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Energy is possibly the most important and transformational topic of our time. As new technology supplants old, WEC's importance in our daily lives grows.

I grew up in the Northeast Kingdom and graduated from UVM with degrees in education and business. After starting my business in Waitsfield in 2001, my wife Judy, daughter Elena, and I relocated to East Montpelier in 2018.

Building a net-zero building and modernizing several old farmhouses to enhance energy efficiency fueled my interest in energy. I have firsthand experience with how electricity usage will be influenced as our homes and transportation evolve. Additionally, as a member of Vermont's Energy Action Network (EAN), I have explored and discussed practical ideas that WEC and the associated grid must implement to meet and shape future electricity demand.

After attending or observing all Board meetings for over a year, it is evident that WEC has many dedicated and skilled employees. Similarly, WEC management recognizes the challenges that new and changing legislation poses for the organization. That being said, to serve the best interests of WEC members, WEC must tackle some of its greatest challenges with renewed creativity and vigor.

In a nutshell, in addition to continuing to expand its commitment to providing clean power reliably, WEC should be as proactive as possible about two key areas in particular:

- 1) Affordability - Reducing rates.
- 2) Accessibility - Helping people electrify more easily and affordably.

How do we do this?

First, WEC should strengthen advocacy efforts in shaping the legislation and regulations utilities and WEC members must follow.

Powerful profit-driven trade organizations have effectively dictated Vermont's energy policy in recent years. The Renewable Energy Standard updates of 2024 and the Clean Heat Standard are examples of legislation passed for the wrong reasons. Under pressure, utilities publicly supported the agenda of the trade organizations' flawed legislation. This helped override constructive recommendations that would have resulted in more effective and practical policies. To remain relevant in the future of energy policy in Vermont, member-owned utilities like WEC need to work with each other to transparently advocate for the Vermont consumer. We can't allow WEC to become a hesitant pon of well-funded trade groups.

Second, while it is up to members to utilize Efficiency Vermont's offerings, WEC should advocate for regulators to ensure members receive more direct benefits from Efficiency Vermont's substantial budget. WEC members and local contractors should have improved access to Efficiency Vermont's significant human and financial resources. Given the amount we pay Efficiency Vermont and its budget, we should see value beyond rebates and sometimes unreliable contractor listings.

WEC has a proud history of advocating for its members. However, if the political climate no longer allows such advocacy or if WEC is reluctant to continue it, one might question whether merging with an organization that has greater resources and lower rates would offer better service and value for WEC's members.

Third, and related, whether through merger or cooperation, WEC should prioritize collaboration with other utilities to leverage scale. Currently, WEC lacks the financial and staffing resources necessary for timely investments in some of the infrastructure that would most effectively improve power management capabilities. Pooling resources with other utilities represents the best opportunity for WEC to reduce rates and continue improving reliability and response while facilitating member access to cleaner energy and more efficient technology.

Looking to the future, we can either focus on surviving or pursue paths that will help us thrive. Positioning ourselves to thrive isn't always easy work, but it is worth the effort. I would be honored to have the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with other Board members on your behalf. As a member of the Board, I will work to drive WEC toward a future for our electricity that is as reliable, accessible, abundant, clean, and affordable as possible for all of us. Please don't hesitate to reach out.