

Why Repealing Cap. 278 Weakened Public Safeguards in Barbados' Energy Sector



By the Coalition of Concerned Cooperatives | January 19, 2026

Listen up, Bajans: decisions about electricity affect **your home, your wallet, your children, and your children's children.** And for over 100 years, the law made sure ordinary people had a chance to have a say.

A Century of Public Safeguards

Under the **Electric Light and Power Act, Cap. 278**, anyone applying for an electricity licence had to:

- **Publish notice** in the Official Gazette and local newspapers;
- Allow **three months for objections** from citizens, businesses, and community groups;
- **Consider those objections** before the licence could be granted.

This wasn't bureaucracy. It was common sense. Electricity powers your home, keeps food cold, lights schools, runs hospitals, supports businesses, and shapes our nation's climate resilience.

As we say in Barbados: **“you can't tie up a cow and then tell people to mind the grass.”** Monopoly power without oversight affects all of us.

The Big Change in 2024

In 2024, Parliament repealed Cap. 278 and replaced it with the **Electricity Supply Act**.

The new law **removed the guaranteed public notice and objection process.** Decisions could now be made quietly, without input from ordinary Bajans.

By **November 2025**, Barbados Light & Power Company Ltd. (BL&P) was awarded a **long-term electricity licence** under this system — without public participation.

Why This Matters to You — and Your Children

This is not just policy talk. It **affects your life today and the lives of generations to come.**

Electricity decisions today determine:

- **How much you pay on your light bill** every year;

- **Whether your children grow up** with affordable, reliable energy;
- **Whether your grandchildren inherit** a system that supports renewable energy— or one stuck in outdated ways;
- **Whether small businesses and co-ops** can get fair access to the grid.

When licences are granted without public input, **you lose your voice** — and so do your children. As we say: **“if you sleeping, somebody else gon’ push you out the bed.”**

You cannot choose another electricity provider. Your children will not be able to either. That is why **oversight and transparency matter**.

Transparency Builds Trust

Good governance isn’t just about legality—it’s about **trust**.

For over 100 years, Bajans could expect electricity decisions would not happen quietly. Removing this safeguard and awarding a decades-long licence **broke that trust**.

When decisions are made behind closed doors, confidence suffers — not just in electricity, but in public institutions themselves.

A Future Still Within Reach

Repealing Cap. 278 changed how much say ordinary Bajans have in decisions that affect **your families for generations**.

But it’s **not too late to do right by the people**.

The Coalition of Concerned Cooperatives is calling for:

- **Full publication** of the electricity licence and its terms;
- **Meaningful public consultation** on pricing, renewable integration, grid access, and future amendments;
- **Restoration of public participation safeguards**, so future decisions are open and fair.

A Call to All Bajans

This is about more than policy—it’s about **what kind of Barbados we leave for our children and grandchildren**.

If electricity decisions are made in silence today, **your children and their children will inherit the consequences** — without ever having had a chance to be heard.

Here’s what you can do:

1. Speak Up as a Consumer and Parent

Email the Fair Trading Commission:  info@ftc.gov.bb

Simple message example:

“As a parent and consumer, I am asking for transparency in electricity decisions that will affect my family for generations.”

Or simply:

“Transparency today protects consumers tomorrow.”

2. Hold Election Candidates to Account

Ask every candidate:

- Will you support **public consultation** before long-term utility licences are granted?
- Will you **protect future generations’ right** to have a say in decisions that affect their lives?

Energy decisions are **family questions, not party politics.**

About the Author:

The Coalition of Concerned Cooperatives is an alliance of consumer advocates, renewable energy cooperatives (including Co-opEnergy), and civil society organizations committed to democratic, transparent, and locally owned energy governance in Barbados.