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Editorial: Electric Meter SNAFU

Far from being mightily irradiated, BCers are having to cope with not-so-smart meters, or rather the lack of electronic infrastructure to make them smart. It appears that the sacking of meter readers was a bit too quick. For whatever reason many people's meters are just sitting on the wall as dumb as ever and now no-one is reading them.

Electricity users are getting estimated bills *ad infinitum* (which don't actually state that they are estimates). It's really anybody's guess what you ought to be paying, unless you go round the back and read-er-own. It's then good for the math-brain to compare it with what a human-mindless system guesses you ought to owe.

For those who have recently installed energy saving devices, like heat pumps and solar panels, it takes all the joy out of comparisons.

BC Hydro is sending snailmail letters to explain to some people that they are not getting their meters read by anyone or anything. This is somewhat surprising, since the bills can be sent to people by email and you can view BCHydro's best guess at what you owe them online.

Years ago, I used to get a few estimated bills (once again the bills never stated they were estimates) and then the meter-reader would come by. To save time, he used to read mine

through a hole the neighbour's fence (things got a whole lot easier when the fence fell down). When electricity was cheap those estimated bills were not too much of a problem. Though the highest bill I ever got (twice as high as any winter bill) was one August, when the actual reading caught up with me!

These days with almost no meter readers it could be decades before your meter is read, unless BCHydro sorts out its smart infrastructure muddle soon. Will people get enormous bills or giant rebates? Which century are we in?

A good questions to ask is why were billions of dollars spent on the early installation of new meters if they couldn't be smart? Not only are those folks who didn't want one browned-off but those who were interested in a smart grid (with the possibility of—heavens-to-betsy—feed-in) are equally frustrated.

Threatening to charge *anyone* for meter-reading in these circumstance is beyond ludicrous. BCHydro should apologize all round and get on with it.

The number to call to enquire about your particular muddle is 1-800-224-9376. You'll probably get stuck in a phone tree but jamming the lines may get BCHydro's attention.

What's might help is to email a dated phone-photo of your reading. Perhaps to CEO Charles Reid?

—Christa Grace-Warrick

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