

Governor Christie to Canadian Utility Workers: Thank You

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Transcript:

Governor Christie: It is now about a little over two years that Superstorm Sandy hit the coast of the state of New Jersey and that's where it came on land. Came up the east coast but made the left-hand turn and decided to come to visit my state. And it's hard for me to explain to any of you, today who were not there when that happened, exactly what we woke up to on the morning of October 30 of 2012, but let me try to give you some sense of it. 365,000 homes significantly damaged or completely destroyed, in one 24-hour period, 365 thousand homes. Seven million of New Jersey's 8.9 million citizens completely without power. Almost all of the gas stations in the state closed, all of the major highways in the state closed, every school in New Jersey closed. No operational water treatment, wastewater treatment plants in the state. All the refineries in the state closed. When I went on Google Earth on the evening of the 30th and traced up towards the state of New Jersey, there was all kinds of light until I got to New Jersey and then almost the entire state was dark. And what I began to do, when I was sitting there trying to figure out how are we going to return our state to normalcy, how are we going to bring back our state from this extraordinary destruction. I began reaching out, texting and emailing Governors around the county and friends on this continent to ask them for help. I see both Larry Downes and Ralph Izzo here. Larry Downes is from New Jersey Natural Resources and Ralph Izzo from Public Service Enterprise Group, two of the largest energy suppliers in our state. I remember the conversations we had then about how long it would take to get our state and its people back to their homes, back with electricity turned on in their lives, getting back to normal. It was hard to even begin to estimate how long it would take given the measure of destruction. But what happened was that utility workers from around American and from here in Canada came to New Jersey. Came to New Jersey in extraordinary numbers and without a moment's hesitation, at least from what I could see about leaving their families and coming to a place far away to help people that they knew were in trouble. Definition of a friend to me is always what will someone do when you're absolutely at your worst moment. When you're worse than lowest point, who will be there to help you. Fact is that, Canada was there to help New Jersey at our worst and lowest moment and to help Larry and Ralph and other companies to supplement the workers that they

had and to get people back to something they were begging for, which is just to have their lives seem normal again. You all played an extraordinary role. When I talk to John about this, there were over 700 Canadians who came to assist in the Sandy recovery. Eighty-seven state and volunteer workers from the Canadian Red Cross came to our region to provide emergency assistance following Sandy, the Canadian Electricity Association cited over 800 utility workers deployed down to our region. Over 400 utility workers came for the providence of Ontario alone, to the U.S. to assist with Sandy power restoration. Sixteen crew members were named honorary citizens of Lambertville, New Jersey for their power restoration efforts. I don't know what being an honorary citizen of Lambertville, New Jersey gets you. I know the Mayor very well, he's a democrat but we're friends so if you really want to try to cash that baby in come see me and I'll take you to see Dave DeVecchio and we'll see what we can actually get for you for your honorary citizenship but one thing I will tell you for sure, don't take the citizenship to the extent that you want to pay the taxes in Lambertville. That's definitely something you don't want to do. So if he offers you that opportunity, you know smile and respectfully decline. So we decided when I made the decision to come here, to Canada, I thought long and hard about the things I want to say and the places I wanted to go. And one of the things I wanted to do when I was here was to say thank you in person. You know I know that the workers who came down there many of whom are represented here today understand from the faces and the words and the emotions of the people that they saw on the streets that they worked in New Jersey, how much they were appreciated. What a great sense of relief and joy there was when they saw your tracks come down their street and realize that maybe they would finally get heat again. You all remember for those of you that were there as if we need more, a week after Sandy it snowed. In the first week of November, it snowed. So we had to take the plows from moving sand off streets to plowing snow and then going back to moving sand. We were unseasonably cold then and so the lack of power and the lack of heat was something that was hurting the folks, even the ones who didn't have their homes destroyed, the ones that were trying to stay there. So I sensed that you all who were there appreciated at the time and even remember today the appreciation of the individual citizens that you helped through your really extraordinary efforts. But when I decided to come to Canada to visit I thought it would be better to do something more. To do it in person, to ask if we could get some of you to come and visit with me and talk about your experiences. And for me to look you in the eye and say thank you to you personally, on behalf of the 8.9 million people in my state. Sandy is an experience that our state will never forget. And for all the people who were alive during that period of time, no matter how long they live, they will remember what happened. And they will remember all of you. So, these individuals that I'm talking about, some of whom are sitting right in front of us here, worked 12 to 18 hour days in extraordinarily difficult conditions and their efforts helped to restore utilities services to our residents that lost power in the aftermath of the storm. So, today to honor these workers, I've signed a proclamation that declares today in New Jersey 'Canadian Utility Workers Appreciation Day' and all across New Jersey it's been released today. The people across our state are reading about today's a day that the Governor is asking each of our citizens to remember the Canadian utility workers who came to New Jersey and in a completely selfless way to help us begin the long, difficult task of rebuilding and renewing our state. And so, there's lots of companies that we recognize specifically in the proclamation that I want to recognize today: Entegrus Powerlines, Erie Thames Powerlines, Essex Powerlines, Hydro Ottawa, Toronto Hydro, Hydro One, Union Gas, Enbridge Gas Distribution, Gaz Métro, Canadian Gas Association, Electricity Distributors Association and the Canadian Electricity Association, all of whom contributed mightily to the cause that I just outlined. New Jersey is getting back to normal now, two years afterwards. If you came back down and saw some of your work near the Jersey Shore, there's still areas of the Shore where the homes are gone and not rebuilt. But there's most of the parts of the state where people are back in those homes on those streets that you worked on. The doors are closed, the windows are shut now in the winter but you'll see the lights on inside. People's lives are getting back to what we call in New Jersey, the new normal. Lives will never get back to normal again, post-Sandy but, there's a new normal. And it's a new normal that you helped to create. And so for those of you who are here and want to know what New Jersey is all about and why you should want to come and do business in New Jersey, the type of extraordinarily resilient people that could come back from the second worst natural disaster in American history and come back as quickly as we have are the kind of people you want to do business with. They're the kind of folks who will put in the extra hours at your business if you open it in order to make it a success. They're the kind of folks who when they become customers, when you do a good job, will be loyal customers, who won't only go to your place because it may have the lowest price that day, but because you're a good person and a good corporate citizen and a member of the community. People in New Jersey value loyalty, greatly. And the loyalty that our friends in Canada showed to us in the aftermath of Sandy is something we will always honor and always reward.

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