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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

“Resolve, To Provide for Participation of the State in the Planning and Negotiations for the Atlantic Loop Energy Project [Emergency]”

L.D. 82

GOVERNOR'S ENERGY OFFICE

February 18, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology (EUT): My name is Dan Burgess and I am the Director of the Governor's Energy Office (GEO).

The GEO submits this testimony neither for nor against LD 82.

In March 2019, the Atlantic Provinces and Canadian federal government agreed to develop a Clean Power Roadmap for Atlantic Canada. The Roadmap is intended to outline a collective vision to advance renewable energy across the region. This is in part motivated by the federal mandate in Canada that requires all coal generation be retired by 2030. This Roadmap development is being overseen by an Atlantic Clean Power Planning Committee. This committee is composed of senior officials from Canadian federal and provincial governments and provincial utilities. Senior representatives from the Government of Québec as well as Hydro- Québec have been invited as observers to Committee meetings.

As outlined in the Interim Report from the Atlantic Clean Power Planning Committee released in August 2020, “a key element of achieving this vision is the strengthening of the Atlantic Regional Transmission Loop to serve as a clean power superhighway connecting existing and new power supplies across the region...”¹ This transmission initiative is commonly referred to as the Atlantic Loop.

The Atlantic Loop is a concept to integrate the five eastern Canadian provinces to enable electricity, environmental, and economic benefits throughout those provinces. As mentioned above, this initiative is in part motivated by the federal mandate in Canada that requires all coal generation be retired by 2030. By building new transmission and renewable resources in Canada, the loss of capacity from coal generation could be met instead with clean electricity generation. The initiative, as noted in L.D. 82, was mentioned in the 2020 Speech From The

¹ Atlantic Clean Power Planning Committee. Interim Report: Towards a Clean Power Roadmap for Atlantic Canada. August 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/atlantic-canada-opportunities/atlanticgrowth/reports/cleanpower.html>

Throne, which stated that projects like the Atlantic Loop can help to meet Canada’s climate and clean energy goals, including the transition away from coal.²

Given Northern Maine’s close proximity and grid connection to the Atlantic Province of New Brunswick, in addition to Québec, the Atlantic Loop concept presents potential opportunities for Maine – both for carbon free resources to be provided to consumers in Northern Maine and for the potential to export Maine renewable energy. The GEO is interested in the potential of both of these opportunities.

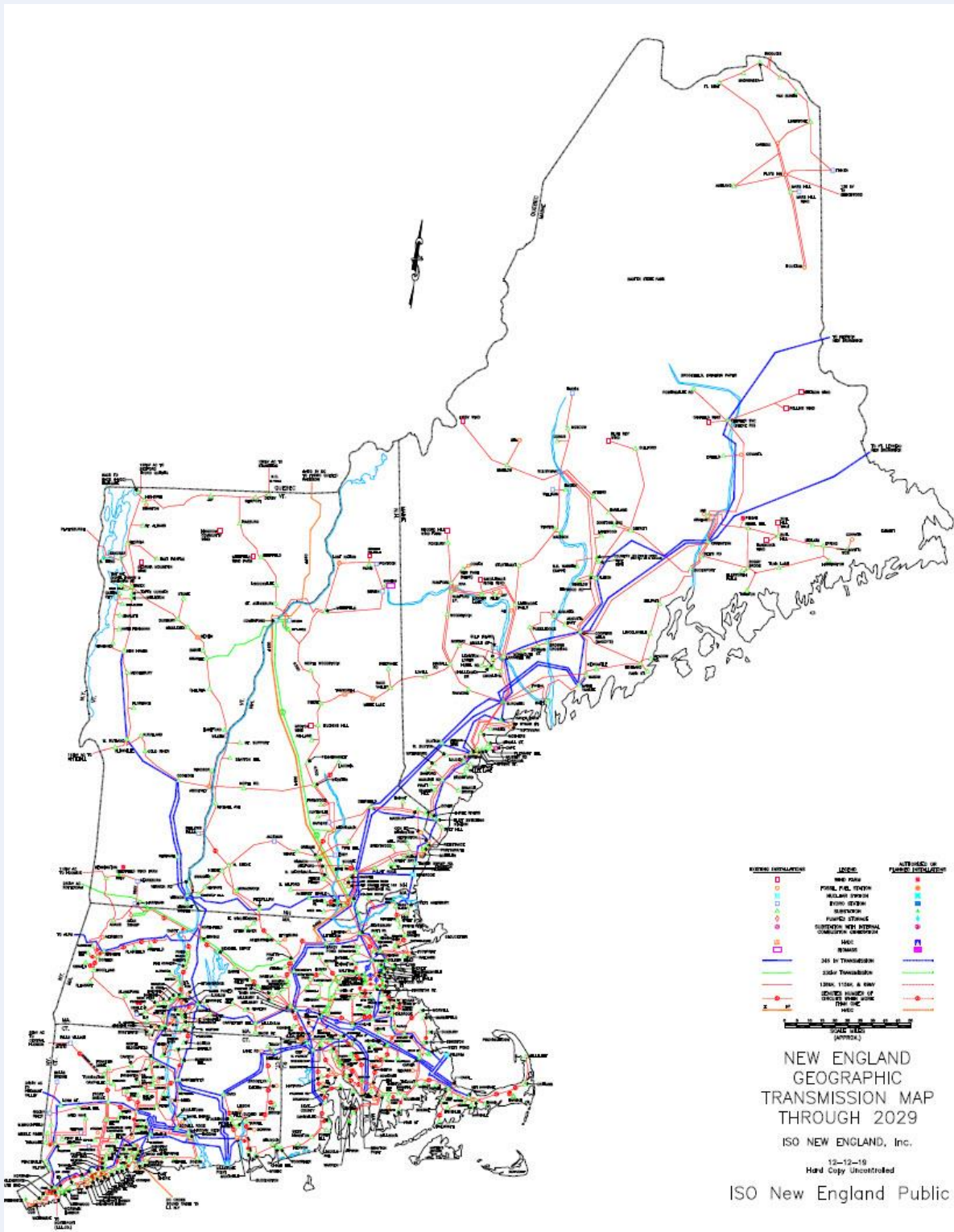
However, at this time to the GEO’s knowledge, there has been no explicit statement of the direct involvement of Maine nor of new transmission development in Maine as a component of the Atlantic Loop concept. The Interim Report from the Atlantic Clean Power Planning Committee³, which does not mention any consideration of Maine, includes the image below with a high-level depiction of the proposed vision, which is still in early planning stages.



² Canada. Governor General. A Stronger And More Resilient Canada: Speech from the Throne to Open the Second Session of the Forty-third Parliament of Canada, September 23, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/campaigns/speech-throne/2020/speech-from-the-throne.html>

³ Atlantic Clean Power Planning Committee. Interim Report: Towards a Clean Power Roadmap for Atlantic Canada. August 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/atlantic-canada-opportunities/atlanticgrowth/reports/cleanpower.html>

For additional context, provided below is the geographical transmission system diagram from ISO New England of the New England regional electricity transmission grid.⁴

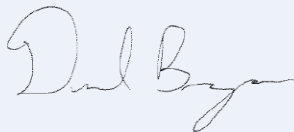


⁴ ISO New England. Maps and Diagrams. New England Geographic Transmission Map Through 2029. <https://www.iso-ne.com/about/key-stats/maps-and-diagrams/>

Our current understanding of the planning process is that it includes solely the Canadian Atlantic Provinces – with Québec and Hydro Québec as designated observers only – and that no direct mention of Maine’s involvement has been explicitly stated. Given this, the language of the Emergency Preamble and within the legislation may not be consistent with the current planning efforts. Rather than directing the Governor to inform Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Premiers that Maine seeks “equal footing in the negotiations,” and then to provide updates every three months to this Committee, it may be more productive for Maine to continue monitoring the ongoing planning initiative and any advancements of the Atlantic Loop concept. Additionally, any involvement in planning processes should take place in the existing and respected avenues for coordination with the Eastern Canadian Provinces. In particular, Maine is a member of the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG/ECP), which encourages cooperative engagement of the six New England states and five Eastern Canadian provinces to address shared interests across the border, including energy and regional projects.

With these long-established avenues for coordination and cooperation, the GEO suggests a less formal approach than is contemplated in L.D. 82. Instead, in recognition of the strongly expressed interest in and potential opportunity of this Atlantic Loop concept and other issues, the GEO will continue to engage with the Eastern Canadian provinces through existing efforts and monitor ongoing planning and discussions around the Atlantic Loop proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Burgess".

Dan Burgess, Director
Governor’s Energy Office