

Hello, thank you for this opportunity to talk with you today.

As a member of the Biomass Task force, we produced a list of recommendations after listening to at least 12 scientists from Canada, USA and Germany. These recommendations were not reviewed by the full Climate council. They were low tech and not costly. We had to fight to even get a link included in the Climate Council annual report. This report did not include costly technology. Look at this list of recommendations,¹ it took a large committee over ten months to make this list. You must consider everything. Making your decisions wisely is important: understand that your words and actions will be heard by three generations back and three generations of those yet unborn.

The science since the arrival of Europeans to this land has always been about supply and demand. If there's a demand, we will just let new technology meet that demand; if the demand continues to grow we'll meet that with new technology. As I hope you can clearly see, this has not worked. It has created huge inequities and destroyed our land, water and air. Actually, this philosophy is exactly why we are in the crisis we now have in front of us today. New Technology doesn't work. There has been little to no balance for a very long time. We cannot continue to let economy rule this land. We will never have a healthy economy if we don't have a healthy land. A healthy land must come before a healthy economy if we are to survive this crisis, and we must change quickly, time is running out. Ask yourself the Equity Probing Question the SEC has created; How will the bill provide for more equitable and just systems for all Vermonters?

I've heard on various recordings from this committee. "What can we do to make these green people happy?" Are you kidding me? The question should be: How can we understand better what these green people know that we don't know? I've also heard from Mr. Duval on these recordings say "if anyone tells you they don't have a better solution, they are giving you hollow words." Mr. Duval's words are all about semantics, your pattern is to listen to folks from various communities, orgs that work with technology and fuels and have Mr. Duval explain why everything they said was true or inaccurate. I'm telling you there is danger in this "single story". Mr. Duval's story is not the only story out there. I worry that you might blindly follow the words of one person. We must be working to braid together knowledges, western science, Indigenous science, and green science. You are not doing that with the way S.5 is currently written and the way you are projecting change. So please let me give you a plan as I see it, so you will not think my words are hollow.

1. As it says in the guiding principles for the Climate Council, there must be fairness to all living and non-living things. For instance: the land, air and water are our kin, they must be treated that way. Ask yourselves this Equity Probing question: How does the proposed legislation distribute wealth and resources to increase social wellbeing for the racial/ethnic groups most adversely impacted? If the bill does not address this, start over and make it so.

¹https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/BiomassRecommendations12_1_22Draft.pdf

2. There must also be equity, as it says in the Global Warming Solutions Act. Using words like the “price will come down”, or “it’s getting cheaper” is not equity, it’s wishful thinking. Ask yourself the Probing Equity Questions that were developed by the Social Equity Caucus for your use. Which individuals benefit from the proposed bill? Right now, I believe it is the wealthy. If you feel something should be followed up by the PUC make them follow the equity probing questions as well. Don’t use this act of pawning something off as an avoidance to address this crisis.

I’m asking you to do what you are supposed to do, show equity. You represent many different people, use your position of power respectfully. If the bill has negative impacts on underrepresented groups, you must tell us how these impacts will be mitigated?

3. Where is this bill talking about reducing our energy use? We must reduce. I heard you talk about the Navy shower, I put a shut off valve on my hot water line when my children became teen agers. If the kids were in the shower too long, I simply shut the hot water off. No problem, no argument, they got out quickly and got used to quick showers. We need to reduce in every area of our lives. Where are incentives to get people to use less electricity, simple things like turn the lights off when you leave the room, unplug your charger when not in use, or turn the heat down and put a sweater on. I personally set goals for myself to use less kilowatts when compared to the month in the previous year. Where are incentives from Electric Company for things like this? Wouldn’t it be great if you got a cost reduction every time you used less electricity from the year before? Why is this legislative committee addressing this issue if they do not want to reduce?
4. As a member of the Agriculture and Ecosystems sub-committee of the Vermont Climate Council, we had many recommendations, many were not included in the report to the legislature simply because they were not a shiny new technology, go back to look at their recommendations.² Both the Ag and Ecosystems Subcommittee of the Vermont Climate Council and the Biomass Task force recommended we do more research on the potential adverse consequences of using wood for heat, including costs to people, air, land, and climate. This has not happened, I would suggest this be a part of S.5 before anything else is included. Jared Ulmer from the State of Vermont’s Dept of Health, on Friday January 27th 2023 spoke to your committee about reducing home heating, he said reducing emissions especially from biomass is important for good health.³ Burning biomass releases more greenhouse gases and puts more harmful pollutants into the air than fossil fuels. These recommendations are green and many do not cost anything. In addition, ask yourselves the Equity Probing question. How does the bill address recovery and repair of broken relationships by dismantling systematic structures that cause harm? Just so you know in its current state S.5 does not!

² The ag and eco recommendations can be accessed here.

