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Resolve, To Require a Study of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions from the Proposed Central Maine Power Company Transmission Corridor

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, Central Maine Power Company has promoted its proposed western Maine transmission corridor, the New England Clean Energy Connect project, or NECEC, as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions but has not provided adequate evidence to the public and decision makers; and

Whereas, Department of Environmental Protection rule Chapter 375: No Adverse Environmental Effect Standards of the Site Location of Development Act requires that projects cause no unreasonable alteration of climate, but the department has not performed an independent analysis of the greenhouse gas effects of the NECEC and has no plans to do so; and

Whereas, the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35-A, section 3132 requires the Public Utilities Commission to consider the environmental effects of proposed transmission line projects, but the commission has not performed an independent analysis of greenhouse gas effects of the NECEC and has no plans to do so; and

Whereas, climate change poses a substantial threat to Maine's economy, natural resources and public health, including from increased spread of insect-borne diseases, more frequent damaging storms, elevated sea levels and warming oceans; and

Whereas, 53 miles of new, 150-foot-wide transmission corridor through western Maine would fragment the largest expanse of intact temperate hardwood and mixed forest in the world; and

Whereas, Maine's natural resources agencies have expressed serious concern about the transmission corridor's harm to brook trout, deer and other species; and

Whereas, the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee concluded that there would be no reduction in greenhouse gases from Northern Pass, a similar project to the NECEC, unless Hydro-Quebec builds new facilities to increase generating capacity to supply electricity to Massachusetts; and

Whereas, Hydro-Quebec's application to Massachusetts to supply energy via the NECEC specifically states that the NECEC will not result in any new construction of facilities to increase generating capacity; and

Whereas, Maine people and decision makers need concrete, verifiable, publicly available information about the greenhouse gas reductions or lack of reductions associated with the NECEC in order to make an informed decision on whether to support the project; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1 NECEC review. Resolved: That the Department of Environmental Protection shall review all relevant, verifiable evidence and issue a report on the total net effect on greenhouse gas emissions from the New England Clean Energy Connect project as proposed by Central Maine Power Company. The department shall submit the report to the Legislature, make the report available to the public and provide a copy of the report to the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities by June 1, 2019. The department shall consider all relevant, verifiable evidence from New England, the Province of Quebec, Canada and any other area as needed to determine the total net effect of the project on greenhouse gases. The department may conduct the analysis of greenhouse gas effects itself within existing resources or hire an independent consultant to conduct it. The department may not issue a permit for the project without taking into account the results of the department's review.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This resolve requires the Department of Environmental Protection to review all relevant, verifiable evidence on the total net effect on greenhouse gas emissions from Central Maine Power Company's New England Clean Energy Connect project and submit a report to the Legislature, make the report available to the public and provide a copy of the report to the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities by June 1, 2019. The resolve prohibits the department from issuing a permit for the project without taking into account the results of the department's review.