



May 12, 2020

Ref: 111286

Mr. Patrick Wruck
Commission Secretary and Manager, Regulatory Services
British Columbia Utilities Commission
Suite 410, 900 Howe Street
Vancouver, BC V6Z 2N3

Email: Commission.Secretary@bcuc.com

Re: BC Hydro's COVID-19 Residential Rate Relief for Renters Application

Dear Mr. Wruck:

This letter is to express the support of the British Columbia (B.C.) Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources (EMPR) for BC Hydro's COVID-19 Residential Rate Relief for Renters Application (Application).

As a result of the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic, in March 2020 the Government of B.C. declared a state of emergency and a public health emergency. COVID-19 has had financial impacts on BC Hydro customers due to changes in employment and business closures, shutdowns and curtailments.

On April 1, 2020, Government announced that rate relief is to be provided to BC Hydro's residential, small business and large industrial and mining customers impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Pursuant to Order in Council 159, issued on April 2, 2020 Government instructed the BCUC to approve BC Hydro's COVID-19 Customer Relief Program Application which, relating to rate relief provided to residential customers, enabled BC Hydro to provide eligible customers with bill credits of up to three months of the customer's average electricity consumption, and to defer program costs to the Customer Crisis Fund Regulatory Account.

The Province's intention behind the residential bill relief was to include all residential customers who have lost their job or been unable to work. However, we understand that the way BC Hydro's specific Electric Tariff amendments were made does not allow for a certain group of renters to qualify, being those who pay for their electricity as part of their rent. In these situations, their landlords are the BC Hydro account holders, not the renters themselves.

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The Government of B.C. has recently introduced the BC Temporary Rental Supplement program to provide rent relief to renters who have lost their job or been unable to work because of COVID-19. The program allows renters to receive relief indirectly through reduction of their rent, on approval of an application from both the renter and landlord. Working with BC Hydro we have asked that they leverage this Government program to provide electricity bill relief to renters in BC Hydro's service territory who qualify for the government program but who are not BC Hydro account holders.

EMPR is supportive of BC Hydro's proposed Electric Tariff changes that will enable BC Hydro to provide relief to qualifying residential renters who pay for electricity supplied by BC Hydro as part of their rental payments. EMPR also supports the deferral of costs of the COVID-19 Residential Rate Relief for Renters program to the Customer Crisis Fund Regulatory Account, consistent with the approvals already granted by the Commission in accordance with the Direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'L MacLaren', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Les MacLaren
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc: Mr. Fred James
Chief Regulatory Officer
BC Hydro
Email: Fred.James@bhydro.com