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Puerto Rico Governor Criticizes Utility As Power Outages Increase; Blame Cast on Infrastructure and Even an Iguana For Disruptions

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A power outage in Puerto Rico left Old San Juan in darkness in June 2021.

Puerto Rico's governor has for the first time criticized the company his administration contracted to operate the publicly-owned power company on the island commonwealth, as power outages become more frequent and electric bills grow exorbitant.

On Thursday, Governor Pedro Pierluisi called on Luma Energy — a group made up of Quanta Services Inc. from Houston, and Atco, which is based in Calgary, Alberta — to improve its services and stop making excuses, according to the Associated Press.

"I am not satisfied with the performance of Luma," Mr. Pierluisi said. "It is obvious to me that you have to make changes to your execution plan to significantly improve the service you are offering our people."

The government's 15-year contract with Luma [started in June 2021](#), with the promise of improved and more reliable service, even as the company recognized at the time that the power infrastructure was fragile. On Thursday, Luma CEO Wayne Stensby said at a press conference, "We recognize and acknowledge that there are significant challenges that remain to be addressed. I know that the people of Puerto Rico are tired of excuses and the constant blaming of someone else."

According to the AP, recent power outages have led to the closing of some businesses because of the high expense to operate on generators. And one of Puerto Rico's largest hospitals was without power last week when one of its generators failed following a power outage.

For its part, Luma has blamed everything from sargassum, bad weather, an iguana, lack of maintenance and an aging infrastructure for the outages, according to the AP.

Mr. Pierluisi, however, was not having it. "Although I recognize that the electrical network we have is fragile and obsolete, it is Luma's responsibility to operate it under the critical and emergency state in which it finds itself," the governor said.

Along with the frequent power generation failures, Luma's 1.5 million customers in the U.S. territory are also paying more for electricity. According to the AP, seven electric rate increases requested by Luma this year alone have been granted.