

## **Billing**

*Why are our bills being estimated?*

- Our outside contractor is having issues with their reading equipment and has been unable to obtain the reads. Bluestem Utilities is actively working to move this service component in-house.

*How are the estimates calculated, as we have been away on vacation?*

- Estimates are automatically generated in the billing system based on the usage from the same period in the prior year.
- If a considerable discrepancy is apparent, due to the estimated reads, please call Customer Care to request physical reads at the Premises.

*I was overbilled due to the estimated reads; will this be corrected?*

- When an accurate read is obtained, the billing will be corrected to reflect the actual usage of the Premises.

## **Geothermal**

*Why do we have to keep paying for Geothermal?*

- The Base Fee and Access Fee are payments applied toward the operation, maintenance, and capital depreciation of the Geothermal assets.
- The expected lifecycle of the Sun Rivers Geothermal Asset is 50 years.
- Geothermal systems are very capital intensive, and as such, it was necessary for the utility to levelize (subsidize) rates by significantly under-earning on its Revenue Requirement in order to ensure rate affordability, which further extended the amortization period of the assets.
- In accordance with standard utility practice, and to avoid unduly high administrative costs, the individual and group geothermal systems are all consolidated into a single utility for rate-setting purposes.

*Can we opt out of Geothermal use?*

- The decision mandating the use of geothermal systems for residents of Sun Rivers was made by the Developer with the support of the Tk'emlups Nation. It was based largely on the economic and climate change parameters present at the time the development commenced. Under its contract to provide utility services to Sun Rivers, Bluestem is required to abide by these mandates.

*How do I get the best use out of my Geothermal system?*

- The Geothermal HVAC is a “set and forget” system, meant to be set at one temperature.
- It does not respond well to short-term changes in temperature, i.e. lowering the temperature overnight causes the system to overwork in the morning to stabilize.
- A qualified professional should perform regular maintenance for optimal performance.

## Gas

### *Why am I billed when I don't use gas?*

- The decision to install pipelines to make natural gas available to residents was made by the developer, Sun Rivers Development Corporation and the landowner, Tk'emlups.
- In accordance with standard utility practice, Bluestem charges a daily base charge, representing a return of and on the capital required to ensure the availability of gas, and commodity and delivery charges, representing the cost of the commodity and other costs that are incurred as a result of gas consumption.
- Rate payers who do not use gas do not incur the commodity and delivery charges, but must still pay the daily base charge, which reflects the availability of gas. This recognizes the fact that the utility incurred a significant up-front cost to install the pipeline infrastructure required to deliver natural gas, and is entitled to recover that capital cost, as well as a reasonable return on that capital. This is a fundamental principle of utility regulation, as in the absence of a daily base charge and some assurance that its capital investment will be recovered, no utility would be prepared to invest the required capital in pipeline infrastructure.

## Electrical

### *What happens during a power outage?*

- Generally, outages come from our supplier, BC Hydro.
- During a power outage, crews are dispatched to investigate and troubleshoot the issue to restore power as soon as possible.
- Bluestem Utilities is actively upgrading the electrical distribution system to reduce outages and reset times during power outages.

### *Why are electricity rates so high?*

- Bluestem Utilities does not set the electric rates as they mirror BC Hydro rates, regulated by the British Columbia Utilities Commission.