



Testimony in Opposition to LD 1794 "An Act to Enhance the Predictability of Mandated Overtime for Pulp or Paper Manufacturing Facility Employees"

May 24, 2023

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Labor and Housing Committee:

I am writing to respectfully share our opposition to LD 1794, An Act to Enhance the Predictability of Mandated Overtime for Pulp or Paper Manufacturing Facility Employees. We believe this legislation would be catastrophic for our long-standing paper operation in Madawaska and our dedicated workforce, and extremely detrimental to our ability to sustain a viable business.

LD 1794 will place Maine paper makers at a serious competitive disadvantage as we vie for business in a difficult market against out-of-state mills and overseas suppliers. If passed in its current form, LD 1794 will inevitably result in the loss of jobs across Maine papermaking operations and the demise of an already challenged industry identified by the State as vital to Maine's 10-year Economic Plan.

The Twin Rivers Madawaska paper mill directly provides 450+ high-paying jobs that form the economic underpinning of the community. As the President and Chief Financial Officer of Twin Rivers Paper, I can personally attest that the safety of our team members is the company's highest priority. Our colleagues who work at the mill are the reason for our positive impact within the paper industry and our communities, and we are committed to investing in their wellbeing and development.

Like most paper and industrial manufacturers, the scale and complexity of Twin Rivers' manufacturing operation requires that we operate our equipment 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Except for carefully planned periodic outages to conduct preventative maintenance or capital improvements, continuous production is essential. When a shutdown occurs, it takes tremendous time and energy to restart the machines. Put simply, it is not feasible – or safe – to stop and start paper machines based on crew members' last-minute absences. It is essential that we call on our employees to participate in overtime when absences from their team members occur – as this is necessary to keep the machines running.

Although Twin Rivers Paper, like other employers in Maine and across the country, navigates the challenge of filling job openings with qualified candidates, we are not understaffed at our Madawaska mill. We are consistently able to fully staff each operating shift. **The need for an employee to work an extended shift occurs when the crew member scheduled to replace that person on the next shift calls out sick or takes leave without sufficient notice – an occurrence that has been on the rise in recent years.** Despite the challenging economic environment, we have added to our hourly operations headcount and spares pool over the past year. We also have an agreement in place to expand the size of the spares pool in the coming months.



The extended shift procedure, also referred to as inversion or mandatory overtime, at the Twin Rivers Madawaska mill has been governed by language in its Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and that language was retained in the new CBA that went into effect on May 1, 2023. The contract has been widely lauded by Union membership as the best CBA they have obtained. On behalf of Twin Rivers Paper and its more than 1,300 employees across North America, I respectfully contend that for a unionized workforce, matters such as those put forth in LD 1794 are best governed by agreements made across the bargaining table, informed by the facts and circumstances unique to the business and priorities of the Union leaders and the members they represent, and not through the legislative process.

The limitations LD 1794 would place on our operation and workforce would inevitably require layoffs and shutdowns, an outcome certainly not in the best interest of members of the workforce or surrounding communities and not aligned with the intent of this bill.

We recognize and appreciate the sponsor Senator Troy Jackson's commitment to supporting and growing Maine's papermaking industry. We are grateful for Senator Jackson's efforts to help Twin Rivers Paper modernize and improve our operations and processes, which is also critical to the long-term viability and safe operation of our flagship Madawaska mill.

We appreciate this Committee's time and thoughtful consideration of our comments and the critical issues that impact our papermaking workforce and operation.

Sincerely,

Tyler Rajeski

President and Chief Financial Officer
Twin Rivers Paper Company