

## CMP Testimony

“Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology:

My name Karen George. I reside in Winterport, Maine, and I am here to testify in support of “An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company”. In order to do this, I am going to ask that you imagine yourself in the following scenario. Truly put yourself in the scenario, there will be a quiz at the end and the judge is highly influential. 😊

You are a customer of CMP, not by choice, but because you have no other options. At the end of 2017 you notice a dramatic rise in your electric bill. There had been no changes in your daily use or in the things that you own that use electricity. You call CMP, who makes suggestions as to what

could be causing it, none of which fit. They then decide that the increase was due to winter weather. This does not fit either for several reasons. The increase was much higher than any other winter bill you had ever gotten, and it wasn't really into winter yet. You were burning wood exclusively for much of the time because you were out of oil. CMP tells you that the fan on your woodstove can cause an increase but, there is no fan on your woodstove. CMP suggests that you apply for assistance, and you wonder why you should ask for taxpayer assistance to help pay for what you do not owe.

The high bills continue. In the meantime, you become ill. So ill that you cannot work. Your electric bills are rising. You call CMP again, several times. Each time you are told that they have no record of your previous calls. You are then read the same list of possible reasons, and again they do not apply.

In the crisis you are facing, which is approaching its one-year anniversary, your mortgage company works with you so that you do not lose your home. Your car lender does the same, and you can keep your car. The one bill you have that has a comparable monthly payment to your car or mortgage is your electric bill and they don't even have records of your calls for help.

You return to work, but a virus abounds, so you have to work from home, on your computer which requires electricity to run. You also are a full-time online college student at this point, which also requires a computer powered by electricity. You go to the mailbox one day in the winter and find a letter from CMP. You are surprised because you never get bills from CMP. You open it to see a disconnect notice. It is winter and a virus is beginning its rampage, and you will soon be without power because you are being billed for an amount that you do

not owe. If you are disconnected, you cannot work or attend school. You have no recourse, at this point it is impossible to prove that you are being erroneously billed. You are trapped.

You have 2 saving graces. The first is in the fact that many other customers are in your situation, and an investigation into the enormous bills is begun, disputed amounts are set aside.

The second is that the virus has crippled normal daily life and disconnection notices are suspended, (even though it is winter, and they are not supposed to be sent out in the first place).

Time marches on. You feel that your only option is to pay the inaccurate bills. Now that you are working, you begin paying hundreds of dollars each month to pay down the bill.

Funny thing though, your bills have gone back to normal with no changes made by you. Now you're certain that you have been ripped off, yet you continue to pay because it is the lesser of two evils (pay or fight) in terms of your stress level. One

week after making a \$300.00 payment, your electricity is shut off. You can't work. You call CMP and are told that you must pay a bit over \$600.00, your balance (which you mention is far below the over \$2,000,00 where it was because you have been paying, a lot). You cannot pay that amount, you just paid them \$300.00 a week before. The representative leaves the line to check something. He comes back and says that he can restore your power. When you ask why you receive no concrete answer. You let it go because you are behind on work and don't want to rock the boat.

Now you are at today. You have continued to make large payments to CMP, yet you receive another disconnect notice.

### Quiz

You don't get credit if you have not truly put yourself into the scenario and that's between you and God ;-).

1. How do you feel?

2. What can you do?

Obviously, this scenario is mine. I won't elaborate on how I feel, if you truly put yourself in the scenario, you will know.

As for question 2, I chose to act. I want CMP gone. They have stolen from their customers, demonstrated a complete lack of compassion and show no signs of changing. In fact, they are currently asking for a rate increase to aid in the effects of storms. Listen to that one again. CMP wants customers who survived for days without power, to pay for unexpected expenses brought on by storms in Maine. Imagine that; there are storms in Maine! The amazing thing here is that a big power company wants us to believe that the astronomical amount of money they currently get will not cover their expenses. Sounds

like poor planning to me. Another thing to consider, why have we had so many outages compared to previous years. The theory about town is that CMP is not doing enough to prevent such outages. I have heard of cases where individuals call CMP to report problems like trees threatening lines but see no resolution to the problem. In one such case the tree did take out power. It could have been avoided if CMP had listened.

Maine PUC sides with CMP (shocking, I know) despite the fact that thousands of customers are still having problems to this day. It is time to end the monopoly.

I leave you with one plea,

**GET CMP OUT.**

Most sincerely,

Karen George