<https://climatechange.vermont.gov/node/322>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYGsYjHku6Q> located at 1hr. and 3min

5. While on this committee we asked to increase our scope of work from just biomass to include the study of biofuels. We were told “NO” by the climate council, yet nobody in the climate council or the Ag and Ecosystems Subcommittee addressed biofuels. Could you please tell me why? This must be studied, we cannot include biomass or biofuels to have continued use in our world- they are too destructive. They use too much water, there is a high cost for production, cause industrial pollution, create a monoculture, cause deforestation and many more disadvantages. They are simply too hazardous to the land and her people. Again, the Equity Probing Questions will show you this is not equitable when you ask yourselves. Could the bill have disparate negative impacts on marginalized or underrepresented groups? The answer is yes definitely. So how will you mitigate this?
6. The approximate 4500 folks living within a one-mile circle of McNeil Generating Plant suffer. These are low income people, many are BIPOC that work 3 and 4 jobs, to provide a roof over their heads, mostly living in section 8 housing. Food is hard to come by for these people. They can't imagine having money for a car or even an electric car, solar panel, heat pumps or any of the other new technologies that are being promoted when they don't know where their next meal is coming from, relying sometimes on the free and reduced meals at school only. I ask you: Where is the equity here? Who is going to pick them up, and help them through this crisis? It certainly is not S.5. They suffer a great deal from air pollution in this area, with constant hospital visits for COPD and Asthma attacks. According to the EPA, the average age in this area for a hospital visit for an Asthma attack is a ten-year old child. Imagine if that was your child! The average age of a hospital visit for COPD is a twenty-year old. This is sickening. How can they become productive citizens if we are killing them off with pollution? My family has lived in this circle for generations, and when some moved out of state, their asthma disappeared. Why? The McNeil station is allowed to emit 46.6 tons of fine particulate matter – known as PM 2.5 – every year. **These invisible particles are so small that they lodge deep in the lungs and can then get into the bloodstream. Exposure and inhalation of PM 2.5 causes premature deaths, asthma, heart attacks, COPD, and a wide range of other illnesses.** In addition, McNeil is permitted to emit hundreds of tons of other health-harming air pollutants, including sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic chemicals and hazardous air pollutants like benzene and formaldehyde, which are known carcinogens. Why then does S.5 encourage McNeil to expand to produce heat? How does the community around McNeil differ from the averages in Vermont in terms of race, income, and ethnicity, and how will our health be disproportionately impacted by S5? How come S5 only looks at greenhouse gas emissions but makes no consideration of PM 2.5 and other pollution that is making our communities sick? How come there are no doctors or health advocates on the Technical Assistance Group or the Equity Advisory Group? Ask yourself these equity probing questions. You'll find the answers if you take the time to dig deep. S5 not only fails to repair or mitigate the harm that has been done to our community, but it completely ignores the fact that it will encourage more harmful air pollution. The answer is simply to phase out biomass burning, as both the Ag and Eco systems committee and biomass

task force have recommended. One more Equity Probing Question for you, How will this bill provide for more equitable and just systems for all Vermonters?

7. I also serve on the life cycle analysis committee of the Vermont Climate Council. We have not met many times nor are the public allowed to view these meetings or the committee members allowed to meet with ERG the client (VT Staff only). I repeat, we are in a crisis. What the hell is going on here? Another probing question here might be; How quickly will the communities most affected by racial and social inequities begin to benefit from the proposed bill?
8. Require Efficiency Vermont to stop giving rebates for advance wood heating and wood stoves, instead they should focus on home weatherization, heat pumps, solar hot water, and other approaches that do not generate greenhouse gas emissions and harmful air pollutants. Using wood for heat is not reducing carbon emissions, it's increasing them. This should be a backup only when there is a loss of power, not the main source of heat. They are not counting the carbon emissions from burning the wood. Can we really consider wood renewable in an acceptable time frame? Wood is not renewed until you get to the age of the original tree. If you cut down an 80 year-old tree it will take at least 80 years to offset the greenhouse emissions from cutting and logging that original tree. Logging is a high carbon- intensive operation. Creating logging roads, cutting, removing from the forest, transporting, and chipping of trees all uses fossil fuels. And again, I ask, where is the equity to the land? This is killing the trees, taking away habitat and life cycles for many, not just emitting greenhouse gasses into the air. Efficiency Vermont is incentivizing the wrong things. They are creating a bigger problem. S.5 will do the same thing unless biomass and biofuels are slated to be phased out in this bill.
9. The carbon dioxide that is not being counted from burning wood is called biogenic emissions. This burning is currently not being counted in the total amount of ghg going into the atmosphere. If S. 5 called for a proper lifecycle analysis of greenhouse gas emissions that requires all biogenic emissions to be counted you will clearly see the wood burning is destructive. If you continue to burn wood then climate change will continue to get worse. On paper it may look better, but in reality, it will be worse until this accounting error is corrected. No more creative math. PLEASE! Yet another equity Probing Question, Is the purpose of the Legislation to uplift the communities adversely impacted? If so What evidence has informed this bill?
10. Weatherization for both heat and cooling opportunities needs to be considered and incentivized to help low income and elderly. How will the communities be engaged in the evaluation of its success?

Many of the people on the climate council are representatives of corporations making money off this issue or state employees. I want to thank you for getting diverse perspectives, now open your mind to their words. And I apologize for having to share everything here that the Just Transition sub-committee of the Climate council should have shared. I repeat there is danger in a single story. Listen to ours.

Wilioni,
Judy Dow

