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Subject: FW: Reference I.D EB-2015-0176
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From: penny trottier [redacted]
Sent: May-13-15 8:28 PM
To: BoardSec
Subject: Reference I.D EB-2015-0176

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On April 24, 2014, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne announced that the Debt Retirement Charge (DRC), a 0.7 cent-per-kWh charge on Ontario electricity consumers, would be terminated at the end of 2015. The Premier described this as a move that would "bring significant rate relief". This is not true.
As background, the 0.7 cent charge may sound small, but it isn't. It collects about $900 million every year from Ontario electricity ratepayers. The charge was introduced in 2002 to pay for the "residual stranded debt" of the former Ontario Hydro. The original residual stranded debt, back in 1998, was $7.8 billion.
In the 2012 Ontario Budget, it was revealed that, up to March 31, 2012, the Ontario government (through the Ontario Electricity Financial Corporation) had collected $12.8 billion dollars as a result of the debt retirement charge. In the fall 2013 Update, the Finance Minister reported that, although about $1.5 billion more had been collected to that point in time, the remaining residual stranded debt was $11.3 billion. So, after paying about $14.3 billion to retire a $7.8 billion debt, Ontario ratepayers still owed $11.3 billion. This amazing arithmetic is due to the Ontario government's addition of interest to the original amount owing and its switching of certain costs incurred by Ontario Hydro's successor companies unto the "residual stranded debt account".
By the end of December, 2015, the DRC will have collected $15.5 billion, so Ontario ratepayers will have paid almost double the original $7.8 billion owing.
Just one year ago, the Ontario Energy Board approved an electricity (i.e. commodity charge) rate increase that cost the average ratepayer $3.63 a month, or $44 annually. It followed that with another increase in November 2013 raising rates by $4.00 per month, or $48 annually. Then, on April 1, 2014, there was another increase of $2.83

per month, or $34 annually. Those increases did not include rate increases for the “delivery” or “regulatory” lines on our electricity bills, which also increased. So, in just one year, the electricity rates jumped $126 annually and Wynne’s announced rate relief won't happen until the end of 2015.

2015 just happens to also be the year the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit (OECB) ends. The OECB reduces the average bill by $13.30 per month or $160 annually. Ontario’s taxpayers pay it, so it is a subsidy from residents’ right pockets to their left pockets. The average bill (electricity, or “commodity charge ” only) at the start of 2016 will thus be $286 higher on an annual basis than it was as of April 30, 2013. Adding the HST brings the increase to $323. There will also be further increases from the Ontario Energy Board’s scheduled rate setting on December 1, 2014, May 1, 2015 and December 1, 2015; those will add a minimum of $100 to homeowners’ electricity costs.

In other words, the average residential bill will have jumped by approximately $425 per year. That represents a 25% increase in electricity rates in two years before Premier Wynne’s “significant rate relief” of $160 per year occurs. Just as the DRC is ended, another scheduled charge from the recent announcement (aimed at reducing energy poverty) of $11 will be added.

By December 1, 2015, our electricity costs for residences will be charged out at over 21 cents per kilowatt (kWh). That will only get worse as more contracted wind and solar plants enter the grid. Add in expected increases in the “delivery” and “regulatory” lines, tack on HST and all-in costs will be in the neighborhood of 30 cents a kWh! Ontario residents will be challenging Germany and Denmark for the privilege of having the most expensive rates in the industrialized world.

Therefore, I ask the OEB to disallow the recent application EB-2015-1076 by Hydro One to be exempted from providing consumers accurate bills 98% of the time as was previously allowed. Consumers paying these sky high rates deserve at the very least to have accurate bills and not estimated bills. There are thousands of complaints registered with the Ombudsman outlining exactly the dire consequences citizens have suffered and are still enduring because of estimated bills. Citizens are still receiving estimated bills, and when Hydro One finally does send an actual bill it is for huge amounts that families are struggling with and given two weeks to pay before scheduled for disconnection.

It is only fair after the billions spent to install Smart Meters that are 1) NOT CSA approved, and 2) NOT calibrated by Hydro One workers - in fact the workers are not trained to calibrate them and we must put our "faith" in a company from another country and the truck driver delivering those meters. If the transport that is bringing these meters hits bad roads or has a minor accident, what is to say that some meter's microchips and internal gears aren't effectively knocked about enough to make these meters uncalibrated?

The Ontario people have spent billions already only to be let down time and time again by Hydro One. The sheer enormity of the money collected from consumers is criminal in light of all the billing and service errors to date. The very least Hydro One can do is adhere to regulations and provide accurate billing 100% of the time, they're already allowed to be accurate for 98%. This is not too much to ask from Hydro One, and is only fair practice to consumers. I am sure Hydro One would not like its consumers to "guesstimate" their own bills and send only what they think they owe. I

cannot think of a single service or business that can get away with guessing/estimating bills to their customers, charging them their "guesstimate" AND receive the payment for said "guesstimate".
Unfortunately, due to the monopoly of the electricity industry in Ontario we are forced to use Hydro one with no option to shop elsewhere. The very least this board can do is require Hydro One to perform on an acceptable level and ensure it is adhering to regulations. They do not need exemption.... for those affected by billing estimates there is a solution : Have the affected individuals call their meter reading into Hydro One. That is the most cost effective measure to take here. It costs Hydro One not one dime more than what they are already doing by sending an employee out once every three months for an actual read. In the interest of consumers I hope the board finds favourable and honest reason to disallow this request in the interest of fairness and industry standards. I cannot imagine potential private owners wanting to buy shares in a company that cannot even get it's own billing under accurate control.

Regards,
Leo Trottier
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