

FTC engages Utilities on COVID-19 Customer Initiatives

FTC ENGAGES UTILITIES ON COVID-19 CUSTOMER INITIATIVES

In anticipation of significant social dislocation soon after the commencement of the COVID-19 shutdown, the Fair Trading Commission initiated engagement of all regulated utilities with a view to providing relief to customers, particularly those that are most vulnerable to the economic shocks which are likely to ensue from the pandemic.

As a result, the Commission has approved a number of customer-focused initiatives which will be introduced by the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited (BL&P). Over the next few months, customers will benefit from the BL&P's absorption of credit card transaction fees associated with the payment of electricity bills up to \$500. In addition, residential (Domestic Service Tariff) customers will be eligible to receive the 10 percent early payment discount on bills once they are settled within 15 days following the lifting of the national curfew. This initiative is subject to timelines, terms and conditions, as indicated by the BL&P.

Flow (Cable & Wireless (Barbados) Limited) has also developed a programme for both existing customers who have an outstanding debt and those desirous of a more manageable package, to help them maintain a basic level of connectivity. Customers are encouraged to contact Flow to explore the available options.

Similarly, the Barbados Water Authority (BWA), in understanding its public health role, has given its commitment to the Government of Barbados that it will discontinue its disconnection policy during this period and further move to reconnect those customers who were previously disconnected. This initiative is subject to terms and conditions, as indicated by the BWA. Additionally, the Commission is working with the utility to increase the number of operational community tanks and ensure that water tankers frequent those districts that are affected by outages.

The Commission will continue to monitor regulated utilities' customer relief efforts and, where practical, seek additional solutions for the same. For additional information on the initiatives/programmes outlined, customers may contact the relevant utility.

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