

Letter of Comment - EB-2024-0115

-- Name --

Michael Jacino

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

-- Comments --

As an Ottawa resident and customer, I am dumbfounded by Hydro Ottawa's submission of application, EB-2024-0115, to seek substantial distribution rate increases for both residents and business owners of commercial operations.

Additionally, as a citizen interested in active engagement and participation in these types of processes, I found the sheer number of documents to review (74) both overwhelming, lacking coherent organization and exhausting to parse through. It led me to believe that this massive paper dump was a strategic 'shell-game' to distract from the lack of simple, easy-to-understand information that would enable an honest review of the facts behind this application. I am not sure if this was a shrewd tactic by Hydro Ottawa or the responsibility to enforce stricter guidelines on application submission by the OEB: regardless it was an unsettling and disappointing exercise.

With recent shifts in the political climate and the resulting environment of 'uncertainty' that this has created for employment and the ever-increasing cost of living, this application is poorly timed. Hydro Ottawa should have read prevailing news headlines to better understand the climate in which this application landed. These proposed distribution rate increases are not happening in a vacuum: they are in addition to increases consumers and business owners face in terms of housing, food, fuel, education, transportation, salaries, etc.

Set this reality against the backdrop of Hydro Ottawa recently reported net income of \$39.7M (2022). It is quite concerning that a few short years later, this income less the \$20M dividend to the City one has to wonder what happened to these profits? Did a lack of financial transparency, prudent spending or significant inefficiency lead to this application? Climate change and its impacts have been known for decades. Did Hydro Ottawa management simply decide to defer practical planning until the twelfth hour? Either way it bolsters a lack of confidence in all players and key organizational and political decision-makers.

I urge the Ontario Energy Board to reject this application for proposed distribution rate increases. (1) The actual societal climate must be considered as the backdrop to this request - it is not the right time and will create an unnecessary burden on all rate payers. (2) The electrical system from generation to delivery should be a governmental responsibility - meaning distribution should be removed for citizens' and business owners' shoulders. We will pay for what we use and Hydro Ottawa's job is to ensure supply and deliver it. (3) When it comes to assuring that homes and businesses are able to "keep the lights" on in these uncertain times, Hydro Ottawa should be directed to develop actual citizen engagement and participation processes with simpler-to-understand communications - this application was a confusing maze of information making engagement challenging. (4) Future electrical needs will not diminish, additional funding is required and OEB must ensure that Hydro Ottawa can deliver on its five pillars: Customer Value, Financial Strength, Organizational Effectiveness, Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability.