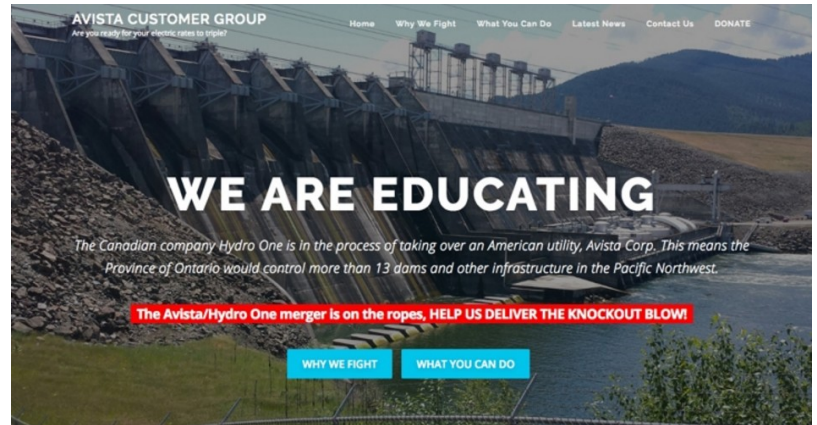




Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 14, 2019

Birchers, Activists Stop Canadian Takeover of U.S. Energy Company

In December, Washington State's Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) [denied approval](#) of the proposed takeover of the Pacific Northwest's largest energy company by a Toronto-based electric utility. It declared that Ontario's Hydro One couldn't be trusted to keep Avista's customers from becoming political pawns in the climate-change game if the \$6 billion merger were allowed to take place: "In the final analysis the Commission determines that the evidence demonstrates that Hydro One lacks sufficient independence from ... its largest shareholder, the Province of Canada, to be a reasonable and appropriate merger partner for Avista."



The back story is far more complex, but the decision is conclusive: Activists who were informed about the risk of an American company being taken over by a foreign government made the decision by Washington's UTC much easier.

Those activists, including members of the John Birch Society in Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Montana, saw the dangers inherent in such a takeover and got organized, creating the "Avista Customer Group." Its [website spelled out the threat](#): "The Canadian company Hydro One is in the process of taking over an American utility, Avista Corp. This means the Province of Ontario would control more than 13 dams and other infrastructure in the Pacific Northwest."

It added: "If approved, Avista would be fully owned by a foreign company which is controlled by the Province of Ontario holding 41% of its shares and maintains control over Hydro One. Hydro One operates under Canadian law and is governed by the Green Energy Act and other energy policies."

Those policies were put in place when the late billionaire oil man Maurice Strong was head of Ontario Hydro in the mid-1990s. (Ontario Hydro was broken into five separate businesses, including Hydro One, in 1999.) Who but well-informed citizens would even know or care about Maurice Strong? Strong was influential in making global-warming alarmism public policy — he was popularly known as the "godfather" of the United Nation's 1997 Kyoto Treaty. Those activist citizens in the Pacific Northwest saw this and realized what was really at stake. Following Hydro One's support of its green mandate, the company was likely to take Avista hostage and imprint its green agenda onto its nearly 700,000 customers.

The Avista Customer Group explained what happened when Hydro One fastened its green agenda onto its Canadian customers:

Because of their green energy policies Hydro One customers have experienced severe rate increases, to the point of having their electricity shut off due to [their] inability to pay. Hydro One's



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rates are currently more than three times the Avista rates at 28 cents per kWh versus just 8 cents.

It is anticipated the same will happen to Avista customers should this merger be realized.... Avista customers would be at the mercy of a foreign government's decisions.

The complaints to the UTC reflected this new information:

Avista rate is 8 cents and Hydro One is 28 cents, and Hydro One is always in the red!

What do you do when they change the rules and conditions? Then you're in International Court;

It is vital to our national security and to the safety of the citizens of the United States that we not allow a foreign entity to take ownership of any part of our power grid [or] any public utility in America;

This sounds similar to the Uranium One sale to a Canadian [company] with Russian ties;

Canada is a socialistic government and owns 47-49% of Hydro One, so they could increase our rates ... and we would be totally at their mercy.

The Gem State Patriot News helped out with additional facts:

Fact 1 — The CEO and board of Avista Corp would receive \$51 million upon close of the merger.

Fact 2 — The existing stockholders of Avista would receive a premium of 24% for their shares during mandated buyback at the close of the merger.

Fact 3 — Hydro One is a company owned by the provincial government of Ontario, Canada and is drowning in billions of dollars in debt, its infrastructure is crumbling and claims the title of the least reliable electrical distribution company in all of Canada all while having the distinction of charging the highest rates in Canada.

Fact 4 — Hydro One charges its customers a 70% surcharge added to every bill to subsidize unprofitable wind and solar power suppliers.

Fact 5 — Avista will sell to Hydro One all its assets, including 15 hydroelectric dams, all electric and gas distribution infrastructure, all 13 subsidiaries of Avista including extensive nontaxable land holdings, land development companies, equity firms, water rights, 2 gold mines with approximately \$10 Billion dollars of proven gold reserves all for the bargain price of \$6.5 billion.... A real STEAL!

Fact 6 — The water rights and control of storage and flows of 15 dams in the Northwest would be owned and controlled by a Canadian government entity.

The announcement from the Washington State's UTC confirmed that activism works, and informed activism works even better. During hearings, supporters for the merger were few and far between, while those opposed offered well-informed arguments about the risks to customers and the risks of losing control over our energy supplies.

Image: screenshot from avistacustomergroup.org

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.

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