

Mills is Wrong to Try to Eco-Balance

by Jonathan Carter

What a total disappointment that the Mills administration has opted to follow the same old model of compromising the health of Maine's environment away. This is called eco-balancing and it employs the notion that CMP's offer to provide 248 million over 40 years will provide a benefit that is equal to or greater than the negative impacts of the 150 mile transmission line that will deliver "dirty power" from Quebec Hydro.

Mainers should be outraged that CMP is calling Hydro-Quebec power clean renewable power. (simply a lie – beyond fake news) I have visited the source of this power in Northern Quebec. It is a land of utter destruction. Rivers have been reversed and drained in order to create vast power head reservoirs. Thousands of square acres of forests have been destroyed, subsistent Native Canadian hunting and fishing grounds have been submerged, and thousands of caribou drowned. The once mighty Churchill Falls is nothing but a trickle. Canada seems to have ignored the lessons of landscape scale dam construction. More dam construction is planned for northern Quebec and Labrador. Buying this power will only encourage more dam construction.

The horrific landscape destruction, the clearcutting, the creation of flood basins and building of transmission lines all reduce carbon sequestration. In addition, the flooded areas have become huge methane (30 times more potent as a greenhouse gas) emitters from the anaerobic decay of massive amounts of detritus and soil organic compounds. When CMP and Hydro-Quebec say that this project will reduce carbon emissions the equivalent of 280,000 vehicles – it is

totally a distortion of the truth. **This energy is not clean energy. If allowed to transit Maine, it will mar permanently the Maine forest landscape.**

Janet Mill's is right when she says "*we cannot afford to do nothing*", but what she doesn't seem to understand is that if we are serious about mitigating climate change, authorizing a transmission line that will destroy Maine's forest and deliver greenhouse gas producing power to Massachusetts is not the answer. For too long, the status quo has been to deal in tradeoffs. Every time the environment is compromised there is one half less of healthy ecosphere left. Take the number 1, cut it in half what is left- $\frac{1}{2}$, continue this process just 10 times and only $\frac{1}{1024}$ is left. There is no room for compromising anymore – we have lost so much already.

Yes, investing in heat pump technology makes sense as does expanding the use of electric vehicles, but this needs to be accomplished, not as a tradeoff, but as a legislative action. As far as money for Franklin County communities and the offer of lower electric rates, these are just out and out bribes. In fact, if we are serious about climate change, we should not encourage more electrical consumption by offering lower rates. On the contrary we should be investing in ways to reduce consumption.

The truth be told there is no turning back from the ongoing catastrophic crisis of climate change. We have passed the tipping point and it is virtually impossible to reverse the oncoming changes. What we can do is make intelligent decisions to mitigate more extreme impacts and invest in adaption and survival strategies. The CMP corridor now being endorsed by Mills is taking us in completely the wrong direction.

Study after study has shown that the cheapest and best way to reduce carbon emissions is to protect forests. **Over the last several decades there has been an effort to quantify the value of non-market goods and services provided by forests annually – this is often called natural capital. Natural capital’s currency included all ecological service: carbon sequestration, disease regulation, water filtration and purification, flood control, pollinator habitat, nutrient recycling, pest control, soil erosion prevention, air filtration, shade and cooling, and soil formation. Generally speaking half of the natural capital value of forests are related to carbon sequestration and storage in both trees and soils. The other half of the natural capital value is driven by ecological services related to air purification, water quality and water storage (TD Economics & Nature Conservancy of Canada, 2017)**

Mills is wrong if she thinks allowing and supporting the destruction of forests in the production and distribution of electricity is sound policy. Her decision to employ the notion of eco-balancing is flawed and will only exacerbate the climate change crisis.

It is not too late for her to reverse course. We must encourage her to think clearly.

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