

Natural Gas Governmental Aggregation Program Frequently Asked Questions

(North Canton - October 2017 Update)

Supplier: Volunteer Energy- 1-800-977-8374

Who is the natural gas supplier for the City's program?

Volunteer Energy was selected to serve our community's program through the November 2018 billing period. Volunteer Energy is certified by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, and currently supplies customers and Governmental Aggregation Programs across Ohio.

What is my price for gas?

A low fixed rate of \$3.299/Mcf will take effect for your December 2017 through November 2018 billing periods. Unlike many offers, our program has no penalty if you decide to leave early. Before the end of your November 2018 billing period, we will notify of the rate for the next period of the program.

What is Governmental Natural Gas Aggregation?

Simply put, it's the entire community joining together to form one large buying group. By voting to allow an aggregation, residents allow their community to shop for natural gas on their behalf.

What are the benefits of Gas Aggregation?

When residents form one large buying group they have more buying power. The aggregation is in a better position to negotiate favorable pricing and supply terms than what could ordinarily be achieved by any one individual resident.

What are the different types of Aggregations?

In Ohio there are two types of Aggregations. A community may conduct an "Opt-Out" program or an "Opt-In" program. With Opt-Out programs, each eligible resident is automatically enrolled in the program unless they notify the supplier that they DO NOT wish to participate. With Opt-In programs, each resident must notify the supplier to actively enroll in the program. Opt-Out Aggregations are the most common types of aggregation programs, because they result in higher participation that usually results in lower rates.

How does a community become an Aggregator?

For starters, a community must obtain the approval of voters to form a natural gas aggregation program. Community leaders are then permitted to proceed through a series of steps to become certified by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio as a Governmental Natural Gas Aggregator.

What are the key steps in an Opt-Out Aggregation?

With the assistance of a PUCO certified consultant, a community seeks bids from Certified Retail Natural Gas Service Providers. A qualified bidder is selected to supply the aggregation with its gas for a set period of time. An "Opt-Out" Notice is sent to each eligible community resident prior to the start of the aggregation. Each resident has 21 days from the postmarked date on the notice to contact the supplier to withdraw or "Opt-Out" of the program. After the 21-day period, any resident not opting out will be submitted to the utility company for enrollment in the program. The utility company will send notice of the pending enrollment to each participating resident. Each resident will then have 7 days to rescind their enrollment in the program by contacting the utility company. After the 7-day rescission period, all participating customers are officially enrolled in the program. The new supplier will appear on your natural gas bill within one to two billing cycles after enrollment is verified by the utility.

Whom do I call if I have a problem with my natural gas service?

Dominion Energy Ohio (DEO) will continue to deliver your natural gas and maintain the pipeline system that brings it to your home or business. You will continue to call DEO 1-877-542-2630 for emergency repairs or gas leaks. For non-emergencies such as billing questions, service turn on or turn off, call 1-800-362-7557.

Will it cost me to join the program?

No. Enrollment in the program is free and you need not take any action. You only need to be eligible to participate. Please refer to the eligibility criteria shown below.

Is everyone eligible for the program?

No, by law there are certain limitations on eligibility. All of the current participants in our community's program will receive a notice of the new program rates, terms and conditions and continue to be eligible. Newly eligible residents or businesses must be located within the community limits. Furthermore, they must have received an Opt-Out Notice from Volunteer Energy. Here are the criteria for new member eligibility:

1. Your local utility company must be Dominion Energy Ohio;
2. You must not have chosen a supplier on your own;
3. You must be a resident or business owner located within the community limits;
4. You must not be a PIPP (percentage of income payment program) customer;
5. You must not be in arrears on your bill payment; and
6. You must not be a mercantile customer (natural gas commercial accounts using over 500 Mcf/year).

When does the next program start?

Customer switching takes place when meters are read. Therefore, your start date will depend on when DEO reads your meter. Your service from Volunteer Energy is expected to begin with your December 2017 billing period.

