

Dear Honorable Members of the House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure,

I write as a member of the public and a retired environmental lawyer, who has worked for many years on climate and air quality issues, including more than 13 years for the Vermont Attorney General's Office.

Please reject the addition of language to H 319, which would provide the new owner of the Ryegate Plant an additional year to make efficiency improvements required to maintain its contract to sell electricity to Vermont utilities at the exorbitant base price of .10 kwh.

As the testimony of the Department of Public Service has made clear, the contract price is far above market rates for electricity and saddles Vermont ratepayers with additional costs of \$5-\$6 million in a typical year.

Worse yet, generating power by burning wood in the Ryegate plant releases far more carbon dioxide per unit of energy generated than burning any fossil fuel, including coal. And even assuming that it is appropriate to credit tree regrowth against the plant's carbon emissions, it takes decades to a century or more for tree regrowth to compensate for the carbon debt relative to burning fossil fuels- that is, assuming that the forest is permitted to regrow.

Contracting for replacement power representing a mix of power on the ISO New England grid, which is supplied about 50% by natural gas and 50% by low and no carbon sources, including hydro, wind, solar and nuclear power, would be preferable to Ryegate from both a ratepayer cost and climate impact standpoint.

The Ryegate plant is not an economic venture, and is likely to be less economic in the future as the value obtained from sale of its RECs declines. Ryegate is being kept afloat only by the legislature's misguided insistence that ratepayers subsidize it by buying its power at an exorbitant price. Biomass plants around the region have been closing for economic reasons- NH wisely declined to extend subsidies for biomass plants and Vermont should do the same.

It is also troubling to me that this issue has been raised as a late in the session addition to a bill to which it is at least arguably not germane. You heard from a very one-sided panel of witnesses. If the issue had been raised in a more timely and appropriate manner, you would have had time to hear from a more balanced collection of witnesses. To say the least, the manner in which this issue has been raised and considered does not inspire confidence in the legislative process.

Thank you for considering my views and for your service to the State of Vermont. Please submit my comments into the record for the proceedings.

Nick Persampieri
Burlington, VT
May 23, 2025