

February 11, 2019

Sent via email

Letter L-2-19

Re: British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority – Complaints filed regarding Standard Charges for Service Alteration/Relocation

Dear BC Hydro Customer,

In letters dated between November 2017 and July 2018, British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority (BC Hydro) customers (Complainants) filed four complaints separately with the British Columbia Utilities Commission (BCUC) regarding the standard charges required by BC Hydro to alter or relocate existing electrical services (complaints). Following requests by BCUC staff, BC Hydro provided further information between November 2017 and July 2018.

The BCUC determined further process was warranted and issued Order G-184-18, outlining a regulatory timetable which consisted of BCUC information requests to BC Hydro and Complainants, BC Hydro and Complainants responses, final comments and reply comments.

Review process

In reviewing BC Hydro's response, under the BCUC Complaints Guidelines, the BCUC has, amongst other things, referred to BC Hydro's approved Tariff, which contains the terms and conditions of service between BC Hydro and its customers to ensure BC Hydro's actions were in accordance with the Tariff.

The BCUC notes that the minimum connection charges were approved by the BCUC through Order G-5-17, following BC Hydro's 2015 Rate Design Application.

The BCUC notes that the minimum connection charges, as listed in section 11.1 of the Tariff, were explicitly approved by the BCUC through Order G-5-17 following BC Hydro's 2015 Rate Design Application. The \$860 that was charged to all Complainants for relocation of overhead service wire and disconnection/reconnection is not listed in BC Hydro's Tariff, nor was it specifically approved by the BCUC through Order G-5-17.

In its response to BCUC Information Request No. 1, BC Hydro confirmed that a new service connection and a modification of an existing service connection, such as a relocation or disconnect/reconnection, are two separate services and therefore have two different costs. BC Hydro stated that the methodology for calculating the charges are the same and the higher cost for service relocation is attributable to the estimated additional site time needed for relocation work and coordination with the Customer's electrician.

BC Hydro stated in its responses to BCUC Information Request No. 1 that while only the charges listed in section 11.1 of the Tariff were explicitly approved by the BCUC, BC Hydro does list common charges which relate to service work on their website, including the charge of \$860 for relocation and disconnection/reconnection requests.

Section 3.14 of BC Hydro's Tariff states:

For each Service Connection installed in Rate Zone I, the Customer will pay to BC Hydro the applicable charges set out in section 11.1 (Minimum Connection Charges – Rate Zone I) and section 11.2 (Additional Meter Charges).

For all other Service Connections, the Customer will pay to BC Hydro the Estimated Construction Cost which will include the cost of installation of one meter per Service Connection.

Although the BCUC agrees that the above stipulation in the Tariff does not specifically address the \$860 charge related to relocation and disconnection/reconnection of services, the BCUC sees no indication that BC Hydro was in contravention of its tariff and the *Utilities Commission Act*, as section 3.14 of the Tariff allows BC Hydro to charge for other service connections. However, the BCUC notes that it would be appropriate and transparent for common charges, such as relocation charges, that are listed on BC Hydro's website to be included in section 11.1 of BC Hydro's Tariff. As such, the BCUC will send a separate request to BC Hydro to update its Tariff to include all such charges and to seek approval from the BCUC for these proposed charges.

While your complaint is now closed, the BCUC will notify the Complainants when the BCUC reviews BC Hydro's terms and conditions and invite them to participate in the proceeding, when it occurs.

Office of the Ombudsperson

If you have concerns about how the BCUC handled your complaint, you may wish to contact the Office of the Ombudsperson. The Office of the Ombudsperson receives enquiries and complaints about the practices and services of public agencies within its jurisdiction. Their role is to impartially investigate complaints to determine whether public agencies have acted fairly and reasonably, and whether their actions and decisions were consistent with relevant legislation, policies and procedures.

If you decide to file a complaint with the Ombudsperson, they will review the BCUC's process to ensure it was fair. Though this may not result in a different outcome for you, the office could request that the BCUC reopen its investigation.

Provided is a link to the Office of the Ombudsperson's website: <https://www.bcombudsperson.ca/>. You can also call their office toll-free at: 1-800-567-3247. An employee at the office will be able to assist you and inform you of your options.

Thank you again for contacting the BCUC.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By Ian Jarvis for:

Patrick Wruck
Commission Secretary

AS/nd

cc: British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority
bchydroregulatorygroup@bchydro.com