Mr. Roberts:

Thank you for your response to my letter to the Commission regarding what I recognize as a truly cumbersome and unnecessarily complex regulatory process.  Your comments did little to convince me that the Commission and staff at UTC have any interest in making the regulatory process for regulated utilities more transparent or understandable to the ratepayer.

Having had some experience in regulation myself, I do realize how complex and convoluted the process may become over time.  However; it is paramount that the actions of government are clear and, at least, understandable by the public which that government serves.  In the case of the UTC’s work where utilities are concerned neither is the case.  The public is simply relegated to the sidelines and asked to take the UTC or the UTC staff’s word that the process was fair and equitable.

I understand the implications of the critique I sent to the Commission.  Much needs to be done to make the existing process clear and understandable.  Government actions must be transparent and clear to the public it serves or mistrust and cynicism will be the order of the day.  Mistrust and cynicism gives way, eventually, to rebellion.  One has only to view current world affairs to understand this simple principle.  Your response to my letter was an avoidance of the all too real and pervasive government attitude that government knows best and the citizen must simply take your word for it.

Yes, my letter, if acted upon, would open a huge can of worms that no one in government wants to deal with.  The alternative, however; is less desirable.  Every  time a citizen is handed a response, such as yours, which characterizes the work of government as too complex and too involved for the average citizen to master is just one more chink in that excuse.

Without question, your website and the way actions on it are described, organized, linked and presented serves to confuse the public rather than to enlighten them.  Much can and should be done here to make this a tool that the public can use to grasp at understanding the processes which are germane to regulation of utilities in Washington State.  The rethinking of this one resource could go a long way in making the business of the UTC understandable to the public and assist in garnering public support for your actions.  I have seen it done in other places, it just means some creativity, good design and considered thought must be brought to bear on the task.  I suggest that staff and the Commissioners of the UTC give this one tiny suggestion some considered thought and action.

Sincerely,

Robert K. Flowers

Spokane, WA

