



## Natural Resources Council of Maine

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### **Testimony in Support of LD 924, a Resolve to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure**

**To the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee  
by Jack Shapiro, Climate and Clean Energy Program Director  
March 21, 2023**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Jack Shapiro. I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine. NRCM has been working for more than 60 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment, on behalf of our 25,000 members and supporters. I'm here today to testify in support of LD 924, a Resolve to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure.

Earlier this year, as a result of LD 1710, passed in 2021, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved a 1,000-megawatt wind project – the King Pine project — and a transmission line to connect that project to the rest of the New England grid.

Successfully completing these projects will bring multiple benefits to Maine. Wind power, both on and offshore, peaking at night and in the winter, complements solar, which peaks during the day and in the summer. A diverse renewable portfolio increases the grid's resiliency and reduces costs overall. The Aroostook County projects will bring indisputable climate benefits to New England, displacing power generated by burning gas or oil and reducing the carbon pollution that causes climate change — which is already bringing significant impacts to our state.

Renewable energy projects also routinely offer energy at lower costs than fossil fuels, and without the harmful price volatility that comes with dependence on natural gas generation. It is well known that the large increases in standard offer supply prices of 83% last year,<sup>1</sup> and 49% this year<sup>2</sup> that Maine people are seeing on their bills are a result of high and volatile fuel prices for natural gas generation in our region.

Renewable energy has no fuel costs and comes with stable pricing for decades, which brings real benefits: a recent report from Daymark Advisors estimated that new wind projects of this scale will save Maine electricity customers \$35 million per year.<sup>3</sup> And the economic benefits are significant. The construction of both the transmission and wind projects will collectively

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pressherald.com/2021/11/17/supply-cost-spike-to-raise-average-homes-cmp-bill-by-30-in-2022/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mainepublic.org/business-and-economy/2022-11-16/cmp-customers-will-see-rate-hikes-next-year>

<sup>3</sup> <https://cleanpower.org/resources/market-and-environmental-benefits-of-new-england-renewable-generation/>

generate hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity, thousands of construction jobs, tens of millions of dollars in sales and property taxes paid to the state and local communities, and dozens of ongoing operations and maintenance jobs.<sup>4</sup>

This bill is designed to fulfill the new requirements put in place by Question 1, which was adopted decisively by Maine voters in November 2021. The Legislature must now approve high-impact electric transmission projects in Maine, of which the proposed Northern Maine line is undoubtedly one.

Even after this step, this transmission project will still need to receive all the applicable permits. We will be following those permit application processes as they move forward to ensure that the developers are fully engaging communities along the route and taking necessary steps to minimize and mitigate environmental or ecological impacts from the project.

Allowing this project to move forward will move Maine closer to bringing these projects to fruition, providing the electric grid with a large volume of low-cost, Maine-made wind energy from Aroostook County — a win for Maine electricity consumers, and a promising example of regional collaboration on our energy future.

We urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 924 and would welcome any questions you have.

Thank you.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=165179>