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Information Request To: BC Hydro

BCUC Hearing: Meter Choices Program

Date: 6 November 2013

1. Page 1-2 line 6 “2. the installation of a radio-off meter
 - 1.1. Has the cost of the purchase of new meters without a radio function in them been factored into the decision and if so what is the cost of meters manufactured with no radios installed in them?
 - 1.2. With the Radio Transmitter turned off are there any other functions required for the Smart Grid still functioning?
 - 1.3. When the Radio is turned off can the Smart Meter pulse a signal (infrared or otherwise)?
2. Page 1 -5 Lines 6 &7 “BC Hydro to perform electricity balance analyses for the electric distribution system to better localize sources of electricity diversion ”
 - 2.1. Question 3 Will the Smart Grid balance the load to each individual installation, or is the balancing limited to the local area with multiple installations?
3. Page 1-6 Lines 3 & 4 “b) costs incurred with respect to the installation and operation of, and services related to, smart meters from all customers”
 - 3.1. Question 4 A number of years ago the the basic charge fee (currently \$0.1505 a day) was added to the general tariffs to pay for the cost of meter reading and billing. At the time there was considerable comment that a normal company includes the cost of billing in their general fee. Has the approximately \$10 per billing period been factored in as a cost the opt-out users are already paying? As meter readers are no longer being used and much of the billing is on line will the basic charge be removed from the bills of customers with Smart Meters?
4. Page 1-5 lines 11-15 “Section 3(2) of the Direction provides that the BCUC must allow BC Hydro to establish a regulatory account for the recovery of “program costs”, “investigation costs” and “infrastructure costs” that are not recovered from customers at premisesincurred during the period January 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014 ”
 - 4.1. Opt-out customers were told if they did not want a Smart Meter they would be put at the end of the list until after further discussions with them about Smart Meters were conducted, they were not told the costs of the additional information would be charged to them.

- 4.2. Why are opt-out customers being threatened with charges retroactively?
 - 4.3. Will the opt-out customers be credited with the savings of not having BCHydro provided and install a Smart Meter?
5. Page 1-5 line 19 “BC Hydro to install legacy meters or radio-off meters for ineligible customers. ”
 - 5.1. Many Customers succumbed to intimidation and pressure tactics and accepted smart meters with out being fully advised of their options by BCHydro. Will these customers be allowed to have the meter of their choice installed?
 - 5.2. Why are these customers that accepted “a modification of their contract” without being made fully aware and equal informed of the facts related to the various concerns about smart meters not eligible for an opt-out?
6. Page 2-3 lines 8-10 “When a customer requested the smart meter installation at their premises be put on hold, a dedicated customer service representative contacted the customer to answer their questions, ”
 - 6.1. Question 10 Why did BCHydro insist that customers with questions look at BCHydro and associated web sites yet when a customer had concerns and questions to be answered and refereed BCHydro to competent web sites BCHydro refused to consider the information – if internet access is appropriate for 1 party to use to communicate their information then it is appropriate for all parties to use to communicate information – why the double standard on the party of BCHydro?
7. Page 2-3 lines 15 -17 “In addition, there are about 15,000 smart meter installations that have not been completed for various reasons.
 - 7.1. Question 11 It is reported that in some rural areas the smart grid is not expected to be fully operating for up to 5 years, is that correct?
8. Question 12 Will opt-out customers in areas that do not have a fully operating smart grid be charged the monthly fee?
9. Page 2-8 Lines 12- 16 “In the event of a failed installation, BC Hydro will attempt to contact the customer via telephone to inform the customer that the terms of BC Hydro Electric Tariff require the customer to allow BC Hydro access to its meter installed at the premises. BC Hydro’s disconnection policies and procedures will thereafter apply if the issue of obstruction cannot be resolved.
10. If the customer was not contacted and advised of the Terms of the BCHydro Electric Tariff” why are they now being advised they are subject to the cost retroactively?

