

**TESTIMONY OF TONY BUXTON ON BEHALF OF  
INDUSTRIAL ENERGY CONSUMER GROUP**

**IN OPPOSITION TO**

**LD 1587, AN ACT TO REMOVE THE MUNICIPAL ORDINANCE EXEMPTION FOR THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF NONESSENTIAL TRANSMISSION LINES**

**MAY 4, 2021**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy Utilities and Technology, I am Tony Buxton of the law firm Preti Flaherty, representing Industrial Energy Consumer Group (“IECG”), an association of larger energy consumers formed in 1985 to participate in regulatory and legislative matters affecting the price and reliability of energy supply, in opposition to LD 1587.

As the Committee is aware, IECG supports CMP’s NECEC Project as an essential transmission line to get New England more rapidly to zero carbon. In fact, IECG has supported this transmission line since it was first proposed in 1987, some 34 years ago. IECG supported the line then and does now despite often being adverse to CMP on various issues, because the line is strongly in the public interest. Thus far, five state agencies in two states, two federal agencies and multiple judicial decisions have agreed. The metropolis of Caratunk, Maine, today asks for the right of its 60-odd voters to veto all those decisions.

IECG asks the Committee to recognize that all transmission lines provide reliability because they provide electricity, in this case badly needed renewable electricity. ISO-New England has publicly warned New England’s Governors of rolling blackouts, as occurred this winter in Texas, if New England does not build more regional transmission interties and generation, predicting that rolling blackouts may begin as soon as 2024. That’s tomorrow in infrastructure terms. It may be worth noting the public fates of the responsible, or irresponsible, Texas regulators. How much more warning do we need?

I mentioned Caratunk for the same reasons CMP did: Caratunk voted 12-5 to prohibit the CMP line. I am informed that beyond the fact that four persons from Caratunk would hold a regional light switch in their hands under this bill, Caratunk also proves an even more serious

principle to be correct. That principle is that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. It's a bit of a play on words here, but still true. Because I am informed that, when NextEra proposed exactly the same line, Caratunk endorsed the NextEra line because NextEra proposed to build a solar project in Caratunk. So, it wasn't the view, or the effect on property values, or life and liberty, it was a higher bid.

My point is not that Caratunk is corrupt. Even though many of Caratunk's citizens migrated from Massachusetts, I presume they are honest. But giving small towns, or any municipality, the ability to block regionally approved transmission lines creates the clear and clearly wrong potential abuse of that power. The corporate temptation, the opportunity for the town and the massively disproportionate risk of harm to the public argue strongly against permitting such tests of human nature.

IECG respectfully urges this Committee to vote against LD 1587, and to do its best to keep the lights on.

I would be pleased to answer any questions.