

North Canton officials have placed a ballot issue on the November 2015 General Election seeking voter approval to pursue an Opt-Out Electric Aggregation Program. Hundreds of similar ballot initiatives have passed in communities across Ohio in the past 15 years, most by a wide margin.

The ballot initiative, if approved, would give our Council the authority, but not the obligation, to pursue an electric program similar to the Natural Gas Governmental Aggregation Program that North Canton voters approved in 2004. The City, working through its consultant, Independent Energy Consultants, would first become certified as a Governmental Aggregator of Electricity with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio and then seek energy offers. Prior to certification, the City would hold 2 public hearings to explain the Plan of Operation and Governance that would be used to administer the program.

With “opt-out” aggregation programs all eligible residential and small commercial customers are included in the program unless they decide to opt-out. The participation rate for opt-out programs tends to be very high, and because of this, suppliers are able to offer lower rates.

This program will be conducted without using any taxpayer money. The ballot must pass before any further steps can be pursued with an opt-out program. If approved, you will be hearing more details about the program as we move forward in the coming weeks and months. As with the natural gas program, participation in the program is purely voluntary and participation in one does not require participation in the other. The City, like others before it, is attempting to leverage the bargaining power of a large buying group to obtain a favorable alternative to the local utility’s electric supply rate. As with the natural gas program, the local utility would continue to deliver your electricity, maintain their distribution systems, read your meters, issue your bills, etc.

These programs do not guarantee savings but do present another valuable option for our residents and small businesses in their attempts to manage their energy costs. State legislators deregulated Ohio’s natural gas and electric markets in 2001 thereby enabling residents to choose their gas and/or electric suppliers. Most of the customer switching and savings have come through Governmental Aggregation programs. To learn more about aggregation programs please visit the Ohio Consumers’ Counsel website [www.occ.ohio.gov](http://www.occ.ohio.gov) or the PUCO’s website [www.puco.ohio.gov](http://www.puco.ohio.gov)

## North Canton Electric Aggregation Program - Frequently Asked Questions

### What are we voting on in the November 3<sup>rd</sup> General Election?

North Canton residents are being asked to allow the City Council to pursue an “opt-out electric aggregation program” similar to the natural gas program that North Canton voters approved in 2004. Opt-out programs require a ballot initiative. If passed, the City will become certified by the PUCO as a Governmental Aggregator of electricity like 100+ other communities across Ohio. Opt-out programs have high participation rates, and with the increased bargaining power, we are able to negotiate lower electric rates for our residents and small businesses.

### What does the City have to do after the ballot passes?

- With the help of our consultant, Independent Energy Consultants (IEC), we will prepare a Plan of Operation and Governance that outlines our program.
- IEC will then lead 2 public hearings to explain the Plan to our residents.
- Our Council will adopt the Plan following the second public hearing.
- We will submit our Governmental Aggregator’s certification application to the PUCO and they will approve it 30 days later.
- We expect to be certified by the PUCO by mid-December.

### Whom do I call if I have a problem with my electric service?

The local utility, Ohio Power, will continue to deliver your electricity, read your meters, and issue your monthly bills. You will continue to call Ohio Power at 800-672-2231 for emergency repairs, downed power lines, leaks, etc. and at 800-672-2231 for billing questions and general information.

### What if I’m with another supplier and would like to join the City’s program?

You should check to see if your current supplier contract charges a penalty for early termination.

### Will I get two bills?

No. You will continue to receive one bill from Ohio Power that shows their distribution charges and the supply charge of the selected supplier.

### Will I still receive a delivery charge from my local utility – Ohio Power?

Yes. Even though you have chosen a new supplier of electricity, Ohio Power continues to deliver the electricity to our homes and businesses. Distribution charges and a flat monthly customer charge apply whether you choose a supplier on your own or remain supplied by Ohio Power.

### Can I remain on budget billing?

Yes. If you are on budget billing you will remain on budget billing. If you would like to switch to budget billing, call Ohio Power at 800-672-2231.

### **Can I exit this program without penalty?**

You will be given an initial 21-day period to opt-out free of charge and then another 7-day period as soon as a supplier is selected and enrolls you as their customer. Then, by law, you will be given a chance to opt-out free of charge at least once every 3 years. You can also opt-out free of charge if you move.

### **Who is eligible for the program?**

1. Your local utility company must be Ohio Power;
2. You must be a resident or business owner located within the City limits;
3. You must not be a PIPP (percentage of income payment program) customer;
4. You must not be in arrears on your bill payment;
5. You must not be a mercantile customer; and
6. You must not be a commercial customer with a peak demand > 400kW

### **How will I sign up for the program?**

Eligible residents and small businesses will receive an Opt-Out Notice from the selected supplier that explains the program rates, terms and conditions. The notice will also provide instructions on how to remove yourself from the program, if you think it is not right for you or your family. Residents will have 21 days to make that decision. If you would like to remain in the program, simply do nothing and you will be enrolled. You will be hearing much more about the program over the next few months. The next important milestone is passage of the ballot initiative at the November 3<sup>rd</sup> election.

### **How did the City develop such a program?**

The City used the services of Independent Energy Consultants, Inc. a PUCO certified broker and aggregator of natural gas and electricity - without using any taxpayer money. They have designed, implemented, and administered many successful aggregation programs across Ohio and have over 100 communities impacted by their gas and/or electric programs.

### **Does the City benefit from the program?**

The City owned accounts are eligible to participate.

### **Will small businesses, schools and churches be eligible?**

Small commercial accounts using less than 700,000 kWh/year are eligible. Interested accounts using more than this amount would need to contact our selected supplier to seek enrollment. Schools may already have their own contract.

### **Does this affect my distribution charges or the wires coming to my home?**

No. Maintenance of the wires coming to a resident's home continues to be the responsibility of the homeowner.

### **Where can I learn more about electric deregulation and assistance programs?**

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio has approved a number of additional assistance programs to help customers with their energy bills. Eligibility and enrollment information can be found on the PUCO's website at [www.puco.ohio.gov](http://www.puco.ohio.gov).