

7 February 2014

Final Submission to the BCUC from Jim Stachow, Intervenor, BC Hydro Meter Choices Program

Commission Members:

I managed to read at least 80% of the over 1,000 submissions you received regarding this application. I trust that you read them as well. If you did, you read the impassioned pleas of hundreds of your fellow British Columbians that you protect them from the detrimental effects of smart meters to their health, privacy, family finances, bees, and more, not only as they see them, but as their medical doctors, and other experts see them. And yes, these pleas came from the same people who remunerate you.

Do you recall how many submissions you read from the public in support of this application? I do.

Zero.

As indicated in my first IR, both my wife and I have been advised in writing by our medical doctor that due to our pre-existing medical conditions it is not advisable that we have a smart meter installed at our home.

For this and many other reasons, I have stated in writing to BC Hydro that I do not want a smart meter at my home. However, BC Hydro is insistent. Therefore, for you to approve anything but a token monthly fee for my family to retain our analogue meters is for you to be an accessory to extorting this payment from us on pain of potential medical harm if we refuse to pay. This is not complicated.

Prior to this application I had no familiarity with the BCUC. Despite the overt and shameful muzzling efforts of the Provincial government specifically targetting your scope with respect to this application, I have been pleased to experience the efficiency of BCUC staff and the opportunity to publicly question BC Hydro. Most regrettably, I have also had the displeasure of receiving BC Hydro's non-answers to many questions put to them as part of this process. In fact, they refused to answer a single question I submitted to them in my IR2. I will present but one example of this, which I believe perfectly encapsulates the spirit which BC Hydro, our monopoly electricity provider, has brought to this process:

In part 2 of my IR I referred to Exhibit D-49-1, submitted by David Garnett, which stated:

Energy Minister Bill Bennett is quoted in the Sept. 30, 2013 Times/Colonist as telling the B.C. Hydro executives "I made it very clear to Hydro that you guys better be damn sure you aren't padding these costs; that they are real costs".

So, the Minister is on record that not only was the prospect of BC Hydro padding costs in this application a possibility, it was a possibility he felt the need to publicly and emphatically warn them not to commit.

In short, to the Minister the prospect of BC Hydro padding costs in this application was a material concern.

It therefore seemed entirely reasonable for me to ask, as I did, in my IR2.2.2:

Did you pad your costs? If so, please itemize.

Here we get to the pivotal moment of this entire process - BC Hydro's answer to this simple question.

The question in this IR appears to be rhetorical. A such, BC Hydro declines to respond.

Pardon?

Was the Minister being rhetorical when he publicly admonished BC Hydro about padding costs?

And just what is a rhetorical question? The compete definition provided by my Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition reads as follows:

A question asked only for effect, as to emphasize a point, no answer being expected.

Let me state in the strongest possible terms to BC Hydro:

I WANT AN ANSWER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

THIS IS MY MONEY WE'RE TALKING ABOUT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(incidentally, BC Hydro claimed other of my IR2 questions were rhetorical but let's stick with this one as it truly does get to the very heart and spirit of this application.)

Here I am, a simple blueberry farmer who has taken my own time to read through almost a thousand submissions to this Commission, to read through as may IR questions and responses as time permitted, only to have this IR treated so dismissively by the applicant.

But wait. Was BC Hydro simply being dismissive, or did they fear that answering the question honestly would have brought them into disrepute? Commissioners, please trust your instincts on this one. And to help you in your deliberations, I remind you of what the intrepid Mr. Garnett also stated in Exhibit D-49-1:

Regarding the B.C. Hydro cost projections surrounding this issue, I am struck by the following. The most blatant example of B.C. Hydro padding the costs of their Meter Choices Program (to penalize customers who do not acquiesce to their Smart Meter demands) is contained in BCUC B-5 (BCH response to Interveners Information Request on pages BCUC_1_009_07 and BCUC_10_1). It states that before the introduction of the Smart Meter program in July 2011, B.C. Hydro owned 20 check meters which were apparently adequate to cover 1.9 million accounts (a ratio of 1 check meter per 95,000 customers). In their new justification of charges, B.C. Hydro stipulated they would require 500 check meters for 10,000 accounts (a ratio of 1 check meter per 20 customers).

Commissioners, where there is smoke, there is indeed fire.

The law is one thing. Morality is another. Commissioners, you are squarely positioned between very strong opposing forces. I sincerely wish you the fortitude to do the right thing in this matter.

Jim Stachow