## INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

LOCAL NO. 49, 49A, 49B, 49C, 49D, 49E, 49L MINNESOTA • NORTH DAKOTA • SOUTH DAKOTA

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To: Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MN PUC) From: Nathaniel Runke- Regulatory & Political Affairs Coordinator, Int'l Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49 Date: June 12, 2024 RE: Docket Number. IP7103/GS-22-451

## In the Matter of the Application of Enbridge Solar (Plummer), LLC for a Site Permit for the up to 130 MW Plummer Solar Project in Red Lake County, MN

On behalf of the over 15,000 heavy equipment operating engineers represented by the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49 ("Local 49") across Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, I am thankful for the opportunity to comment in support of Enbridge Solar's proposed up to 130-megawatt Plummer Solar project("project").

Enbridge has agreed to utilize local union labor for this project. This agreement and Enbridge's longstanding tradition of using local contractors and union labor is another example that the growth of renewable energy generation projects can benefit their host communities and local workforce through family sustaining jobs and increased tax revenue.

Along with the local equity considerations in this agreement, Enbridge Solar has also committed to use best efforts to support and deploy Native American, veteran, and diverse businesses and workforces for the project. Local 49 and our signatory contractors share these aims and strive to diversify and grow our membership across Minnesota through numerous targeted efforts. Our Operating Engineer Pathway in the OE High School Pathway Program is available to all Minnesota high school students. This 4-course virtual high school curriculum works to create opportunities for students to learn about a career as an Operating Engineer both in classrooms and in-the-field settings. Local 49 also co-administers the Building Strong Communities (BSC) Program, a multi-trade apprenticeship preparatory program. Over 80% of BSC program participants are women and/or from BIPOC communities. Women Building Success, of which our Local 49 Women's group is a partner, financially sponsors female candidates through the Building Strong Communities to build pathways to careers in our industry.

These local and diverse job opportunities are one reason that large-scale solar projects must continue to be a major component of Minnesota's renewable energy future. The oversight provided, opportunity for community involvement, and emphasis on a project's benefit to its host community allows these projects to maximize their value to Minnesota and its residents. They ensure that energy transition efforts incorporate employment opportunity, affordable and sustainable energy supply, and a cleaner environment for all Minnesotans.

The project will provide many positive human impacts. One of which is the creation of 150-200 job opportunities for Minnesota's highly skilled energy infrastructure construction workforce during construction and installation. These jobs will provide family-sustaining wages and benefits, and all parties involved are committed to ensure that the workforce for this project is diverse and equitable. The use of local union labor will ensure more socio-economic benefits stay within the local economy and Minnesota tax base. Finally, the project will increase the property and production tax contributions, which will also benefit the region.

On top of all these socio-economic benefits this project does not require the construction of additional transmission lines, which is a major advantage over similar projects. The project aligns with federal and state policies, utility resource plans, and clean energy goals. The project will also provide the potential to improve soil quality and other environmental benefits through its use of deep-rooted native vegetation on the project site.

We would ask that the environmental assessment consider the benefits provided by the project described above.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Nathaniel J Runke Regulatory & Political Affairs Coordinator International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49