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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](mailto: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)

Daniel & Anne Collen

Date:

23-Nov-16

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.

The inequity in the cost of electricity created by the residential conservation rate (two-tier rate) between those who have access to natural gas and those who do not is our main concern.

We reside in an area of the [REDACTED] that has no access to natural gas and are therefore penalized for using more electricity under the two-tier rate. Our understanding of the two-tier rate is that it was created to provide an incentive for consumers with access to natural gas to reduce their electric power consumption not to penalize those with no access to natural gas. The increased cost of the power bill due to the two-tier rate is causing residents to burn wood. During the 1980s we were urged to convert to electric heat as it was considered the most efficient and environmentally friendly heating method. We were given a preferential rate structure to do so. At our older home, electrically heated to 16C, the kWh (kilowatt hours) used in the higher Rate Block 2 can be two to three times the kWh used in the lower Rate Block 1. The higher Rate Block 2 kWh used in our newer home, also electrically heated to 16C, can be double those used at the lower Rate Block 1 causing an unfair cost to us in comparison to those with available natural gas. As seniors on a fixed income we struggle to heat the house to 16C and cannot afford to heat to the more usual 18-22C.

The following is an excerpt from the BC Lung Association pamphlet "Wood Stoves & Your Health":

\*An old woodstove can emit approximately 50 grams of particulate matter in an hour.

\*Residential wood burning is a growing concern in many communities across BC. Hardest-hit are valley communities where temperature inversions prevent smoke from being dispersed. (The communities of [REDACTED], where we live, lie in such a valley).

\*Wood smoke contains such major pollutants as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, as well as toxic volatile compounds like benzene, formaldehyde, benzopyrene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

\*Pollutants are emitted both indoors and outdoors and can seep into other people's homes through cracks, windows and ventilation systems.

\*Long term exposure to pollutants emitted by woodsmoke could result in impaired or decreased lung function in children; increased severity and frequency of symptoms of asthma and COPD; increased emergency room visits and hospitalizations due to asthma; more frequent pre-term birth and more babies with low birth weight; more childhood respiratory illnesses like bronchitis and ear infections; increased risk of heart attack and stroke; increased blood pressure for those with heart disease.

\*Short term exposure could lead to increased rates of heart attack for those with risk factors for cardiovascular disease; increased incidence of irregular heart beat (cardiac arrhythmia); worsening symptoms of obstructive respiratory illness; irritation of the airways and reduced lung function.

In addition to the concerns about the effects wood smoke can have on health there should also be a financial concern regarding the costs incurred in treating these effects, both to the individual and to the province. The health effects particularly concern us as one of us has COPD and asthma. Financially it affects us personally for medication, as residents of BC for medical insurance costs and as taxpayers for the health care system in general.

Recently there have been articles in the local newspapers by the Ministry of Lands and Forests regarding the proper permits and regulations for firewood harvesting as well as some of the abuses they have recorded. These articles indicate the Ministry is also concerned with burning wood for heating.

In conclusion, while we feel the two-tier rate is reasonable for BC residents with access to natural gas, we feel that it is financially punitive to those of us without. To simply lump all BC residents together in a two-tier residential conservation rate is completely unfair to the many who have no choice but to use electricity and suffer the increased cost of the two-tier rate to heat their homes or to resort to burning wood with all its health and environmental concerns. The simple solution to create a fair system for all British Columbians would be to exempt residents without access to natural gas from the two-tier rate.