

March 8, 2021

Ontario Energy Board

Subject: OEB Hearing EB-2020-0246

Dear sirs:

We are some of the 78000 seasonal customers who will move to R2 Low Density Residential Class and who will see an approximate 111% increase to our total electricity bill when the Seasonal Class is eliminated and the All-Fixed Rate is implemented.

This is a \$60 per month increase to customers like ourselves, whereas neighbours who are permanent residents see little change and cottagers in more populated areas see a decrease in costs.

This exorbitant increase will definitely negatively impact our ability to maintain a seasonal residence.

Comments:

As per Hydro One Report [1], we will be excluded from the R2 Class RRRP and DRP subsidies. As low consumption customers, that means we will pay approx. \$120 per month (all-fixed rate) for the privilege of having access to electricity; neighbours who are permanent residents will have the same access at a much cheaper rate. Remember that we seasonal cottagers are also permanent resident ratepayers whose costs help provide this subsidy.

Hardly seems fair and equitable ...

The proposed all-fixed rate changes also appear to be more cost effective overall, if we increase our monthly kWh consumption. Electricity generators and provincial/federal governments encourage participation in energy conservation (with rebates subsidized by taxpayers). Guess there's no point in conserving energy from our perspective ...

We understand low density customers require more infrastructure for access to grid, however, we don't believe putting the increased burden solely on residential customers (specifically mainly northern/remote customers) is appropriate.

Considerations:

We ask that a multi year phase in period be applied to this increase. The OEB's unilateral decision to significantly increase our annual electricity costs will result in a very negative impact to us as we are retirees on a fixed income. Adjusting the cost incrementally will help protect us from having a huge increase at one time and allow us to adjust our finances accordingly.

Hydro One Report [1], Section 4.3 Mitigation of Bill Impacts, “ Option 1: Use Credit Based Approach to Mitigate Impacts” seems the most viable for our situation. This appears to indicate the mitigation of costs over a multi-year period would essentially be shared by both residential and non residential rate classes.

We ask that the billing frequency not be changed during the multi year phase-in. This also includes the continuance of the ability to provide meter “self-readings”. This option is necessary when actual meter readings are annual and the quarterly estimated readings can result in grossly overestimating actual electricity consumption. Continuance of paper billing is also a required option as reliable internet access is still not available for all Ontario residents.

Hydro One Report [1], Section 6.3 Summary of Billing and Meter Reading Frequency Options and Recommendations, “Option C: Adopt Usage Based Levels” appears to be the best suited for low consumption consumers like myself. It allows for variable levels of consumption, a variety of reading options and a variety of billing options which minimize impact of those customers most affected.

Some closing thoughts :

The privatization and deregulation of Ontario Hydro in the late 1990s has led residential customers down an increasingly expensive path. This will eventually force northern/rural cottage customers to find alternate and more affordable energy sources resulting in further increases to Ontario electricity consumers.

Sadly, it seems like residential class customers and specifically northern/rural cottagers are not part of the “me” in the OEB’s goal to “provide me with reliable energy services at a reasonable cost”.

We have enjoyed our rather modest camp, shared with extended family, for the past 60plus years. It would be unthinkable to loose this retreat because of the excessive increase in energy costs.

Thank you for allowing us to voice our concerns and opinion.

Trout Lake campers,

Michel Gravelle

Monique Gravelle

Nicole Gravelle

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[1] Hydro One Report on Elimination of the Seasonal Class; Oct15, 2020 Update; EB-2016-0315.