 19, 2025 – January 20, 2026)

i)	Professional Fees of the Consumer Advocate	\$1,687.50
ii)	Professional Fees of the Legal Counsel to Consumer Advocate	\$1,350.00
iii)	Disbursements (including experts)	\$17,865.38
iv)	HST (i), (ii), & (iii)	\$1,522.94
	Total	\$22,425.82