



Governor Talks Down Oil, MEMA Members Respond

Recently, Governor LePage has been heard advocating or suggesting that the State reduce its use of heating oil either through expansion of natural gas or some other alternative. In essence, anything but oil. These comments are directly related to the pricing situation we are currently facing however, no one is pleased with Government officials choosing one business over another. In response to these statements, a group of MEMA members and MEMA President Jamie Py met with Governor LePage and Energy Office director Ken Fletcher on Tuesday Nov. 15th.

Taking offense that our free market Governor would be encouraging the State to pick winners and losers in the energy market, the group questioned the Governor's intentions on his statements. The Governor did not acknowledge his statements about conversions and suggested that the media may have misunderstood his remarks. He did say that reducing costs was his narrow focus and that he does not support Government subsidies for any fuel. He did say that he might provide backstopping for Madison Paper in the event that it cannot provide the financial assurance that enables it to contract for natural gas. He said he has no plans to support anything with State dollars, taxes, bonds or financial assistance other than the paper mill. He also said that in 10 years none of this will matter as we all will be heating with electricity. He is expecting the price of electricity to plummet.

Our group did clearly state that we represent 10,000 hard working employees in the State and provide health care, and many indirect benefits through our associates employment and purchasing. We are also extremely generous and supportive of our communities. The MEMA group also pointedly asked the Governor to be careful about messaging, especially the conversion language as it is extremely detrimental to our businesses and our customers and may not be all that helpful nor a responsible suggestion. We pointed out that 25 out of the last 32 years, heating oil was less expensive than natural gas and that for most of recent history, Oilheat has been the best value to consumers, thus their choice to use it.

We did offer to work with the Governor as it is likely that this will be a difficult winter for many Maine families. We also pointed out that we are the solution as our members are the energy experts that help people save fuel everyday. The Governor liked that message and suggested that we work with Ken Fletcher to expand on that solution.

In sum, the message was well delivered by our members that we were not happy with the latest round of anti oil rhetoric. We are not sure if the Governor will alter his messaging. Thanks to MEMA members: Marc LaCasse, AFC; John Babb, J&S Oil; David Martin, Webber Energy; Jinger Duryea, CN Brown; Dick Guerette, Winthrop Fuel; Deanna Sherman, Dead River Co., and Lennie Burke, Downeast Energy for spending the time and being direct and forceful in their conversation with the Governor.

We should not and will not apologize for our outstanding record of providing the people of Maine the best heating solutions. We will continue to provide what the people want. Government should not be dictating our assisting with those choices.