

Natural gas column misleading

By Matt Cota

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In the June 7 edition of The Burlington Free Press, a column on investing in Business Monday by Ian Wyatt made an error when attempting to compare the cost of heating fuels.

Wyatt states that "compared with oil, natural gas is about two-thirds less expensive." This is false. A survey of heating fuel prices compiled every month by the Vermont Department of Public Service shows that both products are usually within a few dollars of one another, and often oil heat is the less expensive alternative.

While Wyatt portrays natural gas as the preferred heat source in Vermont, the vast majority of Vermonters receive home fuel delivery — whether it's propane, oil, biodiesel, kerosene or wood pellets. These heating fuel sources provide consumers with a choice among providers and that competition is in the best interest of the consumer. The deliverable fuels industry also provides more than 4,000 jobs in Vermont.

While Wyatt mentioned that he owns shares in an energy company, what he didn't say is that the company (Chesapeake Energy) is the largest natural gas well leaseholder in the Marcellus Shale. Environmentalists are fighting development of this shale gas because it injects toxic chemicals into the ground (learn more at <http://un-naturalgas.org/>).

Meanwhile, the retail oil heat industry is embracing renewable fuels, using ultra low sulfur fuel blended with biodiesel. In February, the Vermont House passed J.R.H. 36, a resolution that supports a Cleaner and Greener Oilheat Standard. We applaud their vote and encourage further action in Congress. Massachusetts and Connecticut have already passed biofuel mandates. Rather than trumpet his own investments, I would encourage the author to support our efforts.

An ultra-low sulfur biofuel blended oilheat will lead to greater efficiencies, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and foreign oil while supporting Vermont farmers by creating a market for locally grown feedstocks.

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