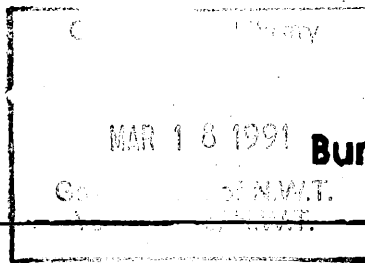


Office of the Mayor



Room 34, City Hall
Burlington, Vermont 05401
(802) 658-9300 ext. 100

Peter Clavelle
Mayor

George Thabault
Assistant to the Mayor
Faye Lawes
Administrative Assistant

Statement by Mayor Peter Clavelle
Wed., Feb. 20, 1991

In what has to be one of the most difficult decisions I've made as Mayor, I am announcing today that I have decided to oppose the purchase of power from Hydro-Quebec by the City of Burlington.

I will be voting "No" on Question 8 on the March ballot. (This item seeks voter approval for a 20-year extension of the power we are currently receiving from Hydro-Quebec.)

I could have argued that the City should extend current contracts for Hydro-Quebec power. We have already gone on record as opposing the purchase of additional power from Hydro-Quebec. I could have argued that maintaining a modest amount of power from Hydro-Quebec is reasonable as we pursue other sources in the coming decade. However, I have concluded that I cannot, in good conscience, make this argument.

I believe the issue before us is a watershed in the development of our energy policy for the 1990s and beyond. As such, we must be clear about the principles that guide our actions.

The foremost principle is respect for the rights and opinions of those people who are most directly affected by power generating facilities. I believe that we are in the process of developing a new way of looking at energy in our society. No longer can we be comfortable with restricting the environmental impacts of power generation to a far-off place while enjoying the power it produces.

We must move toward regional energy self-sufficiency. We must accept the consequences of our lifestyle and of our consumption of power. While enjoying the benefits of abundant electric power supplies, we must be prepared to assume the responsibilities of our choices. We cannot impose the burden of our use on other peoples. We cannot support an energy policy which will flood an area the size of Vermont against the will of the natives populating that region. We must commit ourselves to consume less and conserve more.

The city's Energy Task Force puts it this way:

"The development and use of any power source has associated social and environmental costs. We have a responsibility to limit such adverse impacts and assure that they be borne, to the extent possible, by the beneficiaries of such development."

In considering this contract, we must recognize the damage already done to Northern Quebec's environment and to its native peoples, whose lives have been forever changed by the vast James Bay project. I also oppose this contract because Hydro Quebec continues to plan for an expansion of the James Bay hydro project which will ultimately flood an area the size of the entire state of Vermont. This would be an environmental and social tragedy of immense proportions.

In addition to being the right thing to do, I'm convinced that the rejection of this \$186 million contract makes economic sense. By rejecting the contract, some of the funds we would have sent to Quebec could be used to create jobs and power sources in our own region. I want to see as much of our money invested locally and regionally as possible, so that it is our economy that benefits.

The Burlington Electric Department analysis has shown that other options are available to replace the Hydro-Quebec power. B.E.D. projects that the average cost of these alternatives over 20 years could be as little as only 1.5% greater than Hydro-Quebec.

I am also concerned with reports from Quebec suggesting that almost half of the power from James Bay II may be allocated to a consortium of aluminum smelters. These facilities require large quantities of cheap power and create significant air pollution. Although touted as a comparatively clean source of energy, this hydro power may be used to create massive amounts of air pollution and acid rain. In light of this connection, I feel it's wrong to support this project, even in a small way.

I also cannot ignore the pleas from the native Crees and Inuits of the James Bay Region. Grand Chief Mathew Coon-Come asks us to "help us the Cree people of Northern Quebec to save the rivers and lakes, to stop the mercury pollution of reservoirs, and to save all of the animals that presently inhabit this rich environment."

Chief Robbie Dick states in a recent letter, "This purchase threatens our very survival."

For these reasons I strongly urge Burlington voters to reject Question 8 and say NO to power from Hydro-Quebec.



The Hydro-Quebec contract for Burlington represents a very small fraction of HQ's system capacity right now--about one-tenth of one percent. Even if our share is small, I believe it is wrong to participate in this contract.

I believe we must stand up and recognize the damage already done by Hydro-Quebec, and pledge that we will say no to any plan that would make the expansion of James Bay more of a possibility. How can ignore the fact that Hydro-Quebec is in the federal courts opposing the submission of its projects to the federal environmental review process? What would Vermonters' reaction be to a developer in our backyard who attempted to avoid an environmental review process?

Burlington can survive and thrive without Hydro Quebec. We are leading the state in energy conservation programs, and will continue to do so. I commend the Burlington Electric Department in bringing forth energy conservation and demand-side management. We can take pride in our efforts to produce electricity locally. Our challenge is to continue to meet our needs by reducing consumption, producing power locally, and accepting responsibility for meeting our own demand for electricity.

I will work as hard as I can to seek alternatives to Hydro-Quebec which stress lower electric uses, conservation, and renewable sources of power closer to home. I believe we may create a mix of sources and conservation programs that is cheaper and more environmentally sound than the Hydro Quebec option.