

Comments from North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters

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,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide reply comments on the proposed Sherco Solar project.

The North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters is a labor union representing approximately 12,000 workers and their families across Minnesota. Our members include carpenters, millwrights, floor coverers, lathers, pile drivers, and industrial workers across the state. As such, they work on a wide array of energy infrastructure construction and maintenance—including coal, natural gas, wind, solar, and nuclear.

The forthcoming closure of all three Sherco Coal units will have a significant impact on a number of our members and their families. For decades, union millwrights, carpenters and other crafts have worked on a daily basis to provide ongoing maintenance and repairs at the coal facility. Their work has meant that the facilities have been run safely and efficiently, ensuring Minnesotans access to reliable and affordable electricity.

With the announced closure of the coal units, our members would have benefited from the construction of the Sherco combined cycle natural gas facility—a project we advocated for with the state legislature. With the decision not to move forward with the gas plant, the Sherco solar project is likely the last opportunity to develop and build a renewable energy project in the Becker community that will create good paying jobs for local construction workers.

Furthermore, Xcel energy has committed to give preference to women, veteran and minority owned business contractors and utilize the commission-approved Workforce Training Development Program to provide industry training and incorporate more women, veterans and BIPOC workers into the project construction. The use of registered apprenticeships on the project is an important opportunity to provide on-the-job training to people who are new to the construction industry and those that wish to transition their skills towards work on solar. There has been a great deal of discussion over the past few years about the importance of a “just transition” in the energy sector. This project is the opportunity to show that Minnesota is

doing more than just paying lip service to that idea. For the above reasons, we would encourage the Public Utilities Commission to approve the project.

Sincerely,

Adam Duininck, Director of Government Affairs, North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters