

## THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF  
COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO, INC. TO REVISE  
ITS TARIFFS TO IMPLEMENT IMMEDIATE  
CHOICE ENROLLMENT AND CHOICE  
PRE-PAY.

CASE No. 16-2430-GA-ATA

### FINDING AND ORDER

Entered in the Journal on May 24, 2017

#### I. SUMMARY

{¶ 1} The Commission approves the application of Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc., as amended, to revise its tariff to implement CHOICE Immediate Enrollment and CHOICE Pre-pay.

#### II. DISCUSSION

{¶ 2} Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. (Columbia) is a natural gas company, as defined in R.C. 4905.03, and a public utility, as defined in R.C. 4905.02, and, as such, is subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission.

{¶ 3} R.C. 4909.18 provides, in part, that a public utility may file an application to establish any rate, charge, regulation, or practice. If the Commission determines that the application is not for an increase in any rate and does not appear to be unjust or unreasonable, the Commission may approve the application without the need for a hearing.

{¶ 4} On December 2, 2009, the Commission approved a stipulation, which, in accordance with R.C. 4929.04, provided Columbia with a general exemption of certain natural gas commodity sales services, including the gas cost recovery mechanism, and authorized Columbia to conduct an auction to secure natural gas supplies, initially through a standard service offer structure, and subsequently through a standard choice offer structure through March 31, 2012. *In re Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc.*, Case No. 08-1344-GA-EXM (*Initial Exemption Case*), Opinion and Order (Dec. 2, 2009). On September 7, 2011, the

Commission authorized the continuation of the stipulation approved on December 2, 2009, for the 12-month period beginning April 1, 2012. *Initial Exemption Case*, Second Opinion and Order (Sept. 7, 2011). The December 2, 2009 Order and the September 7, 2011 Order shall be referred to, jointly, as the exemption orders.

{¶ 5} On January 9, 2013, the Commission granted a joint motion to modify the exemption orders and approved an amended stipulation between parties in the case. The amended stipulation, among other things, modified the exemption approved by the Commission in the *Initial Exemption Case* and provided for a five-year term commencing on April 1, 2013. The amended stipulation, as approved, also provided for the implementation of certain enhancements to billing for competitive retail natural gas service (CRNGS) suppliers. Specifically, one of the enhancements provided that Columbia would permit CRNGS suppliers to offer customers the opportunity to prepay the commodity portion of the bill, with the actual account balance and supplier monthly charges appearing on the customer's bill (CHOICE Pre-pay Option). Additionally, a second enhancement would allow new customers the option to immediately enroll in the CHOICE Program at the time they request service with Columbia (CHOICE Immediate Enrollment Option). In the amended stipulation, Columbia agreed to use its best efforts to implement these billing system changes by April 1, 2017. *In re Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc.*, Case No. 12-2637-GA-EXM (*Modified Exemption Case*), Opinion and Order (Jan. 9, 2013) at 37-38.

{¶ 6} On December 23, 2016, in accordance with the amended stipulation in the *Modified Exemption Case*, Columbia filed an application in the above-captioned case requesting authority to amend its tariff to provide the CHOICE Immediate Enrollment Option and the CHOICE Pre-pay Option.

{¶ 7} On February 1, 2017, Columbia filed a motion requesting authority to amend its December 23, 2016 application. Columbia notes in its motion that it is requesting authority, after further consideration, to amend its application to remove the option for customers to have CRNGS suppliers randomly selected for them during the CHOICE

immediate enrollment process. Columbia concurrently filed its amended application for the Commission's consideration.

{¶ 8} On February 7, 2017, Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) filed a motion to intervene in this proceeding. In support of its motion, OCC claims it satisfies the intervention criteria set forth in R.C. 4903.221 and Ohio Adm.Code 4901-1-11. Specifically, OCC asserts that, as an advocate for Ohio residential utility customers, it has a real and substantial interest in this proceeding. Further, OCC contends that its participation will not unduly prolong or delay this proceeding and will significantly contribute to the full development and equitable resolution of the issues raised herein. Finally, OCC notes that, as the state representative of the interests of Ohio's residential utility customers, its interests will not be adequately represented by other parties in this proceeding. The Commission has reviewed OCC's request and finds it to be reasonable. Thus, OCC's motion to intervene should be granted.

{¶ 9} Upon consideration of Columbia's application, as amended, the Commission finds that the proposed tariff changes conform to the stipulation approved in the *Modified Exemption Case*, do not appear to be unjust or unreasonable, and are in the public interest. Therefore, it is not necessary to hold a hearing in this matter. Accordingly, the Commission finds that Columbia's application, as amended, should be approved and Columbia should be authorized to include the revised language in its tariff, which contains the terms, conditions, and rates Columbia applies to the gas service it provides to customers.

### III. ORDER

{¶ 10} It is, therefore,

{¶ 11} ORDERED, That OCC's motion to intervene be granted. It is, further,

{¶ 12} ORDERED, That Columbia's application, as amended, be approved. It is, further,

{¶ 13} ORDERED, That Columbia be authorized to file tariffs, in final form, consistent with this Finding and Order. Columbia shall file one copy in this case docket and one copy in its TRF docket. It is, further,

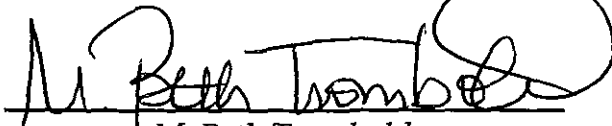
{¶ 14} ORDERED, That the effective date of the new tariffs shall be a date not earlier than the date upon which the final tariff pages are filed with the Commission. It is, further,

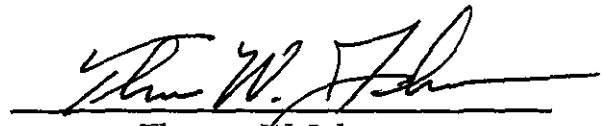
{¶ 15} ORDERED, That nothing in this Finding and Order shall be binding upon this Commission in any future proceeding or investigation involving the justness or reasonableness of any rate, charge, rule, or regulation. It is, further,

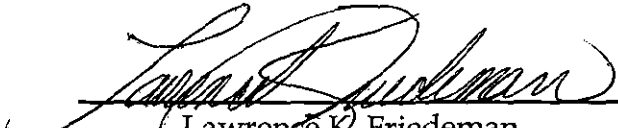
{¶ 16} ORDERED, That a copy of this Finding and Order be served upon all parties and interested persons of record.

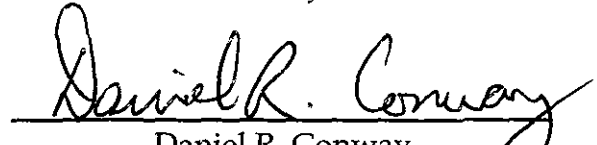
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

Asim Z. Haque, Chairman

  
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MAY 24 2017



Barcy F. McNeal  
Secretary