

From: Dylan Heerema <dylan@ecotrust.ca>
Sent: Monday, December 7, 2020 9:26 AM
To: Commission, Secretary <Commission.Secretary@bcuc.com>
Subject: Registration and letter of comment for CCF Evaluation Report proceeding

Good morning,

On behalf of Ecotrust Canada, I wish to register as an interested party and submit the attached letter of comment for the proceeding:
British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority Customer Crisis Fund (CCF) Pilot Program – Evaluation Report ~ Project No. 1599030

My user name is [REDACTED]

Respectfully,

Dylan Heerema, P.Eng. | Senior Analyst & Researcher | *he/him/his*
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British Columbia Utilities Commission
Suite 410, 900 Howe Street
Vancouver, BC V6Z 2N3

December 4, 2020

RE: CCF Pilot Program Evaluation Report

Ecotrust Canada is a charity that works with communities to ensure that everyone can affordably access clean energy to meet their basic needs, including heating, lighting, cooking and communication. [A study](#) we conducted in May showed that one in five British Columbians were having a harder time paying their utility bills since the COVID-19 crisis began.

BC Hydro's Customer Crisis Fund (CCF) is designed to protect those very customers, by providing a one-time grant for those facing unexpected financial hardship. Government directed BC Hydro to implement this program in 2018, after failing to deliver on a promise to create a permanent "lifeline rate" for qualifying households.

Now, in the midst of an ongoing pandemic, BC Hydro is proposing to terminate the CCF, which would result in BC having no utility bill support programs at all. This will leave the over 270,000 BC households that face energy poverty with nowhere to turn for assistance.

Such a move would be out of step with several other provinces including [Ontario](#), which provides not only crisis support funds, but ongoing bill relief for the income-qualifying customers that need it. Despite a small but vocal minority that opposes these critical measures, by BC Hydro's own estimates, 88% of British Columbians approve of continuing the CCF.

The CCF has certainly not been perfect in its design or implementation, and has faced numerous issues around transparency and eligibility. However, cancelling it entirely, in the midst of a crisis, is not the answer and will only serve to further harm those most impacted by the pandemic.

This is a time when BC's utilities should be expanding their crisis programs, and catching up to other jurisdictions by implementing ongoing bill assistance for income-qualifying customers. Instead, BC Hydro proposes to fall even further behind. The recently announced rate reduction and retroactive bill credit cannot make up for the shortsighted move of abandoning an established crisis support program during an ongoing crisis.

Respectfully submitted,

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