How long is the program?

The community's Governmental Aggregation Program can go on indefinitely. This rate from Volunteer Energy is for one year and will end with your November 2018 billing period.

What if I don't want to participate?

While most residents will remain in, and benefit from Governmental Aggregation Programs, the choice is up to you. If you do not want to participate you will have 21 days in which to return a reply card to Volunteer Energy or call them toll free at 1-800-977-8374. If you fail to do that, Volunteer Energy will enroll you as a new customer. DEO will then acknowledge the enrollment and send you a confirmation letter reminding you of the pending switch. That letter will mention that you can cancel the switch by contacting DEO within 7 days.

Will I get two bills?

No. For your convenience, you will continue to receive only one bill from DEO. It will show DEO's delivery charges and the supply charge amount owed Volunteer Energy. DEO continues to read your meter, issue monthly bills and responds to all service calls.

Can I remain on budget billing?

Yes. If you are on budget billing, you will remain on budget billing. (Note: DEO calculates your monthly budget amount each month by summing your total delivered gas cost on a rolling 12-month basis and dividing that total by average monthly usage in the same 12-month period.)

Can I exit this program without penalty?

Yes. A very attractive feature of our program is your ability to leave free of charge at any time for any reason. There are several "formal" opportunities to take yourself out of the program. First, when an offer is presented you will have 21-days to Opt-Out by returning a card to Volunteer Energy or making a toll-free phone call. If you do not Opt-Out DEO will then send a confirmation notice giving you 7 more days to cancel the switch. Furthermore, by law, you will be able to leave without penalty at least every two years. If you would like to choose another supplier or return to the utility company supply, notify Volunteer Energy at 1-800-977-8374. If you leave the program it may take one to two utility billing cycles before the switch appears on your utility bill.

My friend lives in a nearby community and has a different rate from Volunteer than mine. Why?

Natural gas prices are highly volatile. Market rates change often and quickly. Price differences between communities will vary based primarily on the contract term and the dates on which pricing was secured for the community.

Can I enroll if I do not receive an Opt-Out Notice?

Yes. During the initial enrollment, any eligible resident that does not receive an Opt-Out Notice may contact Volunteer directly at 1-800-977-8374 to enroll in the program.

Can I enroll after the initial enrollment period?

Volunteer Energy will always try to accommodate residents should they wish to enroll after the initial enrollment period. However, Volunteer reserves the right to decline late enrollments depending on market conditions.

Can I enroll even if I currently purchase my gas from another supplier?

Yes, however your supplier may charge an early termination fee. All residents should check the terms and conditions of their current contract for more information.

What happens if I'm part of the program and I move?

A resident moving within the same community can stay in the aggregation by providing Volunteer with their new address. If a resident moves out of the community or does not provide Volunteer their new address, their participation will end and no early termination fee will apply.

Is this related to our community's electric program?

The programs are similar but totally independent. The electric and gas programs have different suppliers and are on different time lines. You do not have to belong to one to participate in the other.

This sounds complex. Is our community qualified to handle such a program?

We have retained Independent Energy Consultants, Inc., a PUCO certified broker and aggregator of electric and natural gas, without using any taxpayer money. They have designed, implemented, and administered similar successful gas and electric programs that impact over 100 communities across Ohio. We will have their assistance and that of Volunteer Energy throughout the program.

How do I contact Volunteer Energy?

Volunteer's customer service department is open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm EST Monday through Friday. You may call them toll free at 1-800-977-8374.

These FAQs help but I still have a question?

If you have additional questions please call Volunteer Energy at 1-800-977-8374, weekdays, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST. For general information on natural gas deregulation in Ohio, you can also visit the Web Sites of the Ohio Consumer's Counsel (www.occ.ohio.gov), or the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (www.PUCO.ohio.gov). **Please do not contact our offices. We are pleased to have made this program possible, but are not prepared to handle calls.**