- 10.1. Some opt-out customers have a serious concern about the negative effects of the meters on their health, being forced and coerced into accepting the meters is causing great stress for some, stress that for some on the various disability amounts or GAIN supplement is a serious situation for them when the \$35 a month represents 1 1/2 weeks of food, a person should not be required to choose between food or electricity in our society – both are considered a necessity. Both the premier's office and the Minister's office have acknowledged the question of how will low income people be accommodated is a good question, yet have not said how they will accommodate low income people, does BCHydro have a way to accommodate these people?
11. Page 3 -1 lines 4 – 10 “For eligible customers who choose a radio-off meter, BC Hydro will install an Itron OpenWay meter adjusted so that the meter’s components that transmit data by radio are deactivated. Meter data will have to be collected through manual meter data downloads using a tablet computer and a secure optical probe that attaches to the front of the meter. For eligible customers who choose to retain a legacy meter, the meters will have to be read manually at the customer’s premises ”
- 11.1. For many years BCHydro has allowed people in isolated areas of the province to read their own meter by completing cards with dials to correspond to the meter, BCHydro customers are capable of reading their own meter – completing cards, and mailing them, phoning the reading in or taking pictures of them and emailing or otherwise sending them in, the few that are not can arrange for others to do so for them. Why has this option not been considered?
- 11.2. Recently a BCHydro rep advised me that the plan was for meters to be read once every 6 months if possible and estimated for the other 2 or more readings. Why is BCHydro attempting to charge for monthly readings when their standard practice has been bi monthly and they are planning to move to semi annually or less?
12. Page 3-1 Lines 12 & 13 “These include costs related to customer account processing, additions and modifications to information technology infrastructure,
- 12.1. The customer is already paying for account processing in the basic charge fee and the current information technology infrastructure is handling the legacy meters; why and what modifications are required to accommodate the opt-out customers?
13. Page 3-11 lines 7-9 “The higher the smart meter density, the less likely an individual meter will be critical to mesh formation since the mesh can reform using a smart meter that is near the meter that was removed ”

- 13.1. The prime purpose of a mesh network is to be able to function if one node is taken off line. It is highly unlikely many opt-out customers will be critical to the operation of the mesh network and if a single customer is that critical to the network there are far more serious security and stability issues for BCHydro to deal with than a few opt out customers. It is probable that all the necessary extenders are already installed or planned for those already accepting smart meters that no extenders will be required to accommodate those that opt out. Also those that have chosen to opt-out will occur predominately in clusters and the BCHydro extra extender model is modeled on the widest possible interpretation of the grid by those that are choosing to opt-out. If the grid is operating now with out the opt-out meters why will additional extenders be required?
14. Page 2-16 Lines "9-10 & 19 -22" "In a 10 typical year, 150,000 to 300,000 meter seals expired" "Of the approximately 60,000 legacy meters which remain in the field, about 40 per cent have a Measurement Canada seal that has either expired or will expire at the end of calendar 2013. A further 14 per cent will expire by the end of calendar year 2014. "
- 14.1. Industry Canada has advised that the legacy meters are approved for 12 years with an additional 10 years because of BCHydro certification procedures. With a current installed base of 1.9 million it would mean approximately 85,000 meter seals would expire a year - allowing for the installed base to have grown considerably in the last 22 years it is not believable that in the last couple of years and next year that over 50% of the seals will have expired. In each of the last 22 years how many meters have been replaced because the meter seal had expired and what was the installed number of meters for that year?
- 14.2. If the legacy meter has to be replaced because the meter seal has expired why is the customer being charged for a cost that BCHydro would have had to do even if no smart meters were deployed - is that cost not already part of the tariff?
15. Page 3-19 Lines 10-11 "FMA will need to continue to visit the customer's premises every two months to manually download electricity "
- 15.1. BCHydro has estimated my meter for the last 6 months, they have not inspected the meter to see if there has been theft of power or evidence of tampering. If they have not been concerned for the last 6 months, what changes on Dec 2, 2013 and suddenly they have concerns that I am tampering with the meter and will need to inspect it every 2 months?
16. Page 3 -28 Lines 12 -15 "Proposed charges have been developed so that the incremental costs related to the Meter Choices Program are

expected to be recovered from those customers choosing the option and not from other BC Hydro ratepayers. ”

16.1. Will the Basic charge of Of \$0.1505 be reduced for non opt-out customers, will the current basic fee be considered as part or all of the fees paid by the Opt-out customers?

16.2. A charge of approximately \$13.00 for Basic Fee, taxes etc and \$70 per billing period when the amount of power used in the same period is less than \$30 - a surcharge of almost 300% on top of the power usage charge. is ridiculous and beyond any sense of being appropriate. Why has no consideration into proportioning the fee in relation to the amount of power used been considered?

17. North American Electric Reliability Corporation requirements

17.1. Is the Smart Meter program a requirement ordered or required of BCHydro or provincial government as a requirement to be part of the North American Electric Grid of other out of province organisation?

17.2. Has an outside agency such as the North American Electric Reliability Corporation specified or otherwise instructed BCHydro or the government the opt outs fees to be imposed.