

Dear Executive Director,

I write today as a customer of Pennichuck East Utility, Inc. in reference to Docket # DW20-156 in which PEU requests a total rate increase of 21.05%.

I strongly encourage PUC to deny this rate increase request. I live in Litchfield, NH which has been impacted for PFAS contamination by Saint Gobain. Many of my neighbors had no choice, if they wanted to protect their families' health and safety, other than decommissioning their private wells and connecting to municipal water. PEU is the only operator in Litchfield and we are completely at their mercy with how much we need to pay for water - which may I remind you is needed for basic survival. We do not feel it is appropriate for PEU to again ask for a rate increase and forcing customers to shoulder their financial burden. According to documents on the PUC website, PEU is asking for a rate increase because "PEU is not earning sufficient revenues to meet its expenses including property taxes, and other necessary and prudent operating expenses."

I maintain that a good portion of this situation is because PEU took on extending municipal water lines and hook ups for homes affected by PFAS contamination without considering how they would fund this increase in infrastructure and demand on the system. PEU should be pursuing opportunities to recoup more costs from Saint Gobain as the pollution source that necessitated increased services in Litchfield. Litchfield residents should not be financially burdened due to being the victims of pollution. PEU can leverage its sister and parent companies wealth while it works on receiving financial compensation from Saint Gobain and any other identified sources of pollution.

Additionally, I question why PEU is not looking into low-interest loans or grants from the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund (established by the state in 2003) or the PFAS Remediation Loan Fund (established by the state earlier this year) in order to fund projects instead of passing on costs directly to customers.

The cost of providing water to individuals has not increased. People in Litchfield have not suddenly started using more water. Rather, an outside influence (Saint Gobain Performance Plastics, located across the river in Merrimack, NH) has created a situation in which PEU has needed to do more work and provide more service. PEU has most likely agreed to provide this service because more customers = more revenue - this is their business decision and it should not be the responsibility of customers to pay for their business investment and risk. They wanted to provide more infrastructure - PEU should be responsible for pursuing Saint Gobain for financial assistance and PEU should accept responsibility for an investment that will take time to turn over a profit. That's what businesses do - they take risks and hope in the long run they will pay off, they finance their debt in hopes of future profit - I will not argue their methods.

However, it is not just or reasonable to expect PEU customers to absorb this drastic of a rate increase that PEU is saying is necessary as a result of their business decisions leading to debt.

I am the Litchfield community representative on the HB 737 PFAS statutory commission and would be happy to provide more information or context if necessary. Thank you for your time. Please do not approve this rate increase.

Best,
Nicole Fordey
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