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1 DECEMBER 3, 2015
 2 (9:12 a.m.)
 3 CHAIRMAN:
 4 Q. Good morning, everybody. There are no
 5 preliminary matters, and I understand we have
 6 a statement from -
 7 MS. GLYNN:
 8 Q. There is one preliminary matter, Mr. Chair.
 9 Hydro is going to enter a piece of information
 10 onto the record.
 11 CHAIRMAN:
 12 Q. Okay.
 13 MR. YOUNG:
 14 Q. I'm assuming Ms. Glynn is referring to a
 15 matter that arose in a letter of October 28th
 16 that Hydro filed with respect to the fuel
 17 forecast. It's come up and it was discussed
 18 in the hearing. We discussed it yesterday
 19 with the Board Clerk. It'll be entered, I
 20 understand, as an information piece.
 21 MS. GLYNN:
 22 Q. Yes, and we're looking for the number.
 23 CHAIRMAN:
 24 Q. Okay, all right, so we just have one
 25 presentation. Before we proceed, Madam

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1 Dempster, I would be very negligent if I
 2 didn't congratulate you on your re-election.
 3 I understand the vote was very close.
 4 MS. DEMPSTER:
 5 Q. Squeaked in at 93 percent.
 6 CHAIRMAN:
 7 Q. I've experienced a few of them myself. So
 8 congratulations.
 9 MS. DEMPSTER:
 10 Q. Thank you.
 11 CHAIRMAN:
 12 Q. The floor is yours.
 13 MS. DEMPSTER:
 14 Q. Thank you. Yes, after knocking on
 15 hundreds and hundreds of doors for the last
 16 number of weeks and then to travel in here
 17 yesterday, I'm still trying to switch gears
 18 again, and I'll state right upfront that I'm
 19 definitely not an expert, I'm in a room full
 20 of experts, and that's why I'm in a different
 21 field, but we live in a democracy where my job
 22 is to be a voice for the people that I work
 23 for and that I serve, and so what I hope to do
 24 over the next few minutes, and I won't be too
 25 long, is to bring forth some of the concerns

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1 that I have been hearing from the residents in
 2 that area.
 3 I want to thank you for the opportunity
 4 to present this submission on behalf of the
 5 residents of Labrador who live in communities
 6 that fall within the Labrador isolated rates,
 7 and that would be primarily half of my
 8 district from Lodge Bay in the south to
 9 Cartwright in the north, three unconnected
 10 completely isolated communities, and the
 11 communities on the north coast of Labrador
 12 from Rigolet to Nain, and the communities that
 13 I'm going to be speaking about this morning,
 14 they do represent a very small portion of
 15 Labrador's population. Labrador's population
 16 of 27,000 people, the people I'm going to
 17 speak on behalf of this morning represent less
 18 than one-third of that population, so small
 19 numbers.
 20 Under the amended general rate
 21 application to the Public Utilities Board,
 22 Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is proposing
 23 an 11.4 percent increase for domestic service,
 24 18.5 percent for general service, and a 2.8
 25 percent increase for street lighting. This

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1 will result in an overall average rate
 2 increase of 16.1 percent for the Labrador
 3 isolated rate class. Of all the service
 4 classes in the rate application, this is the
 5 largest proposed increase. The only other
 6 class that comes close to this is the island
 7 isolated with an average increase of 13.5.
 8 All domestic and non-domestic customers within
 9 the Labrador isolated class, they're serviced
 10 by diesel operated power plants in our
 11 communities. Diesel generated power by its
 12 very nature represents the highest rates
 13 within Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro's power
 14 generation systems, resulting in very high
 15 energy bills to the customers, and despite a
 16 rebate program to help alleviate the burden of
 17 high cost to consumers in coastal Labrador
 18 communities, in these areas those people still
 19 pay some of the highest rates in the province,
 20 and I can run through if you want, I don't
 21 know, currently power rates in the Labrador
 22 isolated rate class for domestic customers are
 23 as follows; basic customer charge, \$15.70 per
 24 month; energy charge broken down into a first
 25 block, second block, and all kilowatts over

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1 1,000 per month. So first block kilowatt
 2 hours per month, 10.573; second block, 11.993;
 3 and the all kilowatt over 1,000, 16.261. For
 4 non-domestic customers, basic customer charge,
 5 \$18.98 per month; energy charge all kilowatt
 6 hours, 16.182; minimum monthly charge single
 7 phase, \$18.98; and three phase, \$34.81.

8 We fully understand that diesel generated
 9 power is a costly method of electric power
 10 generation mainly due to the cost of fuel and
 11 the ongoing maintenance of equipment.
 12 However, the recent drop in global oil prices
 13 has somewhat taken the validity we feel out of
 14 that argument. If that argument were to hold
 15 true, then we should be seeing a proposal to
 16 reduce hydro rates rather than increase them,
 17 given where oil prices are today.

18 When this amendment was submitted to the
 19 PUB on November 10th in 2014, I believe the
 20 price of Brent crude oil was around \$83.01 per
 21 barrel, and today the price has dropped to
 22 less than \$50.00 a barrel. There is a
 23 significant difference, and I want to go down
 24 this road for a moment, there is a significant
 25 difference in the 2014 proposed increase

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1 versus the 2015 amended application,
 2 especially for Labrador customers. For
 3 customers on the Labrador interconnected grid
 4 under the 2014 proposed application to the
 5 PUB, they would have seen an overall average
 6 increase of 23.3 percent, with domestic
 7 customers seeing a 26 percent increase. For
 8 customers under the Labrador isolated system,
 9 an average overall rate increase of 13. 9
 10 percent was proposed. In the 2015 proposal,
 11 Labrador interconnected grid customers, the
 12 increase has dropped to 2.1 percent, but
 13 Labrador isolated customers saw a further
 14 increase to 16.1 percent, and I have a chart
 15 just outlining some of the 2014 versus the
 16 2015.

17 Labrador interconnected, the average
 18 overall rate impact for this system in 2014
 19 would have been - and I'm going to run through
 20 it just for the purpose of the recording, if
 21 that's okay. The average overall rate impact
 22 for this system 2014, 23.3 percent; 2015, 2. 1
 23 percent. Domestic, 26 percent in 2014, and
 24 the amended, 1.9 percent. General service, 0
 25 to 10, 28.5 in 2014, and now 1.9. General

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1 service, 10 to 100 kilowatt, 16.6 in 2014, now
 2 1.9. General service, 110 to 1,000, 2104,
 3 16.9; 2015, 1.9. General service over 1,000,
 4 22 percent in 2014; 2015, 1.9, and street and
 5 area lighting, 42.8 percent in the initial
 6 proposed of 2014, and 17.5 in the amended
 7 2015.

8 Now Labrador isolated, four figures I'll
 9 run through here. Average overall rate impact
 10 for this system in 2014, 13.9 percent, and in
 11 the 2015 amended, 16.1. Labrador isolated,
 12 domestic 2014, it was 20.4 percent; 2015, 11.4
 13 percent. General service, 11.6 percent in the
 14 2014 application, and 18.5 percent in the
 15 2015. Street and area lighting, 3.2 percent
 16 in the 2014, and 2.8 percent in the 2015. I
 17 guess, the question that begs to be asked is
 18 why is - and this is what I'm hearing from the
 19 residents in coastal Labrador, is why is Hydro
 20 proposing such a dramatic drop in the Labrador
 21 interconnected proposal from 2014 to 2015, yet
 22 proposing a further increase for Labrador
 23 isolated customers.

24 We couldn't seem to find any logical
 25 reason given to us for the proposed increase

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1 other than we do know, and it was in the media
 2 and lots of coverage on the fact that Hydro
 3 intends to increase its return on equity from
 4 4.47 to 8.8 percent. If this is the case,
 5 then the reason I'm here this morning, and
 6 I've asked for your ear for a few minutes, is
 7 to outline some of the concerns.

8 We feel that Hydro is targeting the
 9 people who already pay the highest rates to
 10 increase their profits, and I guess it is also
 11 worth noting that customers within the
 12 Labrador isolated service represent a very
 13 small percentage of Hydro's total customers.
 14 This increase, I can tell you I feel very
 15 strongly about this, will come as more of a
 16 rate shock than an increase. An 11.4 percent
 17 domestic increase will result in a tremendous
 18 adjustment to people's financial situations,
 19 meaning that other essentials will have to be
 20 cut to keep the lights on, or as one lady said
 21 to me, "I'll have to make a choice now between
 22 paying my hydro bill or paying for my pills".

23 Residents will also be affected by the
 24 proposed 20 percent increase to commercial
 25 service. Businesses that carry essential

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1 goods will no doubt pass on their extra
 2 expenses to the consumer, the same consumer
 3 who has already been saddled with an 11.4
 4 percent at home, and what I mean there, the
 5 Aunt Nellie's and the Uncle Joe's who will try
 6 and adjust their budget, you know, many of -
 7 we have an aging population in our province,
 8 we're just over 500,000 people, and we have
 9 93,000 seniors, and by 2025 that's going to
 10 increase so that one in every four will be a
 11 senior. Well, this aging population is much
 12 more pronounced in rural parts, and certainly
 13 throughout the district of Cartwright L'Anse
 14 Au Clair in the north coast of Labrador. The
 15 majority of people are on a low fixed income.
 16 So they'll be adjusting their budget to pay
 17 this extra 11.4 percent on their bill, and in
 18 addition to that, the small business owner
 19 that will bear the brunt of a 20 percent
 20 increase will have to increase their bread and
 21 butter and their milk, so then the Aunt
 22 Nellie's and the Uncle George's, as I see it,
 23 will be paying again.
 24 While there are a limited number of
 25 commercial businesses in these communities,

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1 they do provide an important service to
 2 residents and we cannot allow the
 3 sustainability of those businesses to be put
 4 in jeopardy because of higher energy cost.
 5 Just recently, I had a small business owner
 6 show me a hydro bill up to \$6,000.00. Some of
 7 the small businesses pay between \$2,000.00 and
 8 \$4,000.00 a month, and I don't want to get
 9 political here this morning, but we did just
 10 go through an election and there was things
 11 talked about, business tax incentives and
 12 things to support small businesses because
 13 they're desperately needed in our communities
 14 and we need to be supporting them, but I know
 15 that many are struggling because of the high
 16 overhead, and I've had a number of businesses
 17 say to me that, in fact, the largest grocery
 18 store in the district of Cartwright L'Anse Au
 19 Clair, the individual said to me, "If I have
 20 to pay an extra 20 percent on my commercial
 21 rate, I will have to close my doors".
 22 The aging population, as I mentioned, is
 23 a very concerning factor. The majority of
 24 residents on fixed income that simply cannot
 25 afford an increase in electricity, certainly

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1 not the high increase now being proposed by
 2 Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. The number
 3 of seniors in our province is going to
 4 continue to increase. Therefore, I believe
 5 that we have to give careful consideration
 6 before we burden them with extra expense. I
 7 guess, in concluding here, I feel, and so does
 8 the people of the area, that there is no
 9 compelling argument that can justify the
 10 proposed rate increase by Newfoundland and
 11 Labrador Hydro to the customers within the
 12 Labrador isolated rate class.
 13 While other classes are seeing moderate
 14 increases, this small segment of the
 15 population is being saddled with the enormous
 16 increases that will have a significant
 17 negative impact on residents. It is fair to
 18 say that an increase consistent with the rest
 19 of the province would certainly be much more
 20 acceptable to the residents.
 21 So on behalf of the residents of coastal
 22 Labrador communities, we are asking that the
 23 PUB reject Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro's
 24 2015 application for the Labrador isolated
 25 rates. I also didn't mention, but a group

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1 that I hear from on a very regular basis, is
 2 the non-profit groups. The 50 Plus Clubs in
 3 the area, they are paying commercial rates.
 4 They're having fundraisers every other week.
 5 I mean, it's important to their mental health
 6 and it's important to their physical, all of
 7 the events they have in some of the small
 8 modest buildings, they're paying high rates
 9 and I have written in the past letters on
 10 their behalf wondering if non-profit could
 11 come under residential rates, and, of course,
 12 I didn't get an acceptable answer, but I feel
 13 it's noteworthy that this is another group
 14 that would be very hard hit, the non-profit.
 15 Also in my district is a home in the
 16 centre, Mary's Harbour, the Battle Harbour
 17 Manor, and it's my understanding that there's
 18 only one other home in the province, that's in
 19 Flower's Cove, that would fall into a category
 20 where they're not subsidized by government,
 21 and that home, I believe, have written a
 22 number of times, struggling in a very huge
 23 way. They have 15 residents in that little
 24 home and they're struggling with a number of
 25 things, but with the power bill being the

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1 greatest one.
 2 Thank you for the opportunity to present,
 3 and I don't understand a lot about your role,
 4 but I believe one of it is to oversee and
 5 ensure that there is an equitable balance, and
 6 I know you have to consider what the consumers
 7 pay, and, of course, you have to look at the
 8 service provider and they have to be able to
 9 make a fair profit as well, or a living, or at
 10 least bring in enough money to cover the
 11 maintenance, and I know it's very expensive
 12 along the coast, but I believe when you
 13 consider things that are just and reasonable,
 14 safe, and reliable, you will consider the
 15 things I've said here this morning.
 16 I guess, especially of mention, older
 17 people, and one of the things that I hear a
 18 lot when I go around - when I sit in my office
 19 in my constituency office in Forteau, I look
 20 out my window and I see 55 foot towers, and
 21 I'm digressing a bit, that's going over the
 22 land and the whole landscape have been changed
 23 significantly, and because those towers from
 24 the mighty Muskrat Falls project, the fifth
 25 largest project of that nature in the world, I

