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Dear Committee Members,

I well remember the ice storm of 1998. I owned a rental house in Machias at that time. Fortunately, I was remodeling it so no tenant was in it when the power went out. It took weeks for power to be restored to that area and a couple of more weeks before an electrician could reinstall the power line that was ripped off the house. I had the knowledge and equipment to flush out the water from all pipes, toilets & water tank to avoid damage. Others in the area were not so lucky and this weather event caused an incredible amount of suffering and property damage for people who could least afford it. In Saco, we only lost power for a few hours and I was grateful that I had a wood stove to keep us warm which would have prevented bust water pipes if the outage had lasted longer. Now that I'm reaching my 70s, the time will soon come when running a wood stove may be too much of a hardship to continue. That is why I recently had a natural gas line run to my house so I can have a gas heater backup instead of my wood stove. Unlike other sources of heat that require electricity, a gas heater can maintain heat using its pilot light to ignite itself even if I'm not home. Also, burning natural gas is far less polluting than burning wood. In a heavily forested state plagued with numerous destructive weather events, it would hurt many people to remove a source of energy that serve as a convenient backup during prolonged electrical outages. Please do not restrict natural gas as a source of energy that many of us depend on.