

August 7, 2020

François Legault
Premier
Édifice Honoré-Mercier, 3e étage
835, boul. René-Lévesque Est
Québec (Québec) G1A 1B4

Sophie Brochu
President and Chief Executive Officer
Hydro-Quebec
75, boulevard René-Lévesque Ouest
Montréal (Québec) H2Z 1A4

Dear Premier Legault and Ms Brochu:

We are writing as a follow-up to a July 29, 2020 letter from 25 current and former Maine lawmakers who requested that Hydro-Quebec cease its campaign to influence the outcome of a citizen-initiated ballot measure dealing with the Central Maine Power (CMP) transmission corridor.

We strongly repeat the request that Hydro-Quebec, a Crown Corporation owned wholly by the Province of Quebec, immediately stop its political campaign in Maine and let Maine people vote without further meddling by Hydro-Quebec in our elections.

Frankly, we are stunned by the [reply from Monsieur Serge Abergel](#), Director of Media and External Relations for Hydro-Quebec, claiming that “Hydro-Quebec’s campaign efforts are not trying to influence Maine’s elections.” To be clear, here in Maine, by law and practice, a vote on a referendum is an election; Hydro-Quebec and its sole shareholder the Province of Quebec clearly and irrefutably are trying to influence the election outcome on the CMP corridor referendum.

On November 20, 2019, Hydro-Quebec registered a Ballot Measure Committee with the Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices for the purpose of opposing the CMP corridor measure. Hydro-Quebec [has spent more than \\$6.2 million](#) on its campaign to influence Maine voters on this referendum and is on track to spend \$10 million – which likely would exceed the spending level of nearly every other ballot measure committee in 100 years of referenda campaigns in Maine.

Reports filed by Hydro-Quebec with the Maine Ethics Commission and by its consultants ([Blaze Partners](#), [Forbes Tate](#), and [Certus Insights](#)), operating as registered foreign agents, with the U.S. Department of Justice reveal that Hydro-Quebec’s campaign is financing newspaper, television, and digital ads; focus groups, message development, and voter opinion surveys; voter analysis and voter targeting; identification of authors/influencers for letter writing campaigns, with consultant-assisted drafting of such letters; advertising performance tracking; and five tracking polls starting in September and leading up to the November election. How can Hydro-Quebec and the government of Quebec possibly defend the claim that “Hydro-Quebec’s campaign efforts are not trying to influence Maine’s elections.”?

This level of campaign activity by a foreign government-owned corporation to influence voters is without precedent in Maine. Elections are the cornerstone of our democracy. We recognize that the Quebec government and residents of Quebec stand to receive billions of dollars in dividends from the sale of electricity to Massachusetts across the CMP corridor project. However, Maine people have a right to decide how they will vote on the CMP corridor referendum question without Hydro-Quebec's multi-million-dollar campaign involving some of the most expensive consultants and sophisticated voter analysis, message development, and campaign tactics that money can buy.

Madame Nadine Girault, Quebec's Minister for International Relations, sent a perfunctory reply to the July 20 letter that failed to address Quebec's continued campaign activities in Maine and our concerns about the importance of protecting Maine's elections from foreign government interference. Minister Girault's brief note failed to treat this issue with the seriousness it deserves.

Maine lawmakers and the people of Maine deserve a direct response from the highest level officials of Hydro-Quebec and the Province of Quebec about our specific concerns about the meddling in our elections by the people of Quebec, acting through their government and government-owned Crown Corporation, Hydro-Quebec. The July 29, 2020 letter from Maine lawmakers was addressed to the two of you. It was not addressed to Hydro-Quebec's public relations manager, Monsieur Abergel, or Minister Girault.

We respectfully request that you respond directly to this call by elected officials in Maine that Hydro-Quebec immediately cease its campaign aimed at influencing our November 2020 election vote on the CMP corridor ballot measure.

Sincerely,

Rep. Ackley of Monmouth
Rep. Bailey of Saco
Rep. Beebe-Center of Rockland
Rep. Berry of Bowdoinham
Rep. Blume of York
Rep. Cooper of Yarmouth
Rep. Dodge of Belfast
Rep. Dolloff of Milton Township
Rep. Doudera of Camden
Rep. Evangelos of Friendship
Rep. Farnsworth of Portland
Rep. Grahoski of Ellsworth
Rep. Gramlich of Old Orchard Beach
Rep. Grignon of Athens
Rep. Hall of Wilton
Rep. Hepler of Woolwich
Rep. Hickman of Winthrop
Rep. Higgins of Dover-Foxcroft
Rep. Keschl of Belgrade
Rep. Kessler of South Portland
Rep. Maxmin of Nobleboro

Rep. McCreight of Harpswell
Rep. Mike Sylvester of Portland
Rep. Pebworth of Blue Hill
Rep. Pluecker of Warren
Rep. Riseman of Harrison
Rep. Skolfield of Weld
Rep. Tepler of Topsham
Rep. Tipping of Orono
Rep. Warren of Hallowell
Rep. Zeigler of Montville
Sen. Bellows of Kennebec
Sen. Black of Franklin County
Sen. Carson of Cumberland County
Sen. Chenette of York
Sen. Chipman of Cumberland County
Sen. Cyrway of Kennebec County
Sen. Miramant of Knox County
Sen. Linda Sanborn of Cumberland County
Former Sen. Rick Bennett of Oxford County
Former Sen. Saviello of Franklin County