

Your Rights as a Utility User

The Utilities Regulation Act

2000-30, seeks to ensure that all Barbadians have access to reasonably priced, reliable utility services from the regulated utility companies.

Regulating the Utilities

The Fair Trading Commission, as the regulatory authority responsible for these areas, administers the Utilities Regulation Act and therefore

- establishes the principles for rate setting
- sets the maximum rates to be charged
- monitors utility rates to ensure compliance
- determines the standards of service and monitors to ensure compliance
- promotes efficiency on the part of regulated utility companies
- ensures that utility companies operate efficiently and earn reasonable returns on capital investments
- protects the interests of consumers, ensuring they receive safe, adequate, efficient and reasonably priced services.

Currently, there are two regulated utility services - electricity and telephone, over which, the FTC has jurisdiction.

In the future, the Commission will also be responsible for regulation of water and natural gas.

It's Your Right

So, what are your rights as a consumer under the Utilities Regulation Act?

As mentioned earlier, all consumers have the right to safe, adequate, efficient and reasonably priced services, so, should you have a grievance about the cost or quality of service provided by a regulated utility company, there is recourse.

STEP ONE:

If you notice a discrepancy on your bill, or have a query about interrupted service, notify the utility company immediately. You may do so by phone, in writing or in person. However, it's always a good idea to put your complaint in writing, since you may need a record of your actions should you be unable to settle dispute with the company.

When writing to the company, be specific and provide as much detail as possible about your concern, whether it be an incorrect meter reading or miscalculated arrears.

STEP TWO:

After the company has completed its investigation, should you disagree with their findings, forward your correspondence and a cover letter explaining the situation to the Chief Executive Officer, Fair Trading Commission, Manor Lodge, Lodge Hill, St. Michael, Barbados.

You may also submit details of your case to the Commission by: telephone, fax or e-mail (see contact page).

Or you may wish to contact the Office of the Public Counsel, housed in the Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development. There you'll receive advice on matters relating to the Utilities Regulation Act and, should you require it, assistance in preparing for a review or hearing, before the FTC, regarding your complaint.

For further information please contact us .