

-- Name --

Lara Trehearne

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

-- Comments --

Argument Against Hydro Ottawa's 2026 Rate Increase Application (EB-2024-0115)

The proposal of residential customers paying an additional \$6.08/month, and a small business customers paying \$14.57/month, starting January 1, 2026, from Hydro Ottawa's application to increase electricity distribution rates in 2026 is both poorly timed and inadequately justified.

First, the application process itself lacks transparency and accessibility. The submission, including 74 documents, is overwhelming; the volume of technical material discourages meaningful public engagement. Moreover, it is not at all accessible to all customers of Hydro Ottawa, particularly the neurodivergent and visually impaired communities. This approach - one email notice, not two weeks before the cut off, with 74 pages of technical material - in fact seems designed to DISCOURAGE meaningful public engagement.

This rate hike comes at a time when many households and businesses are already under financial pressure. According to Statistics Canada, while inflation slowed to 2.4% in 2024, shelter costs rose by 5.7%, and service-related inflation remained high at 4.1%, indicating that essential living expenses continue to climb. These increases compound the financial burden on consumers, making any additional utility cost hikes particularly difficult to absorb. The Daily — Consumer Price Index: Annual review, 2024 : <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250121/dq250121b-eng.htm>

Electricity distribution is a critical public utility. The burden of infrastructure costs should not be shifted to consumers, especially when Hydro Ottawa is a municipally owned utility whose profits ultimately benefit the City of Ottawa. This raises questions about whether the utility's financial planning aligns with its public service mandate. Annual Report 2022 : https://hydroottawa.com/sites/default/files/2023-06/Hydro%20Ottawa_2022_Annual_Report_EN_WEB.pdf

Hydro Ottawa reported a net income of \$39.7 million in 2022, including a \$20 million dividend paid to the City of Ottawa. As a designated Sustainable Electricity Leader by Electricity Canada, the utility has publicly committed to environmental stewardship, operational excellence, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2030. These commitments, while commendable, must also be reflected in the utility's approach to rate-setting.

Given its strong financial performance and its role as a municipally owned public utility providing an essential service, Hydro Ottawa has a responsibility to ensure that electricity distribution remains both sustainable and affordable for its customers. The proposed significant rate increases appear inconsistent with these principles, particularly at a time when affordability is a growing concern for residents and businesses alike. Perhaps a better approach would be for Hydro Ottawa to look for efficiencies, as is the reality for all private sector, businesses, and residences in the current economic climate.

Hydro Ottawa commits to being net-zero by 2030 | Hydro Ottawa

<https://hydroottawa.com/en/news-releases/hydro-ottawa-commits-being-net-zero-2030>

While I very much appreciate Mark Sutcliffe's commitment to keeping property tax increases reasonable, and the

announcements I have seen that seem to indicate evidence-based decision-making, everywhere around the city are seemingly mismanaged, and/or 'nice to have' projects from Jim Watson's years, at least some of which should have been called off after the deficits of Covid. This looks a lot like an increase in taxation by another name to pay for a City public utility, on top of already significant budget increases for other City services approved by council for 2025. Enough.