

January 26, 2009

To the Editor,

I have respect for Mr. McClaughry's intellect and his commitment, but his recent op-ed concerning the definition of renewable energy and Hydro Quebec (HQ), and the follow-up editorial by this paper, are guilty of promulgating a myth and needlessly disparaging Vermont's efforts to promote local renewable energy and economic development.

First off, the Vermont State Statutes (Title 30, chapter 89, subsection 8002) define renewable energy as "energy produced using a technology that relies on a resource that is being consumed at a harvest rate at or below its natural regeneration rate." Therefore, hydro, of any size, is defined as renewable. The renewable energy industry has been pointing this out for quite some time. It is agreed that hydro power from HQ is renewable.

What McClaughry mistakenly refers to as "the definition" is further down in the statute. In an effort to promote new renewable energy and local economic development, hydro power over 200MW in size is exempted from the definition of renewables—but only for the purpose of that specific chapter. The reason renewable energy advocates agree with this restriction is that this law was created to promote local—*Vermont*—renewable energy. HQ has enough hydro to flood our electric markets with renewable power, making it more difficult for Vermont-made power to participate in the electric market.

McClaughry and others may jump on this point and claim it obstructs the "free market." However, we believe that supporting local Vermont-based projects foremost is the right choice, just as it is correct to give economic support to other industries located in Vermont (IBM, Ethan Allen, etc.) and to those that would move here. Unfortunately, when Vermonters advocate for state support for the Vermont renewable energy industry, they have been attacked by this paper and McClaughry under a double standard that some industries are worthy of support and others are not.

It has been demonstrated in dozens of ways over the last ten years that Vermonters' preferred power choice is local renewable energy and that local economic development and other benefits derived from the local renewables industry outweigh the risk that prices might be higher than imported renewable hydro power.

Vermont should continue to buy and benefit from Quebec's renewable hydro power, but the greatest benefit will come from meeting more of our power needs with our local renewable energy resources.

Sincerely,

Andrew Perchlik

Executive Director, Renewable Energy Vermont Inc.