



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

March 15, 2018

Auditor General highlights risks to the BC Utilities Commission's effectiveness

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released a new information report: *Observations on the BC Utilities Commission*.

The British Columbia Utilities Commission (the commission) is responsible for regulating some of the biggest companies in B.C.—including BC Hydro, FortisBC and ICBC—which together, provide services to almost all residents in the province.

“Utility companies tend to be monopolies because they are large and have expensive infrastructure, and so an effective regulator is in the interest of all residents of British Columbia,” said Auditor General Carol Bellringer. “Here in B.C., the commission has a valuable role to play.”

Regulators provide transparent oversight of the utilities’ activities to balance the interests between ratepayers and utilities.

Government established task forces in 2013 and 2014 to identify risks to the commission’s effectiveness and make recommendations for improvement. Bellringer’s team identified many of the same risks as the task force and the report highlights five of them: the commission’s independence; the commission’s review of large projects; the clarity of policy guidance; the commission’s capacity; and the effectiveness of processes and performance.

As one of the task forces noted, Government sets energy policy, defines the commission’s mandate, and directs the commission on specific matters, but when government gives direction it should not dictate specific outcomes or intrude on the commission’s consideration of individual applications. Even in cases where government chooses to make final decisions itself, the commission can provide independent expert review to help ensure that key decisions are well informed and transparent.

“Given that government already knows how it can use the commission more effectively, we encourage government to clarify its intentions regarding the outstanding task force recommendations,” Bellringer stated.

Government created the commission in 1980 to provide important oversight by considering both the short- and long-term interests of ratepayers, as well as the financial viability of regulated companies. Over the years, government has committed to strengthening and protecting the independence and credibility of the commission.



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The full report is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.bcauditor.com. Bellringer will answer questions pertaining to the report via a news conference.

News Conference Date: Thursday, March 15, 2018

Time: 12:30 p.m. (Pacific time)

Dial-in Information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the USA: 1 877 353-9184

Participant Pass Code: 44848#

During question and answer period, to ask a question: Press 01

During question and answer period, to exit the question queue: Press #

About the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

The Auditor General is a non-partisan, independent Officer of the Legislature who reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the Auditor General and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

Contact us:

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For general questions, call Colleen Rose, Manager, Communications: 250-419-6207

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