

March 10, 2021

Ontario Energy Board  
2300 Yonge Street  
Toronto, ON M4P 1E3

File # : EB-2020-0246

Subject : OEB Decision to Eliminate Hydro One Seasonal Rate Class

To Whom It May Concern,

I am an existing customer with Hydro One with respect to my seasonal residence located in Tiny Township Ontario. I did receive the initial letter August 2019 and the second letter February 2021 from Hydro One regarding the elimination of the seasonal rate class.

In both cases I contacted Hydro One and the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) for details and clarification. In addition I went onto your websites to examine the documentation posted.

Sadly, neither one of you seems to have any answers to the extremely simple questions I the customer is asking. What I am being told and what I am reading are not the same. This unfortunately applies to both of the times I contacted the two organizations. I would have thought you both would have a better understanding of what you are doing and could address our questions as it is now two years later.

I also resent the time I am spending having to actually do the investigative work needed to even write this letter. Normally I would not but at this time I am more concerned with the impacts of Covid and feel my efforts to help my children make it through these difficult time are a better use of my time.

My thoughts as to the elimination of the Seasonal Rate Class are as follows:

- 1) We are in the middle of a pandemic.** Currently we have lost our jobs, are suffering mental health concerns and basically in fear for our lives if we are in a position where the Covid virus could kill us or our loved ones in the target groups.

To even suggest this is a “good” time to proceed with this elimination of a rate class tells me OEB has lost their perspective on reality.

This change should be deferred until 2024-2025 which is when we expect to get back to some kind of normal life/economic status. No one has the time to concern themselves with this now.

- 2) Communication**

Surely it is also clear you do not have any. Perhaps it is time to actually set up what to tell the customer and to issue a document in customer terminology. I read your documentation but many will not as it is too confusing for many of us. Failure to write for the customer means you are not interested in communicating nor are you interested in hearing our opinions. It further means we will not find out what you are doing until after it is already done. It appears that is when both OEB and Hydro One will know also.

Hydro One’s call centre knows nothing about this. They put you on hold to try and find the letter/information and still have no idea what to tell you.

OEB’s call centre is basically about the same. They know what it is but again cannot answer any of our questions.

Of course this could perhaps something to do with the fact we are in the middle of a pandemic and staff is working from home or recovering/isolating from a Covid exposure.

### 3) Suspend and Restore Service

I have been asking for this service from Hydro One since 1998. They refuse to even entertain the idea. I can and do use this service for all of my other utility providers. The service normally (outside of what is happening during Covid) is restored in May and suspended in October. I pay a service charge to suspend (yes reasonable) and the equipment remains on site. I do not lose my credit history and even can keep my billing number or I have to get a new one depending on the provider.

Hydro One said if they were to do this they would have to remove the meter/poles and lines to the residence and it would cost me thousands of dollars to reconnect it. Needless to say I think this is ridiculous but it is what I was told the last time I asked.

This is a simple solution. Let us pay for what we use as we do for our other utility providers.

Why did OEB not direct Hydro One to implement this? I could answer this question for you but I think you already know the reason why it was not done.

It would make perfect sense.

It would be fair, minimize costs of the reclassification and overall billing and meter reading costs (yes I copied this straight out of your documentation and there was more I could have used).

Fair:	We all would pay for what we use
Minimize costs of reclassification:	There would be none
Overall billing:	A simple order(s) within the system and if you put it on your website we could do it ourselves
Meter reading costs:	We do it ourselves and submit at time of suspend

In addition: New process documented within your manuals, training of staff, website update and communicate to customers.

I believe the costs to do this would have been significantly less than the costs incurred since the start of this directive and the changes you are ordering Hydro One to implement.

This should have been considered as a workable option and offered to the customer as a choice.

#### **4) Discrimination of application of seasonal classification**

It is interesting that while OEB are eliminating the seasonal rate class and moving us to the residential rate class, OEB is now setting up another unfair situation in that we are still considered seasonal, the system will continue to treat us as seasonal and not allow us to be considered for any “assistance /billing programs” the residential customers could apply for.