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1 believe, because that ran down over our land
 2 and it was a DC power, you know, the most
 3 reliable power, as I understand it, we
 4 couldn't splice in, it would need a converter.
 5 People have said, you know, we're getting
 6 nothing from that, we really don't hear how we
 7 get our benefit, but we believe that a subsidy
 8 is in order for us, and instead, you know,
 9 Hydro files this rate application increase in
 10 2014. At the time that happened in the fall
 11 of 2014, myself and my colleague, Randy
 12 Edmunds, we were inundated with calls, with
 13 messages, and it's all recorded in Hansard, so
 14 you can look it up, but at that time we did
 15 present many, many petitions on behalf of the
 16 people that we work for, bringing forward
 17 their issues and their concerns about the
 18 negative impact that this increase would have
 19 on them. It was interesting for us to - we
 20 just couldn't understand why an application
 21 was filed in 2014 and it changed so
 22 drastically in 2015, so that this tiny
 23 population that, I'm sure there's a more fair
 24 and equitable way to balance out the rates
 25 that would not have such a negative impact on

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1 these individuals.
 2 (9:30 a.m.)
 3 That's all I have, and I certainly thank
 4 you very much for the opportunity for me to
 5 voice a concern on behalf of the people that
 6 live in coastal Labrador and call that home.
 7 CHAIRMAN:
 8 Q. Thank you. Do you have any -
 9 MR. YOUNG:
 10 Q. No questions, thank you.
 11 MR. O'BRIEN:
 12 Q. No questions.
 13 JOHNSON, Q.C.:
 14 Q. No questions.
 15 GREENE, Q.C.:
 16 Q. No questions.
 17 VICE-CHAIR WHALEN:
 18 Q. I don't have any questions. Thank you, Ms.
 19 Dempster.
 20 MS. NEWMAN:
 21 Q. No questions, thank you.
 22 CHAIRMAN:
 23 Q. We have no questions. I think you've made our
 24 case quite clear, and, I guess, on behalf of
 25 all of us, we wish you a very successful at

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1 least four years.
 2 MS. DEMPSTER:
 3 Q. Thank you.
 4 CHAIRMAN:
 5 Q. If not longer, who knows.
 6 MS. DEMPSTER:
 7 Q. I'll be working hard.
 8 CHAIRMAN:
 9 Q. Thank you. I guess, we are adjourned.
 10 (UPON CONCLUDING AT 9:31 a.m.)

1 CERTIFICATE

2 CERTIFICATE

3 I, Judy Moss, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true
4 and correct transcript of a hearing in the matter of
5 Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro's General Rate
6 Application heard on the 3rd of December, A.D., 2015
7 before the Commissioners of the Public Utilities Board,
8 St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador and was transcribed
9 by me to the best of my ability by means of a sound
10 apparatus.

11 Dated at St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

12 this 3rd day of December, A.D., 2015

13 Judy Moss

<p style="text-align: center;">-\$-</p> <p>\$15.70 [1] 4:23 \$18.98 [2] 5:5,7 \$2,000.00 [1] 10:7 \$34.81 [1] 5:7 \$4,000.00 [1] 10:8 \$50.00 [1] 5:22 \$6,000.00 [1] 10:6 \$83.01 [1] 5:20</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">-0-</p> <p>0 [1] 6:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">-1-</p> <p>1,000 [4] 5:1,3 7:2,3 1.9 [5] 6:24,25 7:2,3,4 10 [2] 6:25 7:1 10.573 [1] 5:2 100 [1] 7:1 10th [1] 5:19 11.4 [5] 3:23 7:12 8:16 9:3,17 11.6 [1] 7:13 11.993 [1] 5:2 110 [1] 7:2 13.5 [1] 4:7 13.9 [2] 6:9 7:10 15 [1] 12:23 16.1 [3] 4:2 6:14 7:11 16.182 [1] 5:6 16.261 [1] 5:3 16.6 [1] 7:1 16.9 [1] 7:3 17.5 [1] 7:6 18.5 [2] 3:24 7:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">-2-</p> <p>2.1 [2] 6:12,22 2.8 [2] 3:24 7:16 20 [3] 8:24 9:19 10:20 20.4 [1] 7:12 2014 [19] 5:19,25 6:4,15 6:18,22,23,25 7:1,4,6,10 7:12,14,16,21 14:10,11 14:21 2015 [17] 1:1 6:1,10,16 6:22 7:3,4,7,11,12,15,16 7:21 11:24 14:22 17:6 17:12 2025 [1] 9:9 2104 [1] 7:2 22 [1] 7:4 23.3 [2] 6:6,22 26 [2] 6:7,23 27,000 [1] 3:16 28.5 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