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— Last Updated: Mar 11, 2025, 8:15 PM EDT

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## How the U.S.-Canada Power Trade Helps Keep the Lights On



By **Paul Vieira**, Reporter, Ottawa Bureau



Hydro-Quebec workers in Montreal. (Christinne Muschi/Bloomberg News)

Canada is a net exporter of electricity to the U.S., and the power trade between the two countries is crucial to shore up electricity supply and keep the lights on in the two countries. The surcharge on U.S.-bound electricity from Ontario has fueled widespread worries among authorities in New York, Michigan, and Minnesota, and prompted President Trump to double the tariffs to 50% coming Wednesday on steel and aluminum from Canada.

“Why would our Country allow another Country to supply us with electricity, even for a small area? Who made these decisions, and why?” President Trump said on the Truth Social platform.

The most recent data available from the U.S. Energy Information Administration and Canada’s Energy Regulator, covering 2023, indicate Canada exported roughly \$3.2 billion in electricity to the U.S., or nearly 50 terawatt hours, while the U.S. transmitted \$1.2 billion to Canada, or about 17 terawatt hours.

The amount of electricity involved in crossborder trade—transmitted over interconnected grid networks—represents less than 1% of total generation between the two countries, but is crucial to ensure there is a balanced electricity grid, or enough power to meet demand, according to the EIA.

In Canada, governance over electricity is a subnational, or provincial, matter, so generally provincially-owned power generators and affiliates sell electricity to the U.S. Arguably the biggest player is Hydro-Québec, which generally sells power to the U.S. Northeast.

“Hydro-Québec has all the cards,” said Robert McCullough, a former utility executive who runs his own energy consulting firm, McCullough Research. Because of recent drought conditions, McCullough said, the utility has “lots of reservoir

capacity to store power for a later period. They can simply take the spring runoff, and leave it in the reservoir, and leave New England and New York wondering, 'What's happened.'"

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