

February 26, 2019

Maine Department of Environmental Protection
James Bayer
17 State House Station
28 Tyson Drive
Augusta, Maine 04333-0017

RE: proposed Hydro Quebec high-voltage transmission line through Maine

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing in regards to the above-referenced proposal to run a high-voltage transmission line from Quebec through Maine that will carry hydroelectricity to the Commonwealth.

Scenic America is the nation's only nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the country's landscapes and visual environment. We represent some 14,100 members around the country, including about 430 in Maine.

We have serious concerns about the detrimental impacts this proposal would have on Maine's scenic environment. A recent survey by the Maine Tourism Association found that the number one reason overnight tourists gave for visiting the state was to enjoy its "scenic beauty." Tourism is the top industry in the state in terms of both employment and economic impact, and this is certainly true in the rural and wooded areas proposed to be cleared for the power lines. Negative impacts on the tourism sector would be inevitable.

Maine's interest in scenic beauty is about more than just tourism dollars, though. A respect for the natural environment is part of the state's identity and a source of pride for residents. To that end, Maine is one of only four states that completely ban billboards. Protecting the scenic environment preserves what is unique and true about Maine, and those same actions subsequently benefit the state economically.

Across the country we see landscapes diminished by the visual pollution of overhead utilities. Many communities are playing catch up and trying to put their power lines underground or otherwise mitigate their visual impacts, to say nothing of the power resiliency issues presented by overhead power lines.

There are many iconic Maine landscapes which would be put at risk by this proposal, not the least of which is a wild and scenic gorge on the Kennebec River, a favorite viewscape of whitewater rafters, hikers and other sightseers.

We strongly urge you to take the “long view” of these issues and consider the irreversible impacts of this proposal on Maine’s scenic landscapes. We ask you to deny this proposal and protect the natural beauty of Maine in its own right and also as a critical contributor to the state’s rural economy.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to speak with you anytime about our concerns.

Sincerely,

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President
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