



BEARSKIN LAKE FIRST NATION

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Bearskin Lake First Nation presentation to the Ontario Energy Board Nov. 29,2017 in Thunder Bay.

My name is Lefty Kam and I am the Economic Development Officer for Bearskin Lake First Nation. I have been asked by my Chief and Council to come to Thunder Bay to make this presentation to the Board.

Bearskin Lake First Nation has many concerns regarding the recent application by Hydro One remotes for a rate increase.

Many people in our remote community of Bearskin Lake struggle with the high cost of living. Unemployment is very high and many community members have trouble paying their hydro bills. When Hydro One workers come to town they have a list of people that are on the disconnection list. When someone gets disconnected they have a hard time coping. It disrupts their service and their lives.

Many homes are in bad shape and drafty. The renovation labourers are unable to do all the repairs due to the lack of materials and money. The health inspectors that arrive in the community check the condition of the houses and report that a number of dwellings are not fit for human habitation. There is nowhere else to put the residents. Very few people have a skidoo to get wood. They end up using ovens and heaters to warm up their homes. It is particularly hard on our elders. They are given one cord of wood from the band which is part of welfare.

We must take care of our community members and we want them to be able to use the income they get to be able to buy groceries. Groceries are very expensive because they are brought in by plane.

Our people are concerned about anyone raising prices even more. So we are worried about the hydro hikes again. Many people have trouble paying up. We do not want to see disconnections. We do not want anyone freezing. We can not afford to be paying more.

We have a few houses that are not connected. The previous residents left a substantial bill. Another family can move in if they pay the bill from the previous residents which is someone else's debt. A reconnection charge is also added on. There is not enough money to cover this. Residents are forced to run power from nearby buildings to their home even though Chief and Council do not support this.

At times we have short outages when Hydro One shuts the system down to do repairs. Even being without power for a short time has its' problems and struggles. But when someone's home is disconnected it is an extreme hardship and no one should have to live like this.

Bearskin Lake also has electrical heat trace on the sewer and water lines in the community. The electrical cost to operate these lines exceeds our funding and the shortfall must come for our band funds. Hydro rates continue to go up but our INAC funds do not.

We realize this is an information sharing forum and there is no vote for or against the raising of electricity rates so we are informing the Ontario Energy Board that we are not in favour of the proposed increase.

Thank you for listening to Bearskin Lake's concerns regarding Hydro One Remotes rate increase application.

Lefty Kam
Economic Development Officer
Bearskin Lake First Nation