

Public testimony before the Philadelphia Gas Commission

Public Hearing, December 4, 2018¹

as delivered

Good morning, Chairman Green and members of the Commission. My name is Rich Garella. I'm a resident and homeowner in Point Breeze, about a mile up Passyunk Ave from this proposed facility.²

I came here to ask you, the members of this commission, to take a broad view of your responsibilities. The narrow view is: Could this bring in a couple million extra dollars a year. But that's not all this proposal is about.

The people of Philadelphia aren't clamoring to go into the business of selling fracked gas to outside customers. That's never been the purpose of PGW, which is a publicly owned utility that first and foremost exists to provide natural gas to its customers, like me. Among its other areas of focus is Environmental Responsibility, including a corporate goal to reduce its carbon footprint. That's from PGW's *Corporate Responsibility Report*.³ It fits into the City of Philadelphia's overall goal of reducing carbon emissions.

So, about environmental responsibility. It's been argued that the use of LNG by the prospective buyers of this product would displace the use of a roughly equivalent amount of diesel and so forth, in some ways a dirtier energy source. But

the oil that's displaced won't just disappear. It'll become available to be used elsewhere, more cheaply. Because when you extract more fossil fuel, you make more fossil fuel available and more of it is used. That's more stored carbon coming out of the ground and being burned into the atmosphere, which is how global warming happens. That's why weather patterns are getting more unstable. That's why the polar ice caps are melting. That's why the sea level is rising.

This LNG plant might seem small, in the grand scheme of things. But all these little, narrow decisions add up. Nobody wanted to bring the world to the brink of destruction, but we made millions upon millions of short-term decisions, little decisions, that each made business sense at the time. Those decisions brought us to the biggest crisis that has ever faced humanity. Those were decisions that were made in places just like this room.

So a decision here based on the narrow view could be a decision to create a long-term capital investment in a business that demands additional fossil fuel extraction for decades to come. That's what fossil fuel infrastructure does — it drives an imperative not to see that investment wasted. It locks us in to a long-term investment in our own destruction.

If this LNG plant is built, it will contribute to global warming. It will promote climate change. It will reduce the chance that we can stop the climate disaster that's already unfolding. And

that chance is already small enough.

That's why I'm asking you to take a broad view of your responsibilities. Because we live in a society that constantly rewards us for taking a narrow view, and that's exactly how we got to where we are today. But if we look at the big picture — if we take the broad view — we can see what's right. What's right for our communities. What's right for our world. What's right for our hearts.

I ask each member of this commission: What do you want your legacy to be? When you had the opportunity to take the broad view, to help stop this disaster that is overtaking our world — did you take it?

This is your opportunity. Please, please take it.

1. [^] <https://www.phlgc.net/calendar.html>
2. [^] <https://350philadelphia.org/2018/11/11/the-passyunk-energy-center-just-say-no/>
3. [^] https://www.pgworks.com/uploads/pdfs/PGW_CorporateSocialResponsibility_Report.pdf