



February 17, 2021

To: Vermont Senate Finance Committee

From: David Snedeker, Executive Director, Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Re: Testimony on S.1 – Baseload renewable power portfolio requirement

Senator Cummings & Committee Members:

On behalf of the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA), the regional planning and economic development corporation serving the businesses and communities of Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans Counties, I encourage your support of S.1 – a bill that proposes to extend the baseload renewable power portfolio requirement until 2032. This would positively impact the Ryegate wood-fired electricity plant in the Northeast Kingdom. A similar bill (S.190) passed the Senate in 2020, but the pandemic derailed its progress in the House.

The Ryegate power station, now owned by Stored Solar, LLC, is a key employer in the Ryegate community by providing 20 valuable jobs. Plant operations also support dozens of logging businesses in the region, with an estimated 250 other individuals working in our forests. The importance of these jobs cannot be understated as we no longer have paper mills in Lunenburg (Gilman) and Groveton, NH. The NVDA *2018 Regional Plan for the Northeast Kingdom* strongly supports sustainable forestry and value-added processing opportunities for our region's wood resources, including operation of the Ryegate plant.

S.1 requires the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) to conduct a feasibility study concerning the utilization of excess heat generated by the plant. In 2020, NVDA was prepared to assist with this effort as we had initiated an application with USDA Rural Development that would fund the feasibility study. Plans were halted due to COVID and a change in plant ownership. It is our current understanding that Stored Solar, LLC is working with Marvesta, LLC - an experienced developer of aquaculture installations - to explore the possibility of developing shrimp aquaculture at/near the plant. This is very encouraging. However, should it be determined that their project is not feasible, NVDA is ready to work with the plant owner to identify other potential opportunities.

Again, I want to express NVDA's strong support for this legislation (S.1) and encourage your favorable consideration. Please contact me if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

David Snedeker
Executive Director, NVDA