

September 12, 2023

Will Seuffert
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2147

RE: Comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources
Docket Nos. E999/CI-17-879

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

On August 31, the Minnesota Department of Commerce (Department) filed a request for technical consulting services under Minn. Stat. §216B.62, subd. 8. In response, the Commission issued a notice setting a September 11, 2023, deadline for objections.

No commenter filed objections, but Otter Tail Power Company (OTP) filed a response stating while it did not have objections, it recommended that billing for the three utilities subject to the docket be allocated by the number of EVs in each utility service area, as listed in the Commission's annual report.

The Department first notes that the issue of billing is separate from the decision to retain a consultant. Billing issues can be raised with the Department or Commission at any time, and utilities do occasionally question a bill sent to them by the Department or Commission. The Department and Commission have adjusted bills when errors are discovered.¹

Regardless, the Department does not support allocating costs by number of EVs in a utility service area. Assuming OTP means that utilities with greater numbers of EVs in their service areas bear more of the cost, this would penalize utilities who have successfully encouraged EV adoption through pilots and programs. The Department does not believe this is sound public policy.

¹ The most common error is a typo in a docket number, resulting in the wrong docket being billed for work done. When the Department or Commission are notified of these errors, the bill is adjusted and corrected.

The fairest way to allocate costs would be the most common way the Department and Commission already bill utilities: opening three individual dockets, one assigned to each utility. Under this scenario, hours are billed to each individual utility based on the time spent on each utility's filing. Utilities with more complete, thorough filings are billed less; utilities with incomplete or unclear filings are billed more for the extra time Department and Commission staff take to issue IRs and perform other analysis. Overall, this method of billing rewards utilities with better filings.

The Department is available to answer any questions the Commission may have.

Sincerely,

/s/LOUISE MILTICH
Assistant Commissioner

LM/ar

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Sharon Ferguson, hereby certify that I have this day, served copies of the following document on the attached list of persons by electronic filing, certified mail, e-mail, or by depositing a true and correct copy thereof properly enveloped with postage paid in the United States Mail at St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Minnesota Department of Commerce
Letter**

Docket No. E999/CI-17-879

Dated this **12th** day of **September 2023**

/s/Sharon Ferguson

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