

From: Richard Habinski [<mailto:rhabiniski@windigo.on.ca>]
Sent: December-21-16 4:46 PM
To: BoardSec
Subject: On reserve First Nation rate

To whom it may concern:

On November 23-24, 2016 a two day workshop was held in Sioux Lookout with 7 remote First Nation communities that are currently served by Hydro One Remotes. These seven communities are also part of the Watay Power project which is comprised of 22 First Nation communities that have majority ownership of the project. The seven communities are Bearskin Lake First Nation, North Caribou Lake First Nation, Kingfisher Lake First Nation, Kasabonika Lake First Nation, Sachigo Lake First Nation, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation, and Wapekeka First Nation. The purpose of the workshop was to have discussions with the Hydro One communities that would be connecting to the provincial grid to provide information and identify issues and concerns. Hydro One Remotes provided a lot of information to the participants with regards to their operations.

On Day 2, Lenore Robson, Senior Policy Advisor with the OEB made a presentation on behalf of the Ontario Energy Board regarding the Development of a First Nations Rate for On-Reserve First Nations Electricity Customers as directed by the Minister of Energy. After the presentation the community participants (three from each First Nation) divided into three groups and provided feed back on issues within their communities regarding the cost of electricity and the ability of First Nation band members to pay their hydro bills.

A high level summary of those discussions is as follows and represents the feedback from the community participants that were in attendance.

Issues that were brought up:

1. Remote First Nation communities will require a solution that is different than what will be determined for other non-remote First Nations. The high costs associated with remote living combined with the availability of limited jobs results in many band members living below the poverty line. Issues include lack of year round access, not being able to easily commute to jobs, weather extremes and cost of food and services .
2. Modification/elimination of the current standard "A" rate(97 cents/kwh) for Remote communities until grid connection happens. Also the 29 cent/kwh "A" rate approved when remote communities get connected to the grid should be discussed further. INAC is planning to eliminate their "A" rate funding entirely once grid connection occurs which concerns us greatly. This needs to be discussed further as an issue between the federal government and the province and how it will impact our First Nation communities.

3. Reduction in residential bills will also benefit all remote First Nation band members equally. Hydro One Remote communities do not have a delivery charge but they do have a service charge. An “across the board” percentage reduction on billings is also an option.
4. The OESP is not working as well as it could. More discussion is required.
5. Discussion with the OEB is required beyond the Dec. 31, 2016 deadline. There has been minimal contact with remote communities in the current process.

We have also attached the comments from the three groups in our workshop under attachment “A”. Our remote First Nation communities can not be rolled into a “one solution fits all” category. The realities of living in remote First Nation communities require different solutions than non-remote communities. The issues need to be dealt with separately. Access to goods and services as well as jobs is negatively affecting remote First Nation community members ability to survive on a day to day basis.

PLEASE NOTE:

The information on the “flip chart” summary is from the discussions with the participants after the OEB presentation. There is information referencing the OEB presentation as well as the information provided by Hydro One Remotes. This information was gathered in an informal group setting and has not been altered. It indicates that there are still a lot of question and concerns from the group and that there needs to be a lot more follow-up discussion on the topics. Some individuals had very different perspectives on the problems and this alone requires more follow-up and discussions. We are planning on having a follow-up meeting in the New Year with our Independent Power Authority and Hydro One Communities and have been discussing possible participation with Lenore Robson.

If there are any questions, please contact myself, Richard Habinski-Tech Unit Manager Windigo First Nations Council 807-628-4785.