

## Will You Have Carbon with Your Higher Cost?

**An Op-Ed by Lisa Ventriss, President, Vermont Business Roundtable**

For a few years now, Vermonters have said that we prefer to invest in renewable energy, efficiency programs, a reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions, and stably priced reliable power. But despite those opinions, and with our biggest source of clean, reliable, and affordable electricity – Vermont Yankee - having, according to some experts, only a 50/50 chance of being relicensed this year, we can see that the previous era of having the lowest electric rates in New England and cleanest air in the country is coming to a close.

According to the U.K. Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, nuclear is the least carbon-emitting of all electricity generation technology; less than wind, less than hydro, marine, biomass, natural gas and coal. So, any electricity supply that would come into Vermont to replace Vermont Yankee, or what we would potentially generate in state ourselves, is, according to this chart, going to be dirtier and cost more than what we currently enjoy. The public tradeoffs would be significant to a state that values environmental quality and New England frugality, and boasts of being ‘green’ before green was cool.

To those who would like to shut down Vermont Yankee today, or make them pay hundreds of millions in decommissioning costs (a more punitive proposal than what the Governor vetoed last year), I concede the following. Vermont Yankee’s rolling series of public embarrassments, though they posed no health risks, are totally unacceptable and do nothing to engender public support or confidence in the plant. Plant officials and representatives would state the same. But, we know that Vermont Yankee passed NRC’s highly rigorous and thorough safety and reliability inspections this past year; it is among the nation’s highest performing nuclear power facilities; and, oh, it also employs 600+ people and their families.

The debate about the relicensing of Vermont Yankee is only one of a multitude of energy-related issues that causes deep divides among our citizenry, but it’s arguably the biggest one. The bottom line is that we

need Vermont Yankee to be relicensed, for many reasons, and assuming safety and reliability factors continue to pass strict muster. Then, during the next 20 years, and with the help of leadership from within the utility and renewable energy industries, Vermont can develop a graceful transition for the day that Vermont Yankee is planfully retired.