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## Proposed Gas Pipeline Expansion Projects Fail to Provide Consumer Benefits, Regional Environmental Group Questions Proposals Submitted to Maine PUC

The four proposals submitted by major gas pipeline companies to the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) under the State's Energy Cost Reduction Act fail to provide evidence that they will actually provide any financial benefits to consumers, according to a regional environmental organization.

In a filing delivered to the Maine PUC, Northeast Energy Solutions (NEES) charges that "none of the (submitted) proposals for gas pipeline contracts has sufficient information for the Commission to determine whether anything, other than speculative benefits, will be delivered to consumers..."

The Commission is currently reviewing the proposals and is expected to determine if any of them could reduce energy costs to Maine consumers through increased gas pipeline capacity.

The proposed gas pipeline expansion projects submitted to the Maine PUC were the Maritimes and Northeast Pipeline Project, the Atlantic Bridge Project, the Algonquin Incremental Market (AIM) Project, and the TGP Expansion.

Vincent DeVito, a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Energy for Policy and International Affairs who is the attorney representing NEES, called on the Commission to require that the energy companies provide "a deeper evaluation of purported benefits and better illustration of reasonable costs allocation to beneficiaries."

He said such a thorough evaluation "will show that the proposals do not offer genuine benefits" to consumers living in Maine or the other New England states.

DeVito called on the Commission to ask some of the following questions when evaluating the proposals:

- Do the projects protect ratepayers from market volatility and correlating price increases?
- What are the expected likely impacts on energy prices?
- Will the purported benefits likely to overcome the financial burden place on the state?
- Will the costs of the project be fully born by Maine consumers?
- Does new pipeline capacity in the Northeast equate to lower prices?
- Will the companies include a guarantee of lower energy costs?
- What are the environmental attributes, benefits, and risks?

NEES was established last year to provide sound analysis, effective advocacy, and public education related to proposed energy transport projects in the Northeast.

The organization's founders include Berkshire Natural Resources Council, East Quabbin Land Trust, Franklin Land Trust, Green Berkshires Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, Nashua River Watershed Association, Richmond Land Trust and The Trustees of Reservations.