

An update on seasonal class delivery charges by Hydro One

To the Editor, If you have been following the action since the Ontario Energy Board decreed they must eliminate this class in March of 2015, here is the latest installment. And if you haven't but are a seasonal customer of Hydro One, you should pay attention. Let's be clear: this is not about the cost of electricity which is strictly a political decision. It is only about how much you pay to have your electricity delivered to your property. The new plan will raise the price for seasonal customers in this area substantially. The OEB is the primary driver of this new pricing formula, and Hydro One has always claimed they don't support the move. What is changing now is the density factor used for seasonal customers and the change will take apart a density factor that has been in existence for decades. And it has always been unfair; it penalized seasonal customers in the R1 class and undercharged customers in the R2 zones. There are about 62,000 seasonal customers in R1 density zones and about 78,000 in R2 density zones, the least dense class for Hydro One (and all of the seasonals in North Hastings.) But all this is bafflegab and obfuscation because both Hydro One and the OEB can't find a simple, equitable solution to the pricing for delivery of electricity although all other utilities like phone, cable, natural gas, internet, water can. When I last wrote about this change in 2021 the plan was to start implementing the new higher rates for seasonal customers January 2022 ? however Hydro One said they couldn't make the changes to their billing system until 2023 so the OEB agreed on that date. Recently Hydro One wrote to the OEB with a plan for customer communication in advance of the January 2023 rate increase.

Is there any good news if you are a seasonal customer in an R2 density zone (all of us in North Hastings?) If you have been using your seasonal residence a lot lately with COVID-19, it may be a good time to see if you can meet the residency requirements that Hydro One has determined (and the OEB has endorsed) are required to get the lower cost of electricity delivery of your R2 neighbours. The link to the Hydro One website is here:

<https://www.services.hydroone.com/forms1/ResidentialRateStatusDeclaration.aspx> Now you may be thinking it may be a good time to cut off your electricity for the cottage in the fall and reconnect in the spring so you won't be paying the higher delivery costs all winter when you have no usage. You are allowed one free disconnect and reconnect by Hydro One for 24 hours per year. However if you choose to disconnect your service for longer be forewarned: cost for disconnection and reconnection will all be paid by the customer. And if you disconnect for six months or longer, Hydro One has the right to insist on an inspection of all wiring on the property by the Electricity Safety Authority to ensure it meets current standards. All of this is outlined in detail in Hydro One's Conditions of Service dated March 1, 2019. My guess is this will not be an option that is cost effective.

And think about this: A decision to eliminate the seasonal class in March 2015 will take until at least December of 2033 to complete.

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