

House Committee on Energy and Technology

April 22, 2019

Testimony of Katharine C. Whiteley on H.50, H.175 and H.214

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these three bills. I urge you to move these critical issues related to Vermont's energy choices out of committee so that House and Senate members have an opportunity to discuss and enlighten on these topics. I understand there will be adaptations and changes offered during this deliberative process. Hopefully, these will be in the best interest of future generations of Vermonters.

As state leaders and our elected legislators, we are depending on you to look ahead and to build the foundations we need for a sustainable, clean energy future. The argument that "natural gas" is a bridge fuel and moves us toward our renewable energy goals is a false and specious one. In fact, all investments in fossil fuel infrastructure move Vermont in the opposite direction from where we need to be heading.

There is nothing natural about "natural" gas. It is a fossil fuel, extracted in ways that are more destructive to the environment than oil. We now know that the release of methane throughout the extraction and transmission processes is vastly more poisonous to the atmosphere than the CO₂ released from burning fuel oil.

This is not an either/or situation, choosing one fossil fuel over the other. If we care about clean air to breathe and clean water to drink, there is only one choice. That choice is to stop investing in fossil fuels completely, choosing instead to invest in renewable sources so that we can meet our established goals of 90% renewables by 2050. The longer we delay taking action, this goal fades farther from our sight.

Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan has been well researched and vetted. We need to follow it and update it to reflect current research and to make course corrections. We know Vermont has been slipping backwards. Last year's Agency of Natural Resources' Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) Inventory Update showed a dramatic increase in our greenhouse gas emissions, putting Vermont approximately 16% above the 1990 baseline value. This leaves us with an even greater uphill climb to reduce our GHG emissions by 50% of 1990 levels by 2028.

Quite simply, if we do not change course and make an actionable commitment to stop any further development of fossil fuels, and instead shift those investments to develop sustainable energy sources, we will lose this window of time that still exists to keep our commitments and to create the future our children and grandchildren deserve.

In closing, I would like to add that, although I have not addressed specific aspects of these three bills, I have read other testimonies, and in particular, those of James A. Dumont, Esq. and agree with his assessments and recommended changes to H. 51, H. 175 and H. 214. Please consider this my support for his recommendations.

Thank you again, for the opportunity to participate in this legislative hearing.

Sincerely yours,

Katharine C. Whiteley
Montpelier, VT
Member, Central Vermont Climate Action & 350VT