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This bill should be enacted. It is high time that transmission lines applications receive the highest level of scrutiny before they are permitted or refused. We see with the NECEC and the Atlantic Loop that the public's concerns about how a line received the permit to get built. The answer has been with a rapid process and weak set of criteria. Maine needs a readily-accessible and more robust set of criteria so the public can review them and have bases for expressing its concern; this bill gives the public this ability.

For the first time, "non-essential" is defined in relation to transmission lines. This feature concerns me that permits have been given to applicants that have built lines that are not essential at taxpayer and environmental expense. That practice needs to end. LD170 will ensure that a distribution utility petitioning for commission approval for a nonessential transmission line

is required to demonstrate that the petitioner agrees to provide a minimum benefit to ratepayers in the State of equal value to the ratepayer-funded physical assets used to construct the nonessential transmission line. It is unfortunate that this criteria has not yet existed. All large infrastructure projects should have community benefit agreements that are based on specific criteria.

The same goes for the nonessential transmission lines would be built in the most competitive and cost-effective manner and with consideration given to ratepayer benefits and greenhouse gas reduction goals. I understand the specification of using the greenhouse gas reduction goals because they are a recent development. But the concept that these lines have been permitted without consideration to ratepayer benefits and competitiveness is astonishing for such intrusive structures. All the more reason that LD 170 should be enacted.