

From: Brian Clardy
Sent: Monday, August 28, 2023 8:54 AM
To: PUC: <puc@puc.nh.gov>
Subject: DG 23-067

EXTERNAL: Do not open attachments or click on links unless you recognize and trust the sender.

Good morning.

I received notice of Liberty's request to increase their R3 rate by nearly sixteen percent, resulting in an overall increase to our home heating bills by just under ten percent. I understand that heating services are increasingly expensive, but I have to ask why this is necessary at this time?

Liberty just recently spent an absurd amount of money upgrading their billing systems and statements ostensibly with the intent of being more efficient and saving money. I'm not sure what they actually accomplished, however, as from the moment that they implemented those changes I never had a successful payment go through on time. A system that had worked for nearly five years – namely, triggering a check to be paid by Digital Federal Credit Union (DCU) three business days ahead of the due date – completely and totally fell apart. Checks weren't received until weeks after the payment date. One check went missing entirely. At first, I blamed DCU, but after speaking with them they reported that nothing had changed. As such, I then reached out to Liberty. Or tried, anyway. The website they provided with their first bills didn't work. The app they provided wouldn't even install. Once it installed, it wouldn't logon or recognize any of the usernames or account numbers that were provided in the directions in the billing statements. I tried calling, but the waits were ridiculously long. I finally got through to someone who breezily waived the late charges and fees, noting that there had been many problems in getting the new systems online. Eventually they got the app fixed and I abandoned using DCU, instead using the app to make payments so they wouldn't be late (and being forced to set aside my concerns for my financial privacy given the haphazard manner in which the entire app was rolled out).

In the end, it worked out, but it doesn't change Liberty's apparent plan to fix what wasn't broken and offer no improvements other than some useless (though colorful) charts about usage.

Perhaps if they'd better planned their costly, inefficient billing rollout I could understand. But between development costs, redevelopment costs, customer service hours, and customer time, they clearly wasted huge sums of money that could've instead been used to reduce the increase of our rates.

Yet here they are asking to be *rewarded* for their inefficiency, poor decision making, and brutal customer service by applying for a rate increase that will increase their revenues by \$28 million? I can't believe that this would be considered acceptable, but it doesn't seem like there's much protecting consumers these days. Nevertheless, in the vain hope that someone realizes that there's no accountability for Liberty's actions, perhaps someone can stop them from raising their rates as dramatically in some quest for revenues that they will, no doubt, further misuse.

Best,

Brian Clardy

Hudson, NH