

## Testimony of François Ramsay

General Counsel  
Hydro-Québec

Good day Senator Luchini and Representative Schneck and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee.

My name is François Ramsay. I am the General Counsel of Hydro-Québec which I joined a little less than a year ago.

Over the last 20 years, I have served as General Counsel for Yellow Pages in Canada and Couche-Tard, which operates 16,000 convenience stores, including Circle K stores here in Maine.

Hydro-Québec is the largest renewable energy generator in North America. Our headquarters is located in Montreal, Canada. The company operates and maintains an extensive electricity system, with hydropower generating stations, reservoirs and a transmission grid. In addition to supplying Québec's domestic load, Hydro-Québec delivers large quantities of clean energy to markets such as New England, where in recent years we have provided approximately 14% of electricity used in the region.

You are, of course, aware of the proposed NECEC Project. Hydro-Québec will be the energy supplier for that line. That Project was issued a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity on May 3, 2019.

We have heard a great deal of misinformation about HQ's energy, which is why Hydro-Québec has been active in Maine for months, sharing facts about our energy with Mainers.

NECEC is a vitally important project as it provides a range of benefits for Maine and New England. As we move forward, HQ envisions a long term partnership with and ongoing contributions to the State of Maine, for example through the benefits package proposed in 2019.

We have been advised that U.S. laws in place since the 1970s allow any entity, be it U.S.-based or not, to exercise free speech in a context that is unrelated to candidate elections.

Through its subsidiary HQ Energy Services (US), Inc., Hydro-Québec does substantial business in the U.S. HQ Energy Services (US) Inc. employs Americans and works with American utilities. As such, HQ is subject to US laws. More specifically, through its U.S. subsidiary, Hydro-Québec has taken the steps required by Maine law to legally participate in the debate on the NECEC project, in a fully transparent manner.

There is no doubt that we are subject to US laws when we operate in the United States. Likewise, we believe we also benefit from protections of our rights, including free speech under the U.S. Constitution.

LD 2136 was just introduced to the Legislature on March 5, 2020 as emergency legislation. It looks to us like this legislation is aimed at silencing and preventing us and others to speak in favor of the NECEC project. This legislation would put our company at an unfair disadvantage in doing business in Maine.

We believe that this legislation would prevent Maine citizens from receiving information about the project and about HQ's low-carbon energy.

Passage of this bill would do a serious disservice to Mainers because it would prohibit the very information that is needed by the public to make an informed decision. Imagine for a second, if a voter in Maine reached out to our company for information on the project or on our energy, in an effort to form an opinion on this project. LD 2136 would effectively prohibit us from providing that information.

The people of Maine have a right to hear all sides of the story.

The [unequivocal] legal opinion of our attorneys, who will speak after me to explain that LD 2136 violates Free Speech guaranteed under the First Amendment, is the reason why we believe we must appear in front of you.

Québec and Maine share both a common environment and a common energy future. The U.S. States and Canada are also each other's largest trading partners. Hydro-Québec wants to strengthen those regional ties, and if this project is successful, we want to do more with Maine, together, as neighbors.

For all of these reasons, we ask that you vote "ought not to pass" on LD 2136.