



Letter of Comment

In accordance with the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, to submit a letter of comment concerning an application currently before the Commission, please provide a completed form to commission.secretary@bcuc.com. If email is unavailable, please mail the form to the address above. By doing so, you acknowledge that all letters of comment are published with the author's name as part of the public evidentiary record, both in print copy and on the Commission's website. All personal contact information provided on this page is removed before posting to the website. Forms must be received by the Commission by the last filing date included in the proceeding's regulatory timetable before final arguments.

Proceeding name

Residential 2 Tier Electricity Rates

Are you currently registered as an intervener or interested party?

Yes, interested party

Name (first and last)

Sharon Wiener, Benjamin Manea

City

[REDACTED]

Province

BC

Email

[REDACTED]

Phone number

[REDACTED]

Letter of Comment

Name (first and last)

Sharon Wiener, Benjamin Manea

Date:

August 12.2016

Comment: Please specify the reasons for your interest in the proceeding, your views concerning the proceeding, any relevant information that supports or explains your views, the conclusion you support and any recommendations. The Commission may disallow comments that do not comply with the Rules of Practice and Procedure.

My husband and I live in [REDACTED], BC, and are residential customers of Fortis BC, with no access to natural gas. Our electricity bills have increased significantly since Fortis implemented its 2 Tier billing pricing. For us, the issue is one of discriminatory fee structuring that charges an unfair extra cost to those who live in rural communities with access to only electrical energy. In 2012 we invested in costly upgrades for our older home built in 1977, as recommended by the LiveSmart BC program promoted by Fortis BC. We installed a new furnace and heat pump, new attic insulation, and new low flow toilets, and we have implemented a variety of energy-saving measures such as installing a split unit in our bedroom which serves as our primary AC and heating unit, washing in cold water, lowering the furnace thermostat, only to find that despite achieving sometimes as much as a 40% reduction in our energy consumption, our bills continue to rise and we are still being charged a disproportionately high amount because we do not have access to gas. We have burned wood in our fireplace to 'top up' our heat, but the wood is very expensive and this is not an environmentally friendly solution. We have compared our bills with friends of ours in Naramata who also have access to natural gas (a couple living in a comparably-sized home) and their bills were cheaper, because their 2nd tier consumption was lower. Therefore we ask that BCUC address this inequitable 2 Tier billing system so that all urban and rural residents of BC, electric and gas customers alike, are charged equitably for their usage. Regardless of whether some customers can afford to pay these rates, they are still discriminatory and unfair.

Here is an example of our 2 highest billing/consumption periods, comparing our bills before our heat pump installation and before the 2 Tier program was implemented, vs. current heat-pump and energy-saving measures in place, concurrent with the 2 Tier rate:

Nov. 18.10 - Jan. 18.11 (pre heat-pump and pre- 2 Tier pricing)

\$963.40

10,500 kwh -61 days

vs. 2 Tier rate implementation:

Nov. 20.12- Jan. 18.13 (post heat-pump: roughly 40% reduction in energy consumption!)

\$821.72

6, 621 kwh – 59 days

Nov. 21.14 – Jan. 22.15

\$1093.40

7874 kwh – 62 days

Nov. 23.15 - Jan. 25.16

\$1104.24

7400 kwh – 63 days

AND

Jan. 18 -Mar 16.11 (pre heat-pump and pre 2 Tier pricing)

\$866.62

8989 kwh – 51 days

vs. 2 Tier rate implementation:

Jan.21- March 20.14 (post heat-pump)

\$871.04

6427 kwh – 58 days

Jan. 22- Mar. 23.15 – 2 tier

\$665.98

4799 kwh – 60 days

Jan. 25 – Mar 23.16

\$700.54

4748 kwh – 58 days

If you compare the bills, you can see that despite a very large decrease in energy consumption, our bills have increased significantly and remain disproportionately high.

We believe that this is because the majority of our electricity consumption is necessarily in Block 2 (no mitigation of natural gas to heat our home or water etc.), which suggests an error in the design of the BC Government's 'conservation' rate. We believe that the above figures of increased costs to us, despite a reduction in our energy usage AND despite a large investment of capital, illustrate a serious and unacceptable inequality in billing by Fortis BC since 2012.

We are a perfect example of a home that Nick Marty, in his letter to the BCUC, refers to in the following:

" The huge increase in electricity bills that I have experienced since 2012 is a direct result of the Government and the BCUC requiring electric utilities to implement a two-tiered pricing system that wasn't properly designed to address the diverse set of electricity consumers that exist in BC. The RIB, as structured ignores the fact that there is a small percentage of BC residents (often rural) who use electricity for space and water heating and will, regardless of their efficiency levels, always consume far more electricity than the BC average. This is because most BC residents, particularly those in major urban areas, have access to natural gas and use that fuel for space and water heating, significantly reducing their need to consume electricity.

Please address the serious inequalities outlined here that have been ignored since the 2 Tier rate was implemented in 2012. We have been petitioning and sending letters to no avail since that time.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Sharon Wiener and Benjamin Manea

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