

Response to Consumers Energy Representative Regarding the Planned 2025 Campbell Closure/Demolition by Joseph Parnell McCarter of SaveTheCampbell.com

Consumers Energy (CE) rep Richard Houtteman spoke at the meeting of the Allendale Township Board on 9/23/2024; some of his statements are in italics. Below them is my response.

#1: CE is mainly using natural gas as the base for providing electric to its customer base, and not solar and wind, so people do not need to be so concerned about an over-reliance on solar and wind.

Ottawa County needs to have eyes wide open about UN Agenda 2030, and related UN “pact for the future” signed in September 2024. It not only phases out coal plants, but all other fossil fuel plants, including gas. CE wrongly asserted only 5 years ago that Campbell unit 3 would remain open to 2040, and spent over \$1 billion of customers’ money on anti-polluting equipment for it, yet a few years later changed direction and agreed to rapid closure. County citizens are shafted by the deal, but CE investors and top management were financially rewarded. CE right now is saying it will keep its gas plants open for many years, but based upon past history and the UN agenda, we should doubt that. Even before this recent UN pact, the Biden Administration was committed to a 2035 de-carbonized electric grid; Whitmer agrees, and she appoints MPSC members which regulate CE. This new pact makes the timetable even more aggressive. Ottawa County has effective legal tools with the Campbell given it is located in the county; but it will lack those options for gas plants outside the county. Once Campbell is closed/demolished, Ottawa County will be in a much weaker position to respond to the troubles likely ahead that grid operator MISO warns about. We must “save the Campbell” now using the legal tools available to the county to avert more intractable problems down the road. All our systems rely on electric.

#2: CE bought the Covert plant to make up for the Campbell plant. CE has plenty of gas generating capacity to cover its customer demand.

The Covert plant was already in operation and supplying the overall national grid before CE purchased it, so its purchase did nothing to make up for the loss of the Campbell as it pertains to the overall grid. Our region’s grid operator MISO says that starting in 2025/2026 planning year they are projecting a deficit in generator capacity to meet demand, and so they recommend delaying plant closures like the Campbell. All of that is being ignored by CE. CE not only shafted its customers in the deal to close Campbell in 2025 and buy Covert to make up for it on its books, but it also shafted Wolverine Power, which is why there is on-going litigation with Wolverine. There is good reason to believe CE is going to be legally forced to share its generating capacity with other parties like Wolverine. The electric grid is very inter-connected, and we should not imagine that problems of the regional grid warned about by MISO will not affect us. (Note: The reason CE did not build a new gas plant is because that is contrary to the UN agenda, and given Michigan law is also cost prohibitive. We should expect that soon many gas plants will have to close like the Campbell is being closed.)

#3: Electric from natural gas is cheaper than from coal.

This is not true. According to most analyses, the cost of electric per kilowatt-hour from low-cost sub-bituminous coal from Wyoming’s Powder River Basin that Campbell uses is consistently below that of natural gas:

- <https://savethecampbell.com/the-coal-used-in-the-campbell-plant-from-powder-river-basin-is-significantly-cheaper-even-than-natural-gas/>
- <https://www.statista.com/statistics/189180/natural-gas-vis-a-vis-coal-prices/>

It is important to have both coal and gas in the generating mix because each has strengths that can offset the other’s weaknesses. For example, in winter natural gas demand is high for heating and limited in storage. It is important to be able to use coal then.

#4: Consumers Energy is subject to State political direction and not Ottawa County direction.

That is currently true, but does not have to be the case. Counties have certain legal authority over electric public utilities even without charter status. But if Ottawa County gets charter status like Zeeland Township and other townships have charter status, it can get control over electric public utility service. Given the UN direction, it is important we get such local control.

#5: Consumers Energy may sell the Campbell to some other party and then they may operate it.

There is only one plausible party that could buy the Campbell and then operate it: Ottawa County. It would then be under Ottawa County’s regulatory authority and not MPSC’s. Any other party purchasing it would report to MPSC, and MPSC would likely never permit Campbell to re-open. Let’s not imagine that Campbell will be saved from demolition unless Ottawa County acts, starting with request letters not to close it.