

August 4, 2025

Mike Bull, Acting Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Center for Energy and Environment and Clean Energy Economy Minnesota's Initial Comments in the Matter of the Petition of Minnesota Power for Acquisition of ALLETE by Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and Global Infrastructure Partners

Docket Number: E015/PA-24-198

Mr. Bull,

Center for Energy and Environment (CEE)¹ and Clean Energy Economy Minnesota (CEEM)² (jointly CEE/CEEM) submit the following initial comments in response to the Notice of Comment Period issued by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) on July 18, 2025, in the above-referenced proceeding regarding the proposed acquisition of ALLETE³ by the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) and Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP) (Acquisition), and the proposed settlement filed July 11, 2025, by the Minnesota Department of Commerce (Department), ALLETE, CPPIB, and GIP (Settlement). These comments do not respond to the Notice of Comment Period issued by the Commission on July 18, 2025, regarding exceptions to the Administrative Law Judge report.

CEE/CEEM appreciate the substantial work conducted by parties in this proceeding to assess whether the proposed Acquisition is consistent with the public interest as defined under Minn. Stat. § 216B.50. The proceeding contains an extensive record covering numerous issues related to the details and potential outcomes of the Acquisition, with significant attention being paid to the interest of Minnesota Power ratepayers. CEE/CEEM have reviewed much of the record and recognize the concerns raised from parties regarding potential ratepayer and other impacts

¹ CEE is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to discover and deploy the most effective energy solutions that strengthen the economy and improve the environment, envisioning a healthy, carbon-neutral economy that works for all people. See mncee.org/mission-values.

² CEEM is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide educational leadership, collaboration, and policy analysis that accelerates clean energy market growth and smart energy policies, providing the business voice for energy efficiency and clean energy in Minnesota. See cleanenergyeconomy.org/about.

³ References to Minnesota Power in these comments relate to the utility as a regulated operating division of ALLETE.

resulting from the Acquisition. However, CEE/CEEM argue the Acquisition, with the stipulations contained in the Settlement, is consistent with the public interest for four reasons.

First, the efforts necessary to meet the Carbon Free Standard (CFS) provisions set forth in Minn. Stat. § 216B.1691 will require significant and unprecedented investment in the electric system over the next 15 years. As stated by Minnesota Power and co-signers⁴ in Joint Reply Briefs filed May 29, 2025, “the Acquisition is essential to Minnesota Power’s plans to comply with the Carbon Free Standard”⁵ through investments “far beyond [Minnesota Power’s] historic levels”⁶ that “include major transmission, generation, and distribution projects to meet increasing customer needs and replace retiring thermal generation, while also maintaining reliability of the grid.”⁷ Although the exact investment levels needed may be uncertain or disputed by parties, the scope of investment needed is clear, and the Acquisition makes that level of capital available to Minnesota Power today.

In addition, other Minnesota policies provide pathways for electric and gas utilities to electrify end uses typically served by natural gas and other fuels, such as space heating.⁸ As the electric system decarbonizes under the CFS, electrifying significant portions of the economy is critical to meeting the state’s greenhouse gas emission reduction goals under Minn. Stat. § 216H.02. This underscores the need to give electric utilities the tools necessary to invest in decarbonizing the electric system while at the same time electrifying customer end use technologies.

Second, if the Acquisition is approved, Minnesota Power will still be regulated by the Commission under the authority provided by Minnesota Statutes and Minnesota Rules. While certain aspects of the company will change, such as governance through the composition of the board of directors and capital flowing from private owners instead of public equity markets, none of those changes will affect the Commission’s authority, process, or obligation to regulate Minnesota Power’s actions regarding infrastructure investments, resource procurements and retirements, capital structure, rates, programs, customer service, and reliability in a manner consistent with the public interest.

Furthermore, generating or procuring electricity to meet 100 percent of retail customer needs from carbon-free energy technology by 2040 is the law,⁹ with explicit authority given to the

⁴ Signers included ALLETE d/b/a Minnesota Power, CPPIB, GIP, LIUNA MN, IOUE Local 49, IBEW Local 31, and Energy CENTS Coalition.

⁵ Joint Reply Brief of Minnesota Power, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, and Global Infrastructure Partners. Filed May 29, 2025, in Docket No. E015/PA-24-198. Page 9.

⁶ *Id.* Page 9.

⁷ *Id.* Page 10.

⁸ See Minn. Stat. § 216B.241 (Energy Conservation and Optimization) and Minn. Stat. § 216B.2427 (Natural Gas Utility Innovation Plans).

