



INFORMATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
DATE:	December 12, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Horizon Utilities Process re Service Disconnection for Non-Payment
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Mike Zegarac General Manager Finance & Corporate Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

At the December 7, 2016, General Issues Committee, Corporate Services staff were directed to request that Horizon Utilities provide a summary report on their credit service disconnection policy.

Response from Horizon Utilities Corporation:

As a Local Distribution Company (“LDC”) in Ontario, Horizon Utilities complies with the Ontario Energy Board’s (“OEB”) Distribution System Code (“DSC”) for service disconnections. Horizon Utilities’ process is outlined in Section 2.2 of its Conditions of Service which can be accessed at www.horizonutilities.com.

Horizon Utilities works with customers to avoid service disconnections for non-payment, and only proceeds to do so when all other options have been exhausted.

Horizon Utilities’ makes every attempt to establish suitable payment arrangements with customers and / or connect them to our community partners for further support. Assistance for customers in arrears can take many forms including:

- Flexible payment arrangements;
- Arrears management plans to defer payments over 8+ months;
- Financial assistance to qualified Low-income Energy Assistance Plan (“LEAP”);

- Financial support through the City of Hamilton Utility Arrears Program; and,
- Connecting customers with local community services and programs including those offered by Neighbour to Neighbour Centre and Hamilton Housing Help Centre.

Horizon Utilities actively promotes the Ontario Electricity Support Program (“OESP”) which provides low-income customers with credits directly on their electricity bills. We also provide education, tools, custom usage threshold alerts and conservation programs to help customers reduce their consumption and contain electricity costs.

When a bill is overdue, Horizon Utilities provides customers with two notices, a reminder notice and a final notice and telephone call prior to issuing a service disconnection. Security deposits are applied to the arrears owing before the final notice is issued. Customers also receive a 72-hour telephone call prior to the scheduled disconnection date and our agents attempt to collect the account owing at the location prior to the service being disconnected.

In the winter months when temperatures drop below freezing, Horizon Utilities does not fully disconnect residential locations where the service controls heating. Load limiting devices are utilized to provide partial power for essential household equipment such as the furnace and the refrigerator.