

Climate Action Council Draft Scoping Plan
Testimony

Members of the Climate Action Council and fellow members of the Western New York Community, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the gathering. My name is Connie Gutowski and I come to you as a lifelong private citizen of New York State and a voice for others in our community.

While a lot of us in our community do support the ambitious goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and realize the importance controlling greenhouse gas emissions has on all of us, it's imperative to reach those goals without bringing unnecessary pain to our businesses, workers, our community, and economy.

The draft scoping plan calls for no new gas service in new construction or existing buildings beginning in 2024, no new natural gas appliances in 2030, and no gasoline automobile sales in 2035. What is not in the plan is one of the most important points. That point is how the costs to meet these requirements will be paid for and how we ensure the reliability we need during a harsh winter.

Natural gas, propane, and heating oil are vital for New Yorker's quality of life. From rural areas to inner cities, these energy sources are heavily relied on. What would it cost to switch over to all electric? A new stove/oven is \$1,000; hot water heater \$2,700; a 200amp electrical service upgrade \$2,000 to \$4,500; and \$10,000 to \$12,000 for a new furnace. That is a \$15,000 per house best case scenario. A worst-case number is closer to \$25,000. And that doesn't include the increased cost of running these electrical appliances – electrification is currently 3.5 times more expensive than natural gas. There's a reason we rely so heavily on natural gas – that so many of the appliances in our homes run on natural gas – it is much cheaper and more energy efficient than electric.

I am in no way suggesting we abandon the important goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. What I am asking is that before we set any requirements, we develop a comprehensive and responsible plan that answers the following questions:

1. How will our electric grid handle the increased demand?
2. How can we ensure reliability? Especially in extreme weather and Upstate New York winters? How can we ensure we'll have power when we need it most?
3. What methods are best for reaching our goals? High-efficiency natural gas, hydrogen, biofuels, nuclear, solar, wind?
4. What new technologies should be used? Are these new technologies proven?
5. How can we transition to new energy sources in a way that doesn't hurt the businesses and workforce that we currently rely on for our heating and energy needs?
6. And last but most definitely not least, how much will this cost all of us, how much will it cost a Western New York business, how much will it cost Western New York citizens, and how will we pay for it? I personally know families who cannot afford these drastic changes. They would cripple so many of them and put their health and well-being, their lives itself, in harm's way.

In 2021, New York State issued 42,058 permits for privately owned housing units, compared to Pennsylvania which issued 50,787. We issued 8,700 less than Pennsylvania. The comparison is even worse when you recognize that New York has twice the population as Pennsylvania. Per capita, New York has one of the lowest building rates in the country. In 2021, we issued one building permit for every 480 residents. In Pennsylvania they issued one permit for every 254 residents. And if we want to make ourselves look really bad, we'll compare to Florida, where they issued one permit for every 103 residents. That's more than 4.5 times more building permits per capita than here in New York.

Why is that? Laws, regulations, codes, zoning, all make it harder to build in New York. And without taking into consideration the costs and burdens to construction these changes would bring, we are only going to make the problems we have today worse. Problems such as a housing affordability crisis, a heavier reliance on older less energy efficient buildings and homes and high construction costs. These are self-inflicted wounds that are totally unnecessary.

We do not have to choose between energy sources such as natural gas and renewable energy. It is a false choice. This plan should be driven by data and facts that get us to these goals in the best possible way for our community, ALL OF OUR COMMUNITY, using a combination of the best options available.

Thank you for your time.

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