⁹ Minn Stat. § 216B.1691, subd. 2(g).

Commission to enforce the law and impose financial penalties for noncompliance.¹⁰ The Acquisition does not change Minnesota Power's legal requirement to comply with Minn. Stat. § 216B.1691 as regulated and implemented by the Commission.

Third, the Settlement filed July 11, 2025, provides significant provisions focused on ratepayer protections, workforce and labor stipulations, and commitments to low-income program investments, community contributions, customer service and reliability metrics, and clean energy funds, that were not included in the initial petition.¹¹ These provisions were negotiated and established by the Department and other parties after thorough review and analysis of the Acquisition and subsequent discovery and testimony, and provide safeguards against many concerns raised in the record.

Finally, the risk of not approving the Acquisition outweighs the remaining risks associated with approving the Acquisition. While no deal is perfect, the Acquisition with the Settlement provides the necessary capital needed for Minnesota Power to continue its progress towards meeting the CFS, while protecting ratepayers and investing in clean energy jobs that diversify northeast Minnesota's economy, under the full regulatory authority of the Commission. If the Commission denies the Acquisition, Minnesota Power will have to seek alternative options to fund CFS-related investments that will take significant time and resources to develop and assess, and that will undoubtedly carry their own risks to ratepayers.

For the above reasons, CEE/CEEM find the Acquisition with the Settlement to be consistent with the public interest. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

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¹⁰ Minn Stat. § 216B.1691, subd. 7.

¹¹ Settlement Stipulation between the Minnesota Department of Commerce, ALLETE, Inc. d/b/a Minnesota Power, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, and Global Infrastructure Partners. Filed July 11, 2025, in Docket No. E015/PA-24-198.

AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE

DOCKET NUMBER E015/PA-24-198

I, Will Nissen, hereby certify that on this 4th day of August 2025, I served *Initial Comments in the Matter of the Petition of Minnesota Power for Acquisition of ALLETE by Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and Global Infrastructure Partners* in Docket Number E015/PA-24-198 on the following persons on the attached Service Lists by:

 X placing such filing in envelopes, properly addressed, and depositing the same in the Post Office at the City of Minneapolis, for delivery by the United States Post Office as directed by said envelopes.

 X electronic filing

/s/ Will Nissen

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118	George	Shardlow	george@energycents.org	Energy CENTS Coalition		823 E. 7th Street Saint Paul MN, 55106 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
119	Doug	Shoemaker	dougs@charter.net	Minnesota Renewable Energy		2928 5th Ave S Minneapolis MN, 55408 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
120	Brett	Skyles	brett.skyles@co.itasca.mn.us	Itasca County		123 NE Fourth Street Grand Rapids MN, 55744-2600 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
121	Richard	Staffon	rcstaffon@msn.com	W. J. McCabe Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America		1405 Lawrence Road Cloquet MN, 55720 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
122	James M	Strommen	jstrommen@kennedy-graven.com	Kennedy & Graven, Chartered		150 S 5th St Ste 700 Minneapolis MN, 55402 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
123	Robert	Tammen	bobtammen@frontiernet.net			PO Box 398 Soudan MN, 55782 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
124	Dean	Taylor	dtaylor@pluginamerica.org	Plug In America		6380 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 1000 Los Angeles CA, 90048 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
125	Jim	Tieberg	jtieberg@polymetmining.com	PolyMet Mining, Inc.		PO Box 475 County Highway 666 Hoyt Lakes MN, 55750 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
126	Analeisha	Vang	avang@mnpower.com			30 W Superior St Duluth MN, 55802-2093 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List

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128	Kodi	Verhalen	kverhalen@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP		80 S 8th St Ste 2200 Minneapolis MN, 55402 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
129	Kevin	Walli	kwalli@fryberger.com	Fryberger, Buchanan, Smith & Frederick		380 St. Peter St Ste 710 St. Paul MN, 55102 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
130	Greg	Wannier	greg.wannier@sierraclub.org	Sierra Club		2101 Webster St Ste 1300 Oakland CA, 94612 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
131	Laurie	Williams	laurie.williams@sierraclub.org	Sierra Club		Environmental Law Program 1536 Wynkoop St Ste 200 Denver CO, 80202 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
132	Patrick	Woolsey	patrick.woolsey@sierraclub.org	Sierra Club		2101 Webster Street Suite 1300 Oakland CA, 94612 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List
133	Scott	Zahorik	scott.zahorik@aeoa.org	Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency		702 S. 3rd Avenue Virginia MN, 55792 United States	Electronic Service		No	24-198Official CC Service List