

In the Matter of the Application of)
Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Approval) Case No. 14-1615-GA-AAM
to Change Accounting Methods.)

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel ("OCC") moves to intervene in this case where the utility's request is a prelude to seeking rate increases from residential customers.¹ OCC is filing on behalf of all 1.3 million residential utility customers of Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. ("Columbia" or "Utility"). The reasons the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio ("PUCO") should grant OCC's Motion are further set forth in the attached Memorandum in Support.

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¹ See R.C. Chapter 4911, R.C. 4903.221 and Ohio Adm. Code 4901-1-11.

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Through its Application, Columbia is requesting authority to modify its accounting procedures to establish a regulatory asset and defer, for accounting and financial reporting purposes, the expenses to be incurred in Columbia's new Pipeline Safety Program. As the Ohio Supreme Court has recognized, authorizing accounting changes requested by a utility is a prelude to possible rate increases to customers.² OCC has authority under law to represent the interests of all the 1.3 million residential utility customers of Columbia, pursuant to R.C. Chapter 4911.

R.C. 4903.221 provides, in part, that any person “who may be adversely affected” by a PUCO proceeding is entitled to seek intervention in that proceeding. The interests of Ohio’s residential customers may be “adversely affected” by this case, especially if the customers were unrepresented in a proceeding where the Utility’s action is a prelude to seeking to charge customers up to \$15 million per calendar year (through a rider in a separate proceeding). Thus, this element of the intervention standard in R.C. 4903.221 is satisfied.

R.C. 4903.221(B) requires the PUCO to consider the following criteria in ruling on motions to intervene:

² *Ohio Consumers' Counsel v. Pub. Util. Comm.*, 111 Ohio St.3d 384, 2006-Ohio-5853, ¶ 38.

- (1) The nature and extent of the prospective intervenor's interest;
- (2) The legal position advanced by the prospective intervenor and its probable relation to the merits of the case;
- (3) Whether the intervention by the prospective intervenor will unduly prolong or delay the proceeding; and
- (4) Whether the prospective intervenor will significantly contribute to the full development and equitable resolution of the factual issues.

First, the nature and extent of OCC's interest is representing the residential customers of Columbia's in this case involving a Pipeline Safety Program, which could cost consumers up to \$15 million per calendar year. This is because the utility's accounting request is a prelude to seeking to increase rates to customers. This interest is different than that of any other party and especially different than that of the Utility whose advocacy includes the financial interest of stockholders.

Second, OCC's advocacy for residential customers will include advancing the position that rates should be no more than what is reasonable and lawful under Ohio law, for service that is adequate under Ohio law. OCC's position is therefore directly related to the merits of this case that is pending before the PUCO, the authority with regulatory control of public utilities' rates and service quality in Ohio.

Third, OCC's intervention will not unduly prolong or delay the proceedings. OCC, with its longstanding expertise and experience in PUCO proceedings, will duly allow for the efficient processing of the case with consideration of the public interest.

Fourth, OCC's intervention will significantly contribute to the full development and equitable resolution of the factual issues. OCC will obtain and develop information

that the PUCO should consider for equitably and lawfully deciding the case in the public interest.

OCC also satisfies the intervention criteria in the Ohio Administrative Code (which are subordinate to the criteria that OCC satisfies in the Ohio Revised Code). To intervene, a party should have a “real and substantial interest” according to Ohio Adm. Code 4901-1-11(A)(2). As the advocate for residential utility customers, OCC has a very real and substantial interest in this case where the ultimate rates paid by residential customers may be impacted by the proposed accounting for the Pipeline Safety Program.

In addition, OCC meets the criteria of Ohio Adm. Code 4901-1-11(B)(1)-(4). These criteria mirror the statutory criteria in R.C. 4903.221(B) that OCC already has addressed and that OCC satisfies.

Ohio Adm. Code 4901-1-11(B)(5) states that the PUCO shall consider “The extent to which the person’s interest is represented by existing parties.” While OCC does not concede the lawfulness of this criterion, OCC satisfies this criterion in that it uniquely has been designated as the state representative of the interests of Ohio’s residential utility customers. That interest is different from, and not represented by, any other entity in Ohio.

Moreover, the Supreme Court of Ohio confirmed OCC’s right to intervene in PUCO proceedings, in deciding two appeals in which OCC claimed the PUCO erred by denying its interventions. The Court found that the PUCO abused its discretion in denying OCC’s interventions and that OCC should have been granted intervention in both proceedings.³

³ See *Ohio Consumers’ Counsel v. Pub. Util. Comm.*, 111 Ohio St.3d 384, 2006-Ohio-5853, ¶¶ 13-20.

OCC meets the criteria set forth in R.C. 4903.221, Ohio Adm. Code 4901-1-11, and the precedent established by the Supreme Court of Ohio for intervention. On behalf of Ohio residential customers, the PUCO should grant OCC's Motion to Intervene.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a copy of this *Motion to Intervene* was served on the persons stated below *via* electronic transmission, this 12th day of November 2014.

/s/ Joseph P. Serio

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Summary: Motion Motion to Intervene by the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel
electronically filed by Patti Mallarnee on behalf of Mr. Kevin F. Moore