

July 1, 2020

William Seuffert
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
Saint Paul, MN 55101

RE: Docket Nos. CI-02-2034/M-12-383 In the Matter of the Request for Commission Finding Regarding the Customer Complaint Performance Service Quality Plan

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

The City of Minneapolis (“Minneapolis”) thanks the Commission for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Xcel Energy’s (“Xcel” or “the Company”) request to omit 129 customer complaints filed with the Commission’s Consumer Affairs Office in 2019 from consideration as part of the Company’s Quality of Service Plan (“QSP”) evaluation.

The City of Minneapolis understands that nearly two dozen of the customer complaints that Xcel petitioned be excluded originated with Minneapolis residents who completed solar interconnection applications. A customer’s decision to invest in solar supports Minneapolis clean energy goals, including the 100% renewable electricity goal by 2030¹ and the 10% local generation goal by 2025². We rely on our exclusive electric utility, Xcel Energy, to assist our community in achieving these goals as we cannot do so alone.

Topic(s) Open for Comment:

- **Should the Commission grant Xcel Energy’s request that 129 individual interconnection application complaints from one solar installer not be considered “customer complaints”, and not be included in the customer complaints metric in the Company’s Quality of Service Plan (QSP) tariff, as requested by Xcel?**

No, the Commission should not grant Xcel’s request to exclude 129 individual interconnection application complaints. Minneapolis cites two resources for the Commission’s consideration.

1. Per the Commission’s website, *“the Public Utilities Commission’s Consumer Affairs Office (CAO) helps resolve disputes between customers and utility companies.”*³

¹ Resolution adopting 100% renewable electricity community-wide by 2030.

<https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Download/RCA/4338/100%20renewables%20resolution%20final.pdf>

² Minneapolis Climate Action Plan. June 28, 2013.

<http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@citycoordinator/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-113598.pdf>

³ MN Public Utilities Commission “File a complaint” page. <https://mn.gov/puc/consumers/help/complaint/> Accessed June 20, 2020.

2. The Regulatory Assistance Project (RAP) defines Service Quality Index as:

Service Quality Index: SQI

*A service quality index is a mechanism established by the regulator to measure the quality of electricity service, including such factors as the frequency and duration of outages, the time required to respond to a customer inquiry, the number of regulatory complaints received, and the response time to safety-related calls. The regulator may impose a financial penalty on utilities not meeting defined goals, or may tie a portion of the allowed return to service performance.⁴ (*emphasis added*)*

Neither resource suggests that complaints from customers who are solar applicants be treated differently than other customer complaints. The MN Department of Commerce (Department) coordinated with Commission staff about how customers with interconnection issues could be assisted, and the agreed upon process included Department staff referring customers with solar interconnection complaints to the CAO for support with resolving issues.⁵

Minneapolis emphasizes that all utility customers (including someone authorized to act on behalf of the customer with the customer's permission) must have access to impartial support when experiencing problems with any aspect of their service that they are unable to resolve by working directly with the utility. Minneapolis qualifies this statement with two criteria:

- 1) The customer was aware that their contracted solar installer was filing a complaint on their behalf and supported this action
- 2) CAO accepted the complaint as filed, or if CAO had requests to clarify the legitimacy of a complaint, the complainant was responsive to these requests.

The CAO plays a critical role as the state's most accessible resource for customers needing assistance with utility issues and helps balance the fact that customers cannot choose an alternative electricity provider if they are dissatisfied. The primary leverage a customer has with their utility is having access to the state's approved customer complaint process. Therefore, legitimate complaints must not be dismissed when determining eligibility for a financial incentive or penalty.

• Should complaints from solar installers be tracked, not as "customer complaints" for QSP purposes, but instead, in a separate tracking mechanism?

It is important to treat all customers fairly. A separate tracking mechanism would remove the utility's incentive to work expediently to resolve interconnection issues, and this would lead to discriminatory treatment of customers interested in solar.

The timelines and milestones established through the MN DIP stakeholder process provide clear performance requirements for both the utility and the interconnecting customer.⁶ These guidelines in combination with the CAO complaint process are important to fairly address the disparity between the customer's position and that of the monopoly utility service provider.

⁴ Lazar, J. (2016). Electricity Regulation in the US: A Guide. Second Edition. Montpelier, VT: The Regulatory Assistance Project. p. 197. Retrieved from <http://www.raponline.org/knowledge-center/electricityregulation-in-the-us-a-guide-2>.

⁵ Circa 2016 through interagency leadership and staff level collaboration.

⁶ Docket 16-521. Order Establishing Updated Interconnection Process and Standard Interconnection Agreement. Aug. 13, 2018.

Finally, we stand by the customer's right to have a favorable interconnection experience as envisioned by the MN DIP process, and we want solar developers who perform work in the city to be able to count on a predictable streamlined process. The CAO complaint process and the QSP evaluation process are important consumer protection tools.

The City of Minneapolis appreciates the opportunity offer input on this important topic that impacts the equitable treatment of Xcel's customers. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. W. Havey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

Mr. Kim W. Havey, LEED AP, AICP
Division of Sustainability

STATE OF MINNESOTA)
) ss. **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

I, Kim W. Havey, of the City of Minneapolis, County of Hennepin, State of Minnesota, affirm that on the first day of July 2020, I served a copy of the following via e-mail and/or via U.S. Mail:

Comments of the City of Minneapolis regarding Docket Nos. 12-383

at the last known mailing addresses and email addresses of said entities/individuals on the attached Service List. If by U.S. Mail, I placed said document in postage prepaid envelope and placed same in the U.S. Post Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota for delivery by the United States Postal Service.



Kim W. Havey

Electronic Service Members (Docket 12-383)

Last Name	First Name	Email	Company Name	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret
Commerce Attorneys	Generic Notice	commerce.attorneys@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	Electronic Service	Yes
Ferguson	Sharon	sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us	Department of Commerce	Electronic Service	No
Johnson	Craig	cjohnson@lmc.org	League of Minnesota Cities	Electronic Service	No
Moratzka	Andrew	andrew.moratzka@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	Electronic Service	No
Residential Utilities Division	Generic Notice	residential.utilities@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	Electronic Service	Yes
Savelkoul	Richard	rsavelkoul@martinsquires.com	Martin & Squires, P.A.	Electronic Service	No
Seuffert	Will	Will.Seuffert@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	Electronic Service	Yes
Strommen	James M	jstrommen@kennedy-graven.com	Kennedy & Graven, Chartered	Electronic Service	No
Sweet	Lynnette	Regulatory.records@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy	Electronic Service	No

Electronic Service Members (Docket 02-2034)

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Anderson	Christopher	canderson@allete.com	Minnesota Power	Electronic Service	No
Commerce Attorneys	Generic Notice	commerce.attorneys@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	Electronic Service	Yes
Ferguson	Sharon	sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us	Department of Commerce	Electronic Service	Yes
Medhaug	Susan	Susan.medhaug@state.mn.us	Department of Commerce	Electronic Service	No
Residential Utilities Division	Generic Notice	residential.utilities@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	Electronic Service	Yes
Seuffert	Will	Will.Seuffert@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	Electronic Service	Yes
Strommen	James M	jstrommen@kennedy-graven.com	Kennedy & Graven, Chartered	Electronic Service	No
Sweet	Lynnette	Regulatory.records@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy	Electronic Service	No
Winegarden	Rebecca S.	beckwine@msn.com	Unknown	Electronic Service	No