

August 24, 2022

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

RE: Letter from the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources (the Department) regarding Minnesota Power's Petition for Approval of a Rider for Customer Affordability of Residential Electricity (CARE), Docket No. E015/M-11-409

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

On May 5, 2011, Minnesota Power (MP or the Company) filed a request for approval of a Pilot Rider for Customer Affordability of Residential Electricity (CARE Rider) consistent with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's (Commission) November 2, 2010 *Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order* in the Company's 2009 rate case (Docket No. E015/GR-09-1151).

On September 26, 2011, the Commission issued its *Order Authorizing Pilot Program and Setting Further Requirements* in this docket. Minnesota Power implemented its CARE program November 1, 2011. The Company files annual program reports, and the Commission has approved several modifications to Minnesota Power's CARE program since its inception.<sup>1</sup> The program enhancements are typically the product of parties' collaboration, including MP, Energy CENTS Coalition (ECC), and the Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota (CUB).

On August 2, 2022, Minnesota Power filed a request to modify its CARE program. The Company's request stems from an agreement it reached with ECC and CUB in its current general rate case (Docket No. E015/GR-21-335).<sup>2</sup> The agreement specifically states the proposed CARE program changes are not contingent upon Commission adoption in the rate case.

The agreement identifies the following CARE program changes for consideration in the instant docket:

1. Increasing the CARE annual budget by up to \$429,303.
2. Increasing the current CARE flat discount from \$15 per month to \$20 per month.

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<sup>1</sup> Orders issued on December 3, 2012; July 18, 2013; July 3, 2014; July 10, 2015; January 5, 2018; December 19, 2018; October 30, 2019 in the instant docket.

<sup>2</sup> [Petition](#), Attachment.

3. Extending the CARE flat discount to approximately 10,000 non-LIHEAP low-income customers.
4. Extending the CARE affordability discount to approximately 2500 non-LIHEAP low-income customers.

The Company's rationale provided in its August 2, 2022 filing for increasing and extending the CARE program is sound and in the public interest. Further, the Company's request to expedite this request is not in dispute and would allow low-income ratepayers to avail themselves of the program enhancements in the upcoming heating season.

The Department recommends the Commission take the following action:

1. Approve the Company's proposed modifications to its CARE program through the Commission's consent calendar. Under Minnesota Rules [7829.1050](#), the Commission may act on uncontested proceedings through its consent calendar if a proceeding presents no disputed or novel issues. This docket does not address any novel or disputed issues; therefore, the Department recommends approval through the Commission's consent calendar.
2. Within 10 days of the Order date, require MP to submit a compliance filing with revised tariff sheets reflecting the approved CARE program changes.

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

Sincerely,

/s/ TRACY M.B. SMETANA  
Supervisor, Rates Unit

MB, SC/ja