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Utilities Commission**

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

Are you currently registered as an intervener or interested party?

Name (first and last)

City

Province

Email

Phone number

Letter of Comment

Name (first and last)

J.P. Squire

Date:

Oct. 3, 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.

Thank you for the late opportunity to comment.

I live in a rural area of Kelowna (Glenmore Valley) where, according to your definition, I do not have access to natural gas. Like many others, I feel that I am being held hostage by Fortis since I have no choice but to pay and pay and pay. Until a few years ago, a Fortis natural gas line ended at the corner of Glenmore and Scenic roads. In the 1980s, myself and four neighbours on dead-end Galiano Road asked about extending the natural gas line. At that time, we were told it would cost \$10,000 each to get natural gas service to our property lines. Then we would have to extend it to our homes, plus install natural gas furnace, stoves, hot-water heaters, etc. All to save how much money? There was not enough difference in energy rates to justify the expense.

Since then, the natural gas line has been extended along Glenmore Road past the T intersection of Galiano Road but there is still no line on Galiano Road.

My new neighbours decided to investigate and discovered Fortis would now charge \$18,000 to extend the line a short distance up Galiano Road to their property line. That was subsequently reduced to \$12,000 based on lower anticipated volume but then, Fortis began making other demands which nixed the deal. Instead, they've decided to take many of the same steps as I did.

In my case, I got a Fortis energy audit, then spent \$6,000 to install an air-source heat pump with programmable thermostat, removed house siding and added a layer of blue styrofoam insulation and then new siding (on a 1,300-square-foot modular home), replaced virtually all of the windows, stove, hot-water heater, dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer with energy-efficient products. The heat pump thermostat is turned down during the day and overnight hours. I've closed the door and shut off the heat to one of the three bedrooms. Outside lighting is motion-activated, and inside lighting switched to LEDs.

In spite of that, last winter's electrical bills were \$485 for November-December, \$496 for the next 30 days and \$398 to end the cold-weather months. That's quite a financial hit for someone on senior pensions. I now pay \$218 a month (\$2,612 a year), more than 10 per cent of my before-income tax income on electrical bills with no end in sight for increases which are not geared to any increase in CPP/OAS pensions.

Even during the summer months when I spend virtually all of my free time outdoors, the minimum monthly charge is at the 800 kWh limit for lowest rate.

However, apparently, I'm fortunate. Another neighbour with a larger home on Galiano Road claims he pays \$2,000-\$2,500 a month for electricity during the winter.

The solution, of course, is a higher threshold for Energy Used Block 1 since it would be impossible for us to reduce consumption below 800 kilowatt-hours for most of the year. It is patently unfair to charge those of us "without reasonable access to natural gas" 65 per cent more for Energy Used Block 2 (0.15198/kWh versus 0.09845/kWh).

The intent of the two-tier rate is obviously to encourage energy conservation and I have a proven track record of doing whatever it takes to lower my consumption. Imagine what my annual Fortis bill would be without having taken all of the above steps. I look forward to the commission responding to the concerns of all of us who have no choice but to pay the increasing demands from utility companies like Fortis and BC Hydro.