



March 25, 2020

Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary
Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Anthony Z. Roisman, Chair
Vermont Public Utilities Commission

June E. Tierney, Commissioner
Vermont Department of Public Service

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response & Clean Energy Progress

Dear Secretary Kurrle, Chair Roisman, and Commissioner Tierney:

The Northeast Clean Energy Council (“NECEC”)¹ is reaching out through this correspondence to the Northeast states’ public sector energy leadership to share recommendations for ways that public officials can mitigate the significant impacts that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is bringing to our region.

The global health and economic impacts of the Coronavirus have been—and will continue to be—detrimental for many people. Fortunately, strong leadership from public officials has helped increase public health and safety, and has provided widespread public education, while delivering essential government functions. As the crisis deepens, your continued leadership will be critical to managing the challenges that lie ahead, including the economic impacts that result from the necessary disruptions of business activities.

The clean energy industry is far from immune to the effects of the impending economic crisis. As a result, NECEC urges public officials like you to recognize the important role clean energy companies, many of which are small businesses, play in the local economy. There are several key steps that public officials can be taking to mitigate the financial impacts to these businesses and to help pave the way for recovery. Outlined below, we identify three (?) key areas where state leadership can make a significant difference for the clean energy industry.

Reasonable Accommodation of Program Timelines

NECEC member companies, like companies in many sectors, are experiencing significant disruptions in their ability to perform timely work through no fault of their own. The COVID-19 crisis is impacting supply chains, construction activities, permitting processes, and

¹ NECEC is a clean energy business, policy, and innovation organization whose mission is to create a world-class clean energy hub in the Northeast, delivering global impact with economic, energy and environmental solutions. NECEC is the only organization in the Northeast that covers all of the clean energy market segments, representing the business perspectives of investors and clean energy companies across every stage of development. NECEC members span the broad spectrum of the clean energy industry, including clean transportation, energy efficiency, wind, solar, energy storage, microgrids, fuel cells, and advanced and “smart” technologies.

more. To provide assurance to clean energy companies during these trying times, we request that states provide reasonable relief to clean energy project companies from program and regulatory deadlines until a semblance of normalcy has been restored. This will signal to project developers, owners, financiers, and customers that their projects will be able to move forward and will avoid scenarios in which projects in development cannot be completed. Providing as much certainty as possible as soon as possible will help to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the industry, on its customers, and on its workforce. As such, we respectfully request reasonable accommodation for project and program deadlines until the COVID-19 crisis has subsided.

Acknowledgment of Essential Clean Energy Business Activities

As public officials take necessary steps to limit non-essential business activity, we urge you to recognize that many clean energy business activities are indeed essential to a well-functioning energy system. Clean energy infrastructure—whether generation, efficiency, demand response or energy storage—delivers key energy services across the region. In addition, much of clean energy construction activities can proceed, with appropriate social distancing procedures, during this period of limited commercial activity. Therefore, we respectfully request that, as your state develops and refines categories of essential business activities, you include clean energy operations, maintenance and, where feasible, construction in those categories.

Inclusion of Clean Energy Businesses in Economic Support Activities

Across our region, the clean energy industry accounts for hundreds of thousands of jobs and thousands of small businesses; moreover, clean energy economic activity can be a key element of economic recovery. As you act to support businesses and workers hurt by the economic effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, we ask that you include the clean energy sector in any economic support and recovery efforts. This can include direct economic support, programs to provide additional training to employees who cannot work, and other relief efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of the issues discussed above. We stand ready to assist you and your teams during this challenging time. Please contact us with any questions or to discuss ways we can collaborate on these and other related initiatives.

Sincerely,



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