

OTTAWA COUNTY NATURAL GAS AGGREGATION PROGRAM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR RESIDENTS

Q. What is a Natural Gas Aggregation Program?

A. A natural gas aggregation program is authorized by Ohio law and is an easy and effective way for a large group of consumers, in this case the residents and small businesses in the unincorporated areas of Ottawa County, to save money on their natural gas bill.

Ohio Law allows political subdivisions – counties, municipalities and townships – to form aggregated buying groups to purchase electricity or natural gas on behalf of their citizens. By bringing citizens together, the aggregation gains group buying power and typically can negotiate a better price with the utility supplier than each aggregation group member could have negotiated individually. The aggregator chooses the electric generation or natural gas supplier for all of the customer-members in its group.

The voters of Ottawa County have previously authorized and the commissioners are currently providing an electric aggregation program within the unincorporated area of the county.

Q. Is voter approval required to offer a Natural Gas Aggregation Program?

A. Yes – The Ottawa County Commissioners are placing an issue on the November 8, 2022 Election Day ballot seeking approval for a natural gas aggregation program. By voting FOR this issue, you will allow your County Commissioners to offer a program to purchase natural gas at a discounted rate for the unincorporated areas of Ottawa County similar to the current electric aggregation program.

Q. Has the current electric aggregation program been successful?

A. Yes - The county previously received voter approval in May, 2010 to establish and currently provides an electric aggregation program. The program has been quite successful, saving county participants over \$7.6 million on their electricity costs since the program began.

Q. How do residents join the Natural Gas Aggregation Program?

A. All eligible residents and small businesses in the unincorporated area of Ottawa County whose natural gas bill come from Columbia Gas of Ohio will be enrolled and will begin receiving the discounted pricing under the program. Residents do not need to do anything to join the program. However, anyone who does not want to participate in the program may opt out either at the beginning of the program or at any later time without paying any costs or penalties for leaving the program.

Q. What is a small business that qualifies to be a part of a natural gas aggregation program?

A. Small businesses that consume less than 5,000 CCF of natural gas on an annual basis qualify.

Q. What does opt out mean?

A. Since all eligible residents are automatically enrolled in the natural gas aggregation program, those residents who do not want to participate are given the opportunity to opt out. First, all residents will receive a letter from the chosen supplier (the letter will also include a message from the Ottawa County Commissioners) which will contain the price per CCF and term for the program. To opt out of the program the resident simply detaches and returns the form at the bottom of this letter within the 21 day opt out period noted in the letter. If for some reason they would like to opt out after 21 days, the citizen can still opt out by contacting the supplier. **RESIDENTS MAY LEAVE THE PROGRAM AT ANY TIME WITHOUT ANY COSTS OR PENALTIES - EVEN AFTER THE DUE DATE ON THE OPT-OUT FORM.**

Q. If I join the Ottawa County Natural Gas Aggregation program, who will deliver my natural gas, read my meter, and respond to emergencies and service disruptions?

A. Your local natural gas utility (Columbia Gas of Ohio) will be responsible for the delivery of natural gas to your house or business. They will continue to read your meter and **YOU WILL STILL RECEIVE YOUR BILL FROM COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO EACH MONTH.** The only thing that will change is in the natural gas supply portion of your bill where you will see the supplier that is servicing the program and what the price is per CCF (100s of cubic feet) units of natural gas.

Q. What are my energy supply choices if I decide to opt out?

A. You can stay with Columbia Gas of Ohio, which will continue to supply your natural gas as it always has, or you can shop for an alternative supplier.

Q. Who will be assisting the Ottawa County Commissioners with the Natural Gas Aggregation Program?

A. The Ottawa County Commissioners are members of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) Energy Program. The program is managed by Palmer Energy, an independent consultant to the CCAO who by contract is prohibited from having any relationship with any supplier, marketer or broker in the energy industry. Palmer Energy has been certified for over 20 years by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio as a competitive electric and natural gas service provider (CRES and CRNGS).