### **Energy Law Forum**

Impacts of COVID Emergency Conditions: Actions Taken and Lessons Learned

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#### **EPCOR OPERATIONS**

- Headquartered in Edmonton,
   EPCOR operates in four
   provinces and four states
- Electricity operations in Edmonton and Ontario, and customer care for Alberta RRO and competitive retail customers
- 2,000,000 customers in North America in water, wastewater, drainage, electricity and natural gas
- Over 3,500 employees





# **EPCOR's Purpose Statement**

Communities count on us. We count on each other.



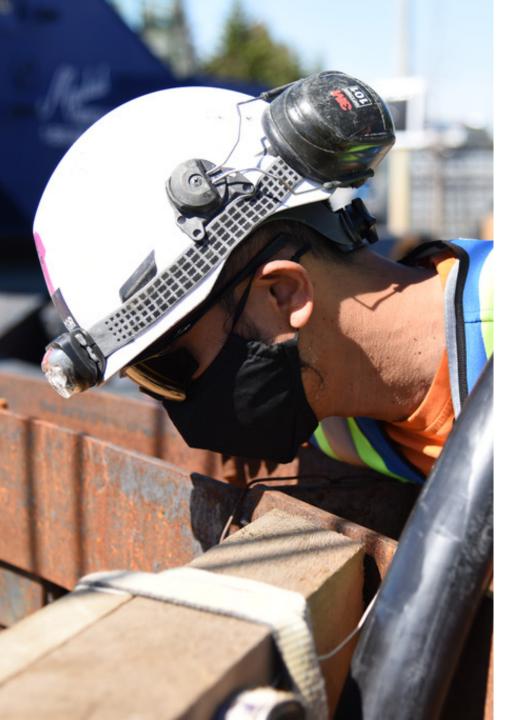
## **Emergency Response and Business Continuity**

#### What Worked

- ✓ Utilities have an emergency response mindset
- √The right people, talking a lot
- ✓ Trusted relationships with public health and infrastructure
- √ Critical staffing dashboard

- ➤ Switching leadership styles
- ➤ The plan on paper wasn't applicable to how the pandemic unfolded





## **Workforce Health and Safety**

#### What Worked

- ✓ Early to lock down, slow to relax
- ✓ Reduced workplace hazards (traffic, line strikes)
- ✓ 1,900 employees working from home

- ➤ Hyper vigilance isn't a long term solution
- Fatigue, mind on task, mental health issues
- > Evolution of what success looks like



## **People**

- What Worked
  - ✓ Appreciation for essential service workers
  - ✓ Employee engagement in early stages, driven by connection to the importance of our work and appreciation for stability
  - ✓ Advancement of hybrid work models

- ➤ Diverging engagement between office and field team members
- ➤ Accelerating retirements and turnover in certain skilled positions
- ➤ Vacation accruals and absenteeism





## **Operating Efficiency**

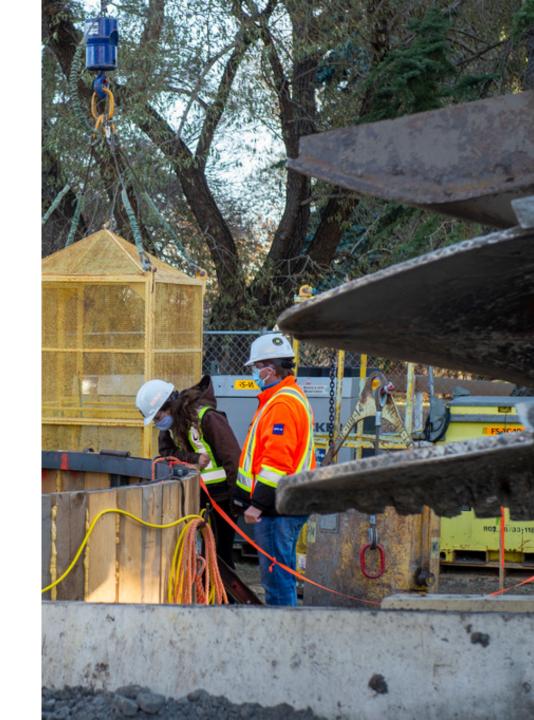
#### What Worked

- √ Workforce availability at record levels
- √ Tested our forecasting and modelling skills
- √Working with crews to discover different ways of delivering services (eg., home inspections by iPhone)

- ➤ 2021 and 2021 are not appropriate baselines for future costs
- ➤ Backlog of non-essential maintenance and inspections, training and vacation
- ➤ Supply of everyday items must not be taken for granted

## **Serving Customers**

- Utility Payment Deferral Program
  - Residential, farm and small commercial customers can defer bill payments for 90 days (March – June, 2020)
  - Repayment over time for deferred amounts
  - No disconnections, late payment fees or collections action
  - AUC authorized to approve a rider on the ISO tariff to recover any deferred bill payments that the utilities / RRO were unable to recover after the end of the period





## **Serving Customers**

#### What Worked

✓ Speed at which the program rolled out provided immediate relief and interim support until federal funding kicked in

- ➤ Cost impacts to utilities of an emergency can be hard to predict
- ➤ Complexity of cost structure can result in under-recovery of approved revenue requirement
- Future responses must take into account all potential cost impacts, and path to recovery must be clear



#### **Lessons Learned**

- 1. Make room for small innovations, and changes with low risk of failure
- 2. Don't take anything for granted
- 3. Never lose sight of your purpose

