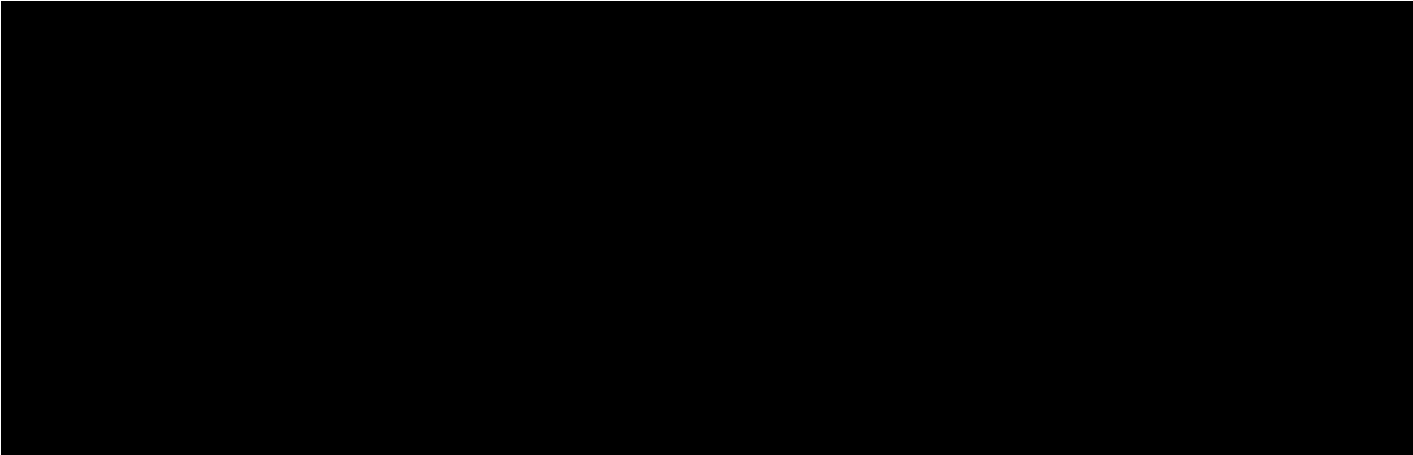




-- Name --

Andrew Pawelski

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

Yes

-- Comments --

I am a resident of Belle River and an E.L.K. Energy customer, and I do not support this rate increase.

The cost of living is already high enough. Groceries, property taxes, insurance, gas, heating and just about every other household expense have gone up. Electricity rates are already a significant monthly cost, and residents should not simply be expected to absorb another increase because the utility's costs have gone up.

I understand that E.L.K. has to maintain its system and invest in infrastructure. Nobody wants unreliable service or aging equipment that creates problems down the road. But before customers are asked to pay more, I think E.L.K. should have to clearly show that it has done everything reasonably possible to control its own costs.

That means looking closely at operating expenses, staffing, administration, procurement, capital projects and anything else that can be reduced, delayed or done more efficiently.

E.L.K. is not operating in a competitive market. As a customer, I cannot simply switch to another electricity distributor if I think the rates are too high. That is exactly why the Ontario Energy Board needs to be very careful about approving increases.

According to the OEB, the proposed increase would add about \$5.63 per month to the bill of a typical residential customer using 750 kWh. On its own, that may not sound like a huge amount. But every company and level of government seems to use the same argument — that each individual increase is only a few dollars.

Those increases add up.

I am also concerned that part of the proposed solution appears to involve delaying the recovery of certain costs to future years. To me, that does not solve the problem. It simply moves part of today's increase into tomorrow.

Families have to live within their means. Businesses have to find efficiencies when costs rise. A regulated utility should be expected to do the same before going back to customers for more money.

I am not suggesting that necessary infrastructure work should be ignored. I am saying that E.L.K. should have to prove that the spending behind this increase is necessary, reasonable and being managed as efficiently as possible.

Residents of Belle River are already paying enough.

I respectfully ask the Ontario Energy Board to take a very hard look at this application and require E.L.K. to justify

every major cost before approving any increase. If spending can reasonably be reduced, deferred or offset through efficiencies, that should happen before additional costs are passed on to customers.

-- Was AI used for the letter of comment? --

No