

# Municipalities and AUC review of renewable energy project applications

The AUC encourages, appreciates and values municipal involvement and input in its regulatory decision making process around energy projects.

## Frequently asked questions

### **Does the AUC require proponents to submit environmental impact assessments as part of their applications?**

Yes – AUC Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines* sets out environmental information requirements for applications – the scope of the information required varies with project scope and type.

### **What is the AUC's role in assessing the public interest in proponents' applications for energy projects?**

The AUC is required by law to consider each project's social, economic and environmental impacts. It does this by considering the information filed by applicants, interveners and through its own assessment of the project. This assessment includes requiring applicants to file additional information on the project when the AUC considers it necessary.

### **When reviewing a specific application, does the AUC consider the cumulative environmental impacts of regional energy projects?**

Yes, the AUC can consider cumulative environmental effects when assessing whether approval of a project is in the public interest.

### **What is the AUC's role in the application/permitting process for new electric transmission lines?**

The AUC makes two decisions on new transmission projects. The AESO, the transmission system planner, is required to apply to the AUC when it identifies the need for a new project. The AUC is responsible for assessing that need. If the need for a new project is approved, the AUC is also responsible for approving the exact routing and siting of the project. These two approval processes may be separate or combined.

### **How does the AUC determine who can reasonably be considered to be directly and adversely affected by a proposed energy project?**

The AUC makes this consideration on a case-by-case basis having regard to each project. It starts with the consultation radius for the project but recognizes that, in some circumstances, persons who are outside of that radius may also be affected.

### **Would the AUC's authority to approve and permit energy projects supersede the authority of local governments if they don't approve energy projects in their jurisdictions?**

Both the AUC and municipal governments have approval authority over energy projects. Where the decisions of the AUC, the provincial regulator, conflict with the decision of the local government, the AUC's decision will prevail.

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### **What is the AUC's role in ensuring that energy companies responsibly decommission project infrastructure after a project stops operating?**

Jurisdiction over decommissioning and reclamation of projects is split between the AUC and Alberta Environment and Protected areas. The AUC assesses a proponents ability to effectively decommission and reclaim projects at the application stage and can set decommissioning standards. Reclamation, however, is regulated exclusively by Alberta Environment and Protected Areas.

An owner must also satisfy Alberta Environment's Conservation and Reclamation Directive for Renewable Energy Operations (REO).

On private lands, operators of REOs require professional signoff for the development and updating of:

- Conservation and reclamation plans.
- Required assessments.
- The reclamation certificate application(s).

### **Critics have said that the AUC doesn't always consider energy projects' potential to disrupt rural Alberta's food security. They also say the AUC has a history of ignoring local governments' objections to past energy projects. How does the AUC respond?**

The AUC considers each application on a case-by-case basis and on the evidence brought before it. The AUC takes into account local government's positions on projects, both when they support

a project and when they oppose a project. It is incredibly helpful to the AUC for municipalities to participate in the AUC's decision making process. This allows the AUC to understand any underlying planning or policy decisions that informed a municipalities decision on a project.

### **What is the importance of municipal involvement in AUC hearings**

The AUC's decisions are based on the evidence presented by involved parties. It is crucial we hear concerns and ideas from Alberta's municipalities, and the AUC considers the opinions of municipalities when discussing proposed projects in their area.

Municipal input can be critical to the AUC's understanding, context, background and local concerns. It is not just land-use planning; it is the entire public interest picture that needs to be taken into account.

### **Additional information**

For additional information about the AUC, its processes or general questions about utilities in the province, please contact us:

310-4AUC (4282) in Alberta  
1-833-511-4282 outside of Alberta  
info@auc.ab.ca  
Monday to Friday (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)