



Client Success Story

The Case of the Misleading Submeters: How a Toronto CRE Group Uncovered Massive Data Inconsistencies with the Help of Brightly Stream

Client

Real Estate Property Management Group

Location

Downtown Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Vitals

A modern commercial office tower with:

- 34 stories
- 875,000 square feet

Results

With Brightly's Stream software and submetering and cost allocation service, one Toronto-based property management team was able to:

- Identify over 200 submetering system deficiencies
- Discover the improper commissioning of over 65% of their submeters, avoiding a \$200,000 utility cost misallocation
- Locate and resolve new installation issues that were discovered after the resolution of the original issue, positioning themselves for long-term operational success and reducing the risk of erroneous cost recoveries

Background

When a 34-story commercial office building opened in downtown Toronto it came with a major challenge: managing data from more than 250 submeters. Another 50 more were added for new tenants as well. To ensure accurate utility cost allocation and streamline operations, the property management team turned to Brightly and its Stream™ software and services.

Brightly quickly assessed the system and were able to uncover some critical issues, including misconfigured submeters and miscalculated data computations. The team worked closely with metering vendors to correct the problems, ensuring accurate billing from the utility vendor and restoring confidence in the building's utility tracking.

The result? A fully optimized submetering system that helped the property owners improve operational efficiency, enhance transparency, and consistently recover tenant utility costs with confidence.

Uncovering Construction Deficiencies

Brightly's initial review of the building's submetering system revealed over 200 issues, ranging from misconfigured devices to data inconsistencies. These issues had gone undetected during the original commissioning process handled by the submetering vendor. This discovery highlighted a critical insight: even when submetering systems are professionally installed and inspected, errors can still persist. Brightly's independent review brought a fresh, unbiased perspective that proved essential in uncovering these hidden issues – issues that could have led to years of inaccurate cost allocation and tenant dissatisfaction if left unchecked.

Drawing on their deep expertise in utility consumption patterns and the various submetering systems, the Brightly team was able to quickly flag the problems and notified the client and the original metering vendor responsible for installation during construction.

Over the next year, Brightly led the remediation effort, including progress tracking, coordination with contractors, and verification of each fix. But just as the system seemed stable, a new issue emerged: the submeters were reporting significantly more energy use than what the utility company was billing.

According to Brightly, "This was a rare and large-scale discrepancy. The submeters were starting to report significantly more energy usage than the utility company as more tenants began to occupy their spaces. If the utility company had been underbilling, our client could have faced a sudden correction – potentially a six-figure lump sum payment. So, we immediately flagged the issue, walked our client through the financial risks, and launched a detailed investigation to protect them from unexpected liabilities and ensure their tenant utility cost allocation remained accurate and defensible."

Investigating the data discrepancy

To help the property management team get to the bottom of the mismatch, Brightly's team launched a detailed investigation. This began by validating the building's electrical layout against construction drawings and installing temporary third-party meters on the main utility feeds.

These confirmed that the utility company's meters were, in fact, accurate.

After ruling out the main meters, Brightly deployed additional temporary metering on key submeters. This revealed that nearly all investigated submeters were overreporting usage. Using 15-minute interval data, Brightly compiled a comprehensive report and presented it to the client and metering vendor.

Correcting the system

After reviewing the reports, the metering vendor responded with multiple site visits and confirmed the root cause: over 200 submeters had been improperly commissioned, despite having passed initial inspection. This led to more than \$200,000 in utility costs being wrongly allocated to tenants instead of common areas.

Throughout the collaborative process, Brightly stayed closely involved, validating each correction, applying historical data adjustments, and clearly communicating the financial impact to the property accounting team. However, once the data correctly aligned with the utility company's billing, another issue surfaced: over 40 submeters were showing negative power factors, indicating they were supplying reactive power back to the grid, instead of consuming it – an anomaly that caused significantly underreported consumption data.

Brightly flagged the issue, prompting another round of metering vendor site visits and corrections. After final adjustments were made, Brightly conducted a final data review to confirm all outstanding issues were resolved and no new concerns emerged, providing a final adjustment based on the observed consumption changes after the power factor corrections.

The Value of Independent Validation

The submeters had originally passed installation inspection and commissioning – performed by the submetering vendor – so the client had no reason to doubt the accuracy of the system. The vendor's sign-off gave a sense of confidence that everything was functioning as intended.

However, Brightly's involvement revealed a critical lesson: even systems that appear to be properly commissioned can harbor deep-rooted issues. Without Brightly's independent review and validation, these discrepancies could have gone unnoticed for years, potentially eroding tenant trust and leading to significant financial misallocations.

This case highlights a critical lesson for property managers and landlords: even systems that pass initial inspection and commissioning by reputable vendors can contain hidden issues that only surface over time. Brightly's independent third-party validation brought a fresh perspective that uncovered these deficiencies, protected the client from long-term financial exposure, and preserved tenant trust. When implementing complex submetering systems, partnering with an experienced and unbiased expert like Brightly ensures not only accurate utility cost recovery, but also long-term operational integrity and transparency.

Learn more: [BrightlySoftware.com](https://brightlysoftware.com)