

-- Name --

Amber MacNeil

-- Do you reside in the impacted service area? -- Yes

-- Comments --

It is clear with a changing climate, growing population and aging infrastructure that rates may need to be increased to service the city. However, I want the OEB and Hydro Ottawa to be aware of the unique situation my local neighbourhood faces. Our neighbourhood has unprecedented rates of power outages and we are often among the very last homes to have power restored (last few hundred during major city wide outages). Further, my side of the street takes days longer than our neighbours across the street to have power restored.

During the May 2022 derecho our side of the street was without power for more than a week. My husband was travelling and I was caring for two young children with daily early morning grocery runs so there was fresh food to pack in lunches, scouring the city for premium gas required for the small generator a neighbour lent us, etc.. We did not receive regular, timely or location specific updates to our situation. We were quite literally in the dark.

I am asking that, as a condition of the rate increase, Hydro Ottawa be required to increase transparency to local residents during outages and especially during emergency situations even if they happen on the weekend (i.e., must have protocols for 24/7 public crisis communications). I am asking that Hydro Ottawa be required to provide specific, local information (e.g., outage due to fire at local power station estimated time to fix X days; outage due to downed power line/downed pole estimated time to fix Y days), daily updates on status with revised time estimates, number of homes remaining without power by neighbourhood in a public, accessible and user friendly manner.

The current outage map, website and twitter feed is abysmal! Climate and weather anxiety is on the rise, especially among young children. My kids were 3 & 5 when the June 2019 tornado hit west end Ottawa leaving us without power for days and when covid lock down started in March 2020. This cohort of children have faced unprecedented traumatic events during critical childhood development. Due to severe weather events and the pandemic these children have survived terrifying storms, runs to seek cover in response to weather emergency notifications, prolonged school closures, mandatory masking, social distancing, plexiglass dividers in classrooms, strict cohorting, quarantined and limited access to learning resources, etc.. Weather anxiety used to be a rare occurrence and now is wide-spread through our community.

HydroOttawa and all of our public institutions owe these children, and the broader public, vastly improved information management, crisis communications during outages or severe weather events, and transparent communication of the state of HydroOttawa's infrastructure and plans/progress to addressing known issues. For example, I have been told informally by HydroOttawa workers in my neighbourhood that we are particularly vulnerable to outages (we had one recently for a day and the weather was sunny and normal) due to trees near power lines and a local transmitter/power station that is very old and in poor condition.

If ratepayers are to absorb additional costs from HydroOttawa's proposal to the OEB, then funding should in return be contingent on the above mentioned improvements.