

Ontario Energy Board  
P.O. Box 2319  
2300 Yonge Street, 27th Floor  
Toronto ON M4P 1E4

Re: file numbers EB-2017-0373 (Town of Collingwood) & EB-2017-0374 (EPCOR)

May 2, 2018

To whom it may concern:

I would like to express my deepest concerns over the proposed sale of Collingwood's electrical utility (Collus, formerly Collus-PowerStream) to the out-of-province, for-profit corporation, EPCOR.

During the past three-and-a-half years, Collingwood Council has held more than 40 in-camera meetings to discuss the utility, its shared services agreement with the town, the partnership with PowerStream, its operations and its sale. Never once has Council or anyone in the town administration explained publicly WHY it was dissatisfied with any of these, or what the benefits of a sale would be or what we would lose by giving up local control over rates and service.

Never once has anyone on council or in the town administration explained why they believed the previous sale to PowerStream or the resulting partnership were bad for the community. Never once have we been told why the town now wants to sell the utility to EPCOR or even why an out-of-province corporation was selected as the best buyer.

Never once has the public been consulted, nor engaged in any part of this process to sell our publicly-owned utility. It was all decided upon and conducted behind closed doors. This council has even called for a judicial inquiry into the previous sale (an open and transparent process) without explaining why.

Never once was the public informed why a fair and reasonable bid by the partnering company Alectra (formerly PowerStream) to purchase the other half (one share) of the utility was rejected when the utility was offered for sale.

Discussions on the purchase of the share from Alectra (PowerStream) nor the sale of the entire utility have been never made in public, never been open to public consultation or comment. No one had even been able to learn if there are commissions to be made or paybacks for arranging the sale by any of the parties involved.

A third of Collus' customers live in neighbouring municipalities. None of these municipalities, their councils or those customers were ever informed about the sale, let alone engaged in the process by Collingwood Council or administration.

This is not the open, democratic process we had last term, nor is it the open, democratic process I believe is appropriate for the disposition of a publicly-owned asset in Ontario. Not one of the current councillors ever raised the issue of selling the utility when they ran for office last election, so it cannot be said they have the public's mandate or consent to do so.

I suggest you speak with the staff at Collus about the amount of harassment, innuendo and bullying they have gone through at the hands of some town administration and even some members of council. This

process started weeks after the new council was sworn in and continued unabated for three years. It was bad enough to drive some to retire early, other to take extended stress leave.

The town secretly attempted to sell (or perhaps give) EPCOR our water/wastewater utility as part of the deal, but only backed off – temporarily – when their attempt was made public by utility staff. It's another example of the council and the town operating in bad faith and doing a grave disservice to our residents.

Please do not let them get away with this. This is not an autocracy where a small, elite group gets to sell public assets through secrecy and deception, without public consent or engagement. Do not let them be the bad example by which other municipalities operate in the shadows.

To avoid public scrutiny, much of the process was given to the sole-sourced lawyer, Mark Rodger. He crafted the RFP for the deal, and he sent it out to undisclosed recipients. It took more than a year and a battle through the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner to get that RFP released – long after the deal with EPCOR was signed. But the list of recipients was never released. That secrecy is not how the sale of a publicly-owned asset should be managed. If you approve this deal, then you condone his methods; a precedent that puts all public assets in the province at risk.

There is no guarantee in any definitive form such as a written document the public is allowed to access that the sale will not result in higher electrical rates. We have received vague assurances that residential rates will not go up immediately, but commercial and industrial rates will do so, hurting the town's economic viability.

There is no guarantee that levels of staffing or service will be maintained or that the sale will benefit the community in any way. In fact we lose local input into service and rates, and the town no longer gets a financial dividend as we did when PowerStream was involved. Not one single benefit to this sale has been identified by our council or the town administration.

I request that the OEB reject this proposal, or at the very least put it on hold until after the ongoing judicial inquiry can look into the previous sale. Until the inquiry shows that was open, fair and honest, any subsequent sale will be further tainted by suspicion. And before any proposed sale is allowed to resume, I request that the OEB demand of the town consult with the public in open meetings and on social media to get a proper referendum on the public's attitude towards any sale.

Sincerely

Ian Chadwick

