

In the Matter of the Application of)
Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Approval) Case No. 16-2422-GA-ALT
of an Alternative Form of Regulation.)

The OCC moves to intervene in this case where Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. (“Utility” or “Columbia”) seeks to increase the rates that Columbia's 1.3 million residential customers pay for pipeline replacements, raising the level of customer-funded investment to \$3.2 billion by 2022¹. This would mean that each of the residential customers OCC represents would be charged up to \$16.70 per month for pipeline replacement. The reasons the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (“PUCO”) should grant OCC’s Motion are further set forth in the attached Memorandum in Support.

BRUCE WESTON (0016973)
OHIO CONSUMERS' COUNSEL

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel
10 West Broad Street, Suite 1800
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3485
Telephone: Bair (614) 466-9559
Telephone: Moore (614) 387-2965
Jodi.bair@occ.ohio.gov
kevin.moore@occ.ohio.gov
(will accept service via email)

¹ Application at 2.

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On February 27, 2017, Columbia filed an application for approval of an alternative rate plan under R.C. 4929.05. Columbia's application seeks authority to implement an accelerated pipeline replacement program in its service territory. OCC has authority under law to represent the interests of all the 1.3 million residential gas 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 which sets the rates they will pay for natural gas distribution service. 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:

- (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 in this case involving an accelerated pipeline replacement program, which could increase the rider rates that Columbia customers pay and raise the level of investment to \$3.2 billion by 2022. 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 charged to consumers should be just and reasonable under Ohio law, for service that is adequate. 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 significantly impacted by the proposed alternative rate plan that could increase the gas rates that Columbia customers pay and raise the level of investment to \$3.2 billion by 2022.

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.²

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.

² See *Ohio Consumers’ Counsel v. Pub. Util. Comm.*, 111 Ohio St.3d 384, 2006-Ohio-5853, ¶¶ 13-20.

Respectfully submitted,

BRUCE WESTON (0016973)
OHIO CONSUMERS' COUNSEL

/s/ Jodi Bair

Jodi Bair (0062921), Counsel of Record
Kevin F. Moore (0089228)
Assistant Consumers' Counsel

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

10 West Broad Street, Suite 1800

Columbus, Ohio 43215-3485

Telephone: Bair (614) 466-9559

Telephone: Moore (614) 387-2965

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kevin.moore@occ.ohio.gov

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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 7th day of March 2017.

/s/ Jodi Bair _____

Jodi Bair

Assistant Consumers' Counsel

SERVICE LIST

William.wright@ohioattorneygeneral.gov
Cmooney2@columbus.rr.com
cendsley@ofbf.org

Attorney Examiner:
Greta.see@puc.state.oh.us

sseiple@nisource.com
josephclark@nisource.com
egallon@porterwright.com
Tony_long@ham.honda.com
srandazzo@mwncmh.com
fdarr@mwncmh.com
mpritchard@mwncmh.com

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Summary: Motion Motion to Intervene by The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel electronically filed by Ms. Jamie Williams on behalf of Bair, Jodi Mrs.