

# United States Senate

December 14, 2020

The Honorable Howard R. Elliott  
Administrator  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Elliott,

We write in opposition to the decision by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to allow Enbridge, Inc. to restart operations at the compressor station located in Weymouth, Massachusetts following two recent emergency shutdowns. On November 25, 2020, PHMSA approved the “Weymouth Station Restart Plan” submitted by Enbridge, Inc.’s subsidiary, Algonquin Gas Transmission, despite PHMSA’s failure to address questions and uncertainties surrounding the compressor station’s safety or review a final Root Cause Failure Analysis of the shutdowns.<sup>1</sup> We are deeply troubled that PHMSA has allowed Enbridge to recommence operations at the compressor station and urge PHMSA to revoke its approval until Enbridge submits the final Root Cause Failure Analysis and a thorough, third-party investigation of station safety is completed.

After the first unplanned gas release and shutdown, we wrote to PHMSA on September 30, 2020, urging it to immediately suspend operations at the Weymouth compression station and conduct a comprehensive review of the natural gas leak and the station’s ongoing activities.<sup>2</sup> That same day, the compressor station experienced its second emergency shutdown. We supported PHMSA’s decision to launch an investigation into the cause of the unplanned gas releases and prohibit station operations until the causes were identified and remedied. But we are now concerned that PHMSA has allowed the compressor to recommence operations without definitively identifying the causes of the unplanned gas releases, leaving the surrounding community vulnerable to another disaster.

In its approval of Algonquin’s restart plan, PHMSA wrote: “Depending on the findings of the pending Root Cause Failure Analysis, PHMSA may again restrict operation of the facility pending completion of any needed corrective actions.”<sup>3</sup> PHMSA should ensure that all necessary

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Robert T. Burrough, Dir., Eastern Region, PHMSA to William T. Yardley, Pres, Gas Transmission and Midstream, Enbridge, Nov. 25, 2020, [https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2020-11/12020014CAO\\_PHMSA%20Approval%20of%20Weymouth%20Restart%20Plan\\_11252020.pdf](https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2020-11/12020014CAO_PHMSA%20Approval%20of%20Weymouth%20Restart%20Plan_11252020.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Sen. Edward J. Markey and Sen. Elizabeth Warren to Howard R. Elliot, Adm’r PHMSA, Sept. 30, 2020.


<sup>3</sup> Letter from Robert T. Burrough, Dir., Eastern Region, PHMSA to William T. Yardley, Pres, Gas Transmission and Midstream, Enbridge, Nov. 25, 2020, [https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2020-11/12020014CAO\\_PHMSA%20Approval%20of%20Weymouth%20Restart%20Plan\\_11252020.pdf](https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2020-11/12020014CAO_PHMSA%20Approval%20of%20Weymouth%20Restart%20Plan_11252020.pdf).


corrective actions are identified and taken *before* the facility is permitted to restart, not *after* the compressor station yet again exposes the community to danger.

We are also concerned that PHMSA sacrificed safety when it acceded to Enbridge's requests to soften the Corrective Action Order. In an October 13, 2020 letter to PHMSA, Enbridge objected to the Order's provisions that would have required inspections of the incoming pipeline and addressed flooding safety concerns.<sup>4</sup> In response, PHMSA amended the Order, striking references to the incoming pipeline and flooding concerns, despite the Weymouth compressor station's location within a Federal Emergency Management Agency-designated flood zone.<sup>5</sup>

In any decisions relating to the operation of the Weymouth compressor station, PHMSA must prioritize public health and safety. Without reviewing the final Root Cause Failure Analysis or including all relevant factors in the Corrective Action Order, PHMSA could not have fully identified and addressed safety concerns before the station again became operational. Before PHMSA makes any future decisions about operations at the station, we urge you to revoke your approval of the restart plan, allow for the completion of a Root Cause Failure Analysis, and review the results of a thorough investigation into the causes of the two unplanned emergency shutdowns.

Sincerely,

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from Alan Kramer Mayberry, Assoc. Admin'r for Pipeline Safety, PHMSA to William T. Yardley. Pres, Gas Transmission and Midstream, Enbridge, Oct. 1, 2020, [https://primis-stage.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/reports/enforce/documents/12020014CAO/12020014CAO\\_Corrective%20Action%20Order\\_10012020\\_\(20-172418\).pdf](https://primis-stage.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/reports/enforce/documents/12020014CAO/12020014CAO_Corrective%20Action%20Order_10012020_(20-172418).pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Alan Kramer Mayberry, Assoc. Admin'r for Pipeline Safety, PHMSA to William T. Yardley. Pres, Gas Transmission and Midstream, Enbridge, Oct. 30, 2020, [https://primis-stage.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/reports/enforce/documents/12020014CAO/12020014CAO\\_Amended%20Corrective%20Action%20Order\\_10302020\\_\(20-172418\).pdf](https://primis-stage.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/reports/enforce/documents/12020014CAO/12020014CAO_Amended%20Corrective%20Action%20Order_10302020_(20-172418).pdf).