

Public Consultation on the review of the BWA Standards of Service 2018-2020

FAIR TRADING COMMISSION CONDUCTS PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON BWA STANDARDS OF SERVICE

The Fair Trading Commission is seeking public input on its proposed Standards of Service 2018-2020 for the Barbados Water Authority (BWA), to determine the applicability of current Standards and ascertain whether new ones should be introduced.

The Standards of Service framework sets out the minimum level of service that should be received by BWA customers. The Commission has outlined a number of proposed changes to the Standards in its consultation paper and members of the public are encouraged to submit their comments on the themes presented, which include:

- the continuance of the Standards of Service framework;
- the modification of the target for the Installation of Service Standard;
- the introduction of automatic compensation for all BWA Guaranteed Standards;
- a requirement for BWA to publish, on its website, social media channels and in two forms of news media, both the Standards of Service and process for reporting breaches, in a clear, prominent manner;
- and a requirement for BWA to provide complainants with information on compensation processes.

The BWA's monopoly within the water and sewerage sector has fostered an environment where the utility lacks market-driven incentives to improve its service quality. It is therefore the Commission's belief that the Standards of Service remain necessary in the absence of competition, with amendments proposed in some instances to further address BWA's service delivery.

A critical element of the Standards of Service framework is the issuance of compensation to customers when a Standard is not met. In order to receive compensation, BWA customers must submit a manual claim within three months after the breach of the Standard has occurred. This obligates customers to submit a complaint via telephone, e-mail or traditional mail if they wish to seek compensation, as opposed to automatic compensation, where a credit would be applied directly to the customer's account when a breach occurs and is acknowledged by the utility. However, the BWA's indication that no manual claims were submitted in 2018 and 2019 has signaled the need to make fundamental changes to the application of compensation and publication of the Standards of Service.

The Commission has therefore proposed that automatic compensation be applied to all of the BWA Guaranteed Standards. The application of automatic compensation, along with a requirement where BWA must publish the Standards of Service across multiple platforms, would therefore provide customers with relevant information on the Standards and their right to receive compensation when breaches occur.

The Commission has also recommended that the target for Installation of Service (GWS 1) be increased from 14

calendar days to 14 business days for residential customers and from 10 calendar days to 10 business days for commercial customers, to allow the BWA additional time to address its backlog of outstanding installations. A new Standard has also been proposed for the repositioning of water meters. The Commission has acknowledged that this can be a lengthy exercise which may inconvenience customers and believes that an indication of the duration of the process, in the form of a target, is warranted. This would result in the renaming of Meter Installation (Existing Service) (GWS 5) as Meter Installation or Meter Repositioning (Existing Service) (GWS 5). The current 45-day target for completion of a meter installation would therefore be divided into two categories for installation and repositioning – installation within 30 working days or relocation of the meter within 15 working days following receipt of the customer’s request.

The Commission’s consultation paper also proposes other modifications to the Standards. The public is invited to respond to all or any of the questions posed. This feedback is important in establishing the level of service required of the utility.

For more information on how to participate in the consultation and to access the consultation paper, [click here](#). Written responses to the consultation, which should be submitted as a Microsoft Word document and attached to an email cover letter, may be emailed to info@ftc.gov.bb, faxed to (246) 424-0300, or mailed/hand delivered to:

Chief Executive Officer

Fair Trading Commission

Good Hope,

Green Hill,

St. Michael

Responses must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 17, 2021. The Commission’s consultation follows its review of the BWA’s Standards of Service performance for the 2018 to 2020 period. Details of the review are also included in the consultation document.

May 20, 2021