One of the reasons this order was supposed to accomplish : “ to make it fair for everyone” and as far as I can see that is not what you have done. You are discriminating against seasonal customers. You have not eliminated the seasonal rate class. You have moved us into a residential rate class BUT we are still considered seasonal and the system still sees us that way. We will pay even more now for services we are not using.

The argument that I am constantly being told by Hydro One is that I am not paying the same as the others and it is not fair.

Well, I do not pay the same as others in the city where I have my other home for a number of reasons. However, I pay for what I use.

Is that not really the point? Stop telling me we all have to pay the same because that is not true and we are not all the same.

#### **5) Outdated application of power calculation**

Hydro One has explained to me that I have to pay for the “cost” to provide power to my residence regardless of whether or not I use it. They have also explained to me that they are not obligated to ensure the power actually works all the time. They have also explained to me that they do not provide credits for time out of service as again they do not guarantee the power will work all the time. In addition they explained that the costs depend on the number of users and it is all different. I again question: if we are all different why are you telling me we all have to pay the same? Silly me, but again I thought, I should be paying for what I use.

Hydro One is the monopoly provider in my area. Other than putting in “alternate sources of power” I have no choice but to use them. They do nothing for us and remain out of date with what is happening in current times.

Why is it that Hydro’s “admin” rates for providing power are so out of line with the other utilities serving our area? The poles don’t move, the lines are there and many actually live in the area I am in. I cannot keep food in my fridge due to the outages and will be putting in a backup generator when I live there full time. I have no choice due to the lack of service quality.

Strange that my other services always seem to be working and they are seasonal and I pay for what I use and they are reasonably priced. Hydro One advised me to download their app so I can monitor the outages in my area.

Why did OEB not direct Hydro One to explore other methods of calculating their internal admin costs in areas outside of an “urban” classification?

Why did OEB not direct Hydro One to update their service quality or credit us for outages?

Why did OEB not direct Hydro One to train their staff and update their website?

Why did OEB not direct Hydro One to offer suspend/restore service?

Why did OEB not direct Hydro One to offer incentives to convert to other viable options of power generation ie solar?

Of all of the items we actually need does OEB really think this is our number one priority? It appears that OEB is also out of touch with the reality of current life in “rural” areas.

By the way, Covid changed that also.

**6) Just a money grab....**

Specifically to my own billing, I pay usage during the time I am at my seasonal property. In addition during that time period I pay the regulatory charges and Hydro's admin fees. I have no issue with these charges as I have used the service and will pay for my service.

When my power is off for the rest of the year, I pay almost the same in regulatory/Hydro admin charges for a service I do not use or need at this time.

Yes that is seasonal service. Yes a suspend/restore service would solve all of our problems and yes it would be the cheapest thing to do.

I find it also interesting that your order has directed Hydro One to maintain the billing system for seasonal yet modify it to bill us at residential rates.

Seems to me it would have been cheaper to just set up the suspend /restore service and not have to modify the system to add the residential category just for billing coding.

Years to roll this service in due to the billing impacts to the customers? This is really what you think is a good idea? Any plan with this kind of timeline for implementation is not a good plan to even start thinking about.

**In Closing**

I know OEB will do nothing about this letter. The fact that a suspend/restore service was nowhere in your documentation nor Hydro One's means you just do not want a simple solution to be considered. It is clear that this is purely about money and making me pay more for service I do not use. It is discriminatory and unjust.

It is also clear that OEB and Hydro One do not read what their own mission statements say. I read them and perhaps you need to walk in our shoes to get back in touch with our reality. It is not just all about theory for us. We need practical and realistic solutions and not just adding another layer of complicated bureaucracy.

We do not use our services all the same. To tell me I have to pay the same as my neighbours is an outdated and unrealistic statement.

Stop telling me that Hydro Ones “administrative cost” that I am billed for are accurate and fair. We all know they are not.

A directive that is discriminatory and that causes further customer billing issues should not be coming from OEB. This will not resolve anything.

I still want answers to my questions and I see that I will never receive any. If you are supposed to be helping me, when do you ever start?

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'L. Papa', written in a cursive style.

L. Papa

