

April 17, 2023

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VIA E-FILING

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

RE: In the Matter of Minnesota Power's Petition for Approval of the Annual Forecasted Rates for Its Rider for Fuel and Purchased Energy Charge PUC Docket No. E-015/AA-21-312

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

The Large Power Intervenors ("LPI")¹ submit this letter comment² in response to Minnesota Power's annual true-up report for 2022, filed on March 1, 2023, in the above-titled docket.³ As it pertains to fuel and purchased energy ("FCA" or "FCA Adjustment") costs in 2022, the Company previously requested a \$36 million increase in fuel and purchased energy costs during the second half of 2022.⁴ The Company now seeks an additional \$13.3 million for underrecovered FCA costs, which it proposes collecting over a 12-month period.⁵ The Company primarily attributes the increased prices to "higher than forecasted" market prices, and combined these increases result in the average cost of fuel increasing from \$30.25 per MWh to \$31.91 per MWh.⁶

¹ LPI is an *ad hoc* consortium of industrial Large Power and Large Light & Power customers on Minnesota Power's (or the "Company") system, consisting for purposes of this filing of: Blandin Paper Company; Boise White Paper, a Packaging Corporation of America company, formerly known as Boise, Inc.; Cleveland-Cliffs Minorca Mine Inc.; Enbridge Energy, Limited Partnership; Gerdau Ameristeel US Inc.; Hibbing Taconite Company; Northern Foundry, LLC; Sappi Cloquet, LLC; United States Steel Corporation (Keetac and Minntac Mines); United Taconite, LLC; and USG Interiors, Inc.

² In the Matter of an Investigation into the Appropriateness of Continuing to Permit Electric Energy Cost Adjustments, PUC Docket No. E-999/CI-03-802, Order Approving Additional Details of New Fuel Clause Adjustment Process at Appendix A, A-2 (June 12, 2019) ("Scheduling Order"). The Scheduling Order contemplates initial comments by consumer advocates on April 15, 2023. Minn. R. 7829.0300, however, clarifies that if a deadline falls on a Saturday or Sunday, that day(s) is omitted from deadline computation. Therefore, LPI timely submits this initial comment on April 17, 2023. See also Minn. R. Civ. P. 6.01(a)(3)(C).

³ Compliance Filing by Minnesota Power (Mar. 1, 2023) (eDocket No. 20233-193558-01) ("2022 Report").

⁴ 2022 Report at 1.

 $^{^{5}}$ *Id.* at 1-2.

 $^{^{6}}$ *Id.* at 4.

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It is well established under Minnesota law that customers are entitled to "just and reasonable" rates pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 216B.03. It is also the energy policy of the state that "retail electricity rates for each customer class be at least five percent below the national average."⁷ Finally, it is also the state's policy to "ensure competitive electric rates for energy-intensive trade-exposed customers."⁸ When assessing the reasonableness of costs, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") must determine whether the Company has (a) demonstrated the amount of given costs as a judicial fact;⁹ and (b) established that it is just and reasonable for ratepayers (as opposed to shareholders) to bear those costs.¹⁰ LPI is not convinced that the Company has satisfied these requirements.

Increasing FCA rates represent one aspect that is part of the overall troubling trajectory of rates and bills on the Company's system. For example, as it relates to the FCA, during the 2011-12 timeframe, fuel and purchased energy costs (including the base cost of fuel and the adjustment) appeared to average between \$19-\$20 per MWh.¹¹ In other words, customers' fuel and purchased energy costs alone have increased by more than 60% in a little over 10 years. The magnitude of this increase appears counterintuitive in light of the Company's decreased reliance on fossil fuel. Therefore, LPI submits this letter in part to request additional information from the Company in reply comment.

FCA rates and other increases are driving industrial customers' rates and bills upward. According to the Company's response to LPI Information Request No. 5000, Large Power customers' average rate in 2022 was \$94.90 per MWh. Rates at this level are well above customers' expectations and certainly raise concerns about the Company's duty to have just and reasonable rates that comply with explicit state energy policy. In reply comments, LPI respectfully requests that the Company update the table in LPI Information Request No. 5000 (attached) to include 2022 actuals, updated/current 2023 information, and current 2024 forecasts inclusive of base rates, riders, FCA charges, etc.¹² In addition, LPI respectfully requests that the Company provide an additional level of detail, showing how each item contributes to the total number. For example, for 2022, it would indicate that \$31.91 per MWh is attributable to the FCA.¹³

In addition to the updated rates information, LPI requests the Company provide additional information in reply comments pertaining to increased market pricing in 2022 (and beyond), by supplementing the record with the following information: (a) if/how decisions to move baseload generation to seasonal/economic dispatch have exposed the Company to the market to a greater

⁷ Minn. Stat. § 216C.05, subd. 2(4).

⁸ Minn. Stat. § 216B.1696, subd. 2(a).

⁹ See In re Petition of N. States Power Co., 416 N.W.2d 719, 722-23 (Minn. 1987).

 $^{^{10}}$ Id. at 723 (finding that "by merely showing that it has incurred, or may hypothetically incur, expenses, the utility does not necessarily meet its burden of demonstrating that it is just and reasonable that the ratepayers bear the costs of those expenses").

¹¹ In the Matter of the 2011-2012 Annual Automatic Adjustment Reports, PUC Docket No. E999/AA-12-757, Minnesota Power Report at Attach. 3, 1-2 (Aug. 31, 2012).

¹² LPI Information Request No. 5000 (attached as Exhibit A).

¹³ 2022 Report at 4. For costs associated with the FCA, LPI further requests that the Company provide a schedule breaking out the FCA costs by driver (*i.e.*, fuel costs, market purchases, etc.).

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degree; (b) if/how the short- and long-term action plans in the Company's recent integrated resource plan (PUC Docket No. 21-33) impacted market exposure in 2022 or will impact market exposure in 2023 and beyond; (c) if/how the Company's existing demand response programs mitigate market exposure; (d) whether the Company is exploring economic demand response or other customer options to help further mitigate market exposure going forward; and (e) a detailed analysis explaining why/how FCA costs are increasing at a dramatic pace despite the Company's significantly lower reliance upon fossil-based fