



## Christopher J. Kessler

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# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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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**

February 18, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology:

I am honored to have the opportunity to start an important conversation. I consider this Resolve a starting point; an opportunity to have a robust discussion about Maine’s energy future and what role we will play in both New England and Canada.

I want to start by expressing that I appreciate Gordon Weil for raising awareness about what’s happening with our Canadian neighbors, and his insight into the world of electric utilities in the United States and Canada.

What is the Atlantic Loop? It is a proposed transmission infrastructure project that aims to reduce carbon emissions in Atlantic Canada by transmitting hydroelectric power from the northern provinces to offset the use of oil, coal and natural gas throughout the region. Nova Scotia, for example, currently generates 60% of its power with coal. At the same time, hydropower generators in Canada have long been selling electricity to New England, and continue to seek new customers. Our electrical grid is very much interconnected with theirs, and as recent history shows us, the drive to continue that trend is strong. In some preliminary sketches of the plan, the Loop is illustrated as running through Maine.

Labrador MP Yvonne Jones was quoted in the news saying the loop could carry the excess 300 megawatts or so of Muskrat Falls power that has not yet been spoken for, and would require more besides. She said, "It provides future opportunities for us to do other hydro development projects in Labrador, and I think that's the key here,"

In my research on the Atlantic Loop, the first thing I thought of was the CMP Corridor; how a transmission line project was in the works, under the radar for years, to be executed in a fashion where communities’ wishes were ignored. I never want to see things play out like that again. This Resolve gives us an opportunity to avoid that; to be proactive rather than reactive.

I recognize the impact that megadam projects in Canada have had on the environment and First Nation people. We must ask ourselves - in our drive to decarbonize our grid, do we wish to do it at their expense? Surely not. Could Maine play a role in lessening the drive to build new dams and



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flood out more native people? Possibly. The future is yet to be written, and that is what this bill seeks to address.

Canada has a strong drive to decarbonize their grid. So does Maine. As Maine builds out our renewable energy resources, we have the potential to be a significant exporter of clean energy. Maine is much closer to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia than Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, electrons are flowing north to south, but there is no reason why they couldn't flow in the opposite direction. What opportunities exist to decarbonize our grid in cooperation with our Canadian neighbors?

We don't know what this will look like, but I know that if we don't engage in this matter, we will not have any influence on the outcome. We will be playing the same reactionary role. We need to have a seat at the table. So this is the starting point. This is where we decide, as the elected Representatives of the people of Maine, what kind of role we wish to play in decarbonizing this region of the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Kessler".

Rep. Christopher Kessler