

Good afternoon. My name is Nathan Phillips; I am an ecologist at Boston University, where one of my research topics is gas and electric systems interaction. My work exposes problems like gas leaking into electric infrastructure, so that we can work on solutions. I've brought this approach to my work in the Consumer Liaison Group, with the No Coal No Gas Campaign, with the Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station, and as an ally with Fix the Grid.

I'd like to take us back once again to last December when Winter Storm Elliot wreaked havoc on the New England Grid. Thank you for managing to keep the lights on, despite widespread failures of fossil fuel plants. We escaped with a mere financial emergency. However, that financial emergency was a 39 million dollar bill that ultimately gets paid by ratepayers. This is a problem we can avoid if you do things differently.

What if, instead of ISO issuing calls to NOT conserve energy during that emergency, you sent conservation alerts, appealing to ratepayers' sense of civic duty? If six million New England householders reduced average electricity use during Elliot, for example by turning a microwave or toaster oven down from high to medium, we would have collectively wiped out the entire capacity shortfall of 2.3 gigawatts. Why would a grid operator send the opposite message, when ratepayers could truly help solve a problem? We can and must do better.

Currently Enbridge has declared "open season" for a gas expansion called Project Maple, and uses the New England grid as its main rationale. They claim the grid will not be reliable without gas expansion. That's where so-called "scheduling issues" in an event like Winter Storm Elliot matters. Ample gas is physically left in the pipeline even during extreme events like Elliot. Moreover, it's unreliable gas plant failures that are the problem, and that's not solved by building bigger pipelines. Please don't allow Enbridge to use you as its excuse to damage our communities and our climate further.

Imagine if New England ratepayers were informed by ISO like we are with weather forecasts. Imagine an ISO app that sends alerts asking us to pitch in to save money, keep the air clean, and protect our climate? What better public image of a responsible, socially-beneficial institution could you hope for? My request to you, the ISO board, is to wake up to our intensifying climate emergency; commit to public outreach that saves energy, money, air quality, and the climate; and recognize the enormous power we ratepayers have to build a truly reliable grid from the household up.