

Dear Committee members:

I strongly urge the Site Evaluation Committee to approve the Sea-3 Inc. exemption request. As a resident of New Hampshire, I am convinced that allowing Sea-3 to upgrade its railcar offloading capacity in Newington as soon as possible would benefit the more than 77,000 New Hampshire homes and businesses that rely on propane. Without the exemption, we face higher propane prices, supply shortages, and nights with “no heat” during the next two winters. Some propane dealers may be forced to unload propane from rail cars into tanker trucks parked along railroad sidings, which lack the automatic cutoffs and fire safety systems installed at the Newington terminal.

New Hampshire needs the propane. The best, cheapest way to bring it in is by rail and it’s coming by rail regardless of the fate of the Sea-3 proposal. Without the Sea-3 upgrade, the propane will simply be taken off the trains and pumped into trucks at temporary rail sidings – a method that is nowhere near as efficient, safe or secure as offloading it at a permanent storage and terminal facility like Sea-3.

A small group of opponents in Portsmouth who bought homes along the existing Pan Am Railways tracks continue their “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) opposition, even though the independent Safety Study they demanded has now been completed. In 1996, the SEC granted a similar exemption to Sea-3 for more extensive improvements to the Newington terminal. Since then, the criteria for granting an exemption in RSA 162-H have essentially remained the same while the local, state, and federal rules and regulations governing Sea-3 have dramatically increased protection of the environment and public safety.

Given the fact that Sea-3 has satisfied all of the legal requirements for an exemption from the SEC’s lengthy review process and given the benefits this upgrade will bring to the New Hampshire economy and families relying on propane, I do hope you will respond to the Sea-3 application with an affirmative vote.

Sincerely,

Shirley Sawtell
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