

B.C. Hydro finally owns up to defective smart meter...

<http://www.theprovince.com/technology/Hydro+finally+owns+defective+smart+meter+only/6426251/story.html>

April 11, 2012

One day in early March,



Trapper Cameron's father-in-law came home from walking the dog to find B.C. Hydro workers on his lawn and up on his roof.

They had come for Cameron's new smart meter, which they had ripped off the wall of his home.

"The meter just kept going around and around and around," the Kamloops resident told me. "They told me it was ringing up about five or six times the actual power I was using. I guess they thought I had a grow-op or something."

The workers took the smart meter away and installed a new one.

And now B.C. Hydro is admitting — for the very first time — that one of its celebrated new smart meters was grossly over-charging a customer for electricity.

"It wasn't working properly — it was very strange," customer-care director Jim Nicholson told me, adding B.C. Hydro has launched an investigation into the "anomaly."

The smart meter was installed at Cameron's house Jan. 5 and removed March 9. During that two-month period, the smart meter measured 48,285 kilowatt hours, which works out to a bill of more than \$4,800.

"It's outlandish — just crazy," Nicholson said. "It was running at an incredible rate."

Nicholson said B.C. Hydro discovered the malfunctioning meter and removed it before Cameron received an inflated bill.

But that's not what Cameron says. The trucking company employee told me he got a bill from B.C. Hydro at the end of March for more than \$1,000 — about six times higher than his usual bill.

"I thought, 'Holy crap! I'm not paying this!'" Cameron said. "I called B.C. Hydro right away and they

cancelled the bill.”

He said B.C. Hydro sent him a new bill for around \$180.

Hundreds of Province readers have contacted me with stories of B.C. Hydro bills that doubled, tripled, quadrupled or spiked even higher — all after receiving a new smart meter.

But B.C. Hydro has insisted its smart meters are working perfectly and have fiercely denied widespread customer complaints of over-billing.

B.C. Hydro said anyone with a high bill must have consumed more power during the winter, and Energy Minister Rich Coleman called stories of over-billing smart meters “an urban myth.”

But now that B.C. Hydro admits Cameron’s smart meter was over-charging him in Kamloops, the spin is changing.

“Like any kind of electronic equipment, you’re going to get some that just go weird,” Nicholson said. He said Cameron’s smart meter is the first with a confirmed malfunction out of one million meters installed so far.

Nicholson said Cameron’s one-in-a-million meter is now undergoing an electronic autopsy at a Vancouver lab. He said B.C. Hydro has alerted Itron, the American manufacturer of the meter, which is tracing records at its South Carolina factory.

But NDP energy critic John Horgan said that’s not enough.

“This program is off the rails,” Horgan said. “We need an independent investigation.”

I’m personally not surprised B.C. Hydro finally admits its smart meters are capable of over-charging customers. There have been way too many stories of hyper-inflated bills that defy explanation.

Now it’s time for the B.C. Utilities Commission to get involved, before any more B.C. Hydro customers get ripped off.

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