

Dec. 14, 2012

Dion: Energy solutions must put more money in the pockets of Maine people and businesses

Good morning, I'm Democratic State Representative Mark Dion from Portland.

This morning I wanted to talk about something we can all relate to – the cost of heating our homes and businesses.

The high cost of energy in our state is an issue that every Maine family and small businesses struggles with every day. It is a key area where Maine must do better in order to strengthen our economy, rebuild our middle class, and improve our business climate.

For over a decade in Maine, we have had a bipartisan energy policy, which encourages energy efficiency and promotes alternative energy. Because of those policies, we've seen a decline in dependency on fossil fuels.

On average, Efficiency programs have saved nearly \$3 for each \$1 spent.

Homeowners have saved 30-40 percent or more in annual energy bills from efficiency programs.

Plus, Maine's investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy has created more than 12,000 jobs in the state.

Maine's efficiency programs are even helping our outdoor sports and tourism industry. Sugarloaf Mountain Ski Resort is using a grant through Efficiency Maine to lower its electricity consumption.

We must continue to work together help lower energy costs, create jobs, and put more money in the pockets of middle class Maine families and small businesses.

We must also continue to work to lower our electric costs. But we won't do it unless we follow a strategic plan that keeps Maine on the right path. We must continue to diversify our energy portfolio, while maximizing efficiency efforts in the short term.

We need to explore natural gas as a transition fuel to help wean us off our dependence on home heating oil.

Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard, which encourages the purchase of alternative energy power, is helping to successfully diversify our energy resources.

It has given Maine a significant hedge against high fossil fuel costs. It has also made our electricity generation cleaner and more renewable – which is both good for our economy and the environment now and in the future.

We've seen our investment in this strategy already helping Maine people and businesses. The RPS helped the Verso Bucksport Paper Mill upgrade to a biomass boiler, making the mill's future and its employees much more secure.

Maine's business community has benefited from the RPS program with more than 300 businesses having worked to construct, support, and maintain the state's existing renewable energy assets. Reed & Reed even started a new division of their construction business specializing in erecting wind-farm turbines.

Governor LePage has a plan that will undo energy efficiency, undercut our efforts to reduce our dependency on oil, and stifle job creation. He wants to send Maine taxpayer dollars to support Canadian Hydro power with no guarantee that we will get the best deal. This would do nothing to lower Maine energy prices but would certainly benefit Hydro Quebec.

It's the wrong solution for Maine. We should be looking to help Maine companies and Maine people. We should be building off the reasonable bipartisan approach that has helped Maine people and so many of our businesses.

Thank you for listening; I'm Rep. Mark Dion from Portland.