

Comments from Operating Engineers Local 49

April 8, 2022

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

*RE: In the Matter of Xcel Energy's Petition for Approval of the Sherco Solar Project
(EOO2/M-20-891)*

Dear Mr. Seuffert,

The International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49 (IUOE Local 49) is a construction labor union in Minnesota representing heavy equipment operators and mechanics, along with stationary engineers. Our members have extensive experience performing construction and maintenance across a wide array of energy infrastructure including large solar projects.

As Minnesota's energy sector transitions towards the increased use of carbon-free resources, it is critical that we do so in a way that supports communities, protects existing workers and creates opportunities for new workers to begin a career in construction. This is especially important because our energy sector has traditionally been highly unionized and a source of family sustaining incomes for workers across our state.

The Sherco Solar project is a critical step towards getting that transition right. By reutilizing the existing interconnection rights at the Sherco facility, Xcel is benefitting rate payers but also the local community at Becker where the facility will provide tax revenue to help offset a portion of the lost revenue due to the plant closure. The community will also benefit from the additional economic benefits during the construction phase of the project.

From the worker perspective, Xcel has committed to using union labor on the project—an important commitment to ensuring economic benefits flow to workers. The project is also well positioned to take advantage of the recently approved Workforce Training Development Program—a program that IUOE Local 49 advocated for—which will help prepare more women, people of color, and veterans for apprenticeship opportunities doing energy work in the construction industry. Through the alignment of the workforce training program with the construction of the largest solar facility in the state, the Commission has the opportunity to advance a project that will serve as a strong example for how to ensure a transition that truly benefits workers and provides new opportunities for those underrepresented in the construction industry.

For the above reasons, I would encourage the Commission to approve this project.

Sincerely,

Nathan Runke, Regulatory and Political Affairs Coordinator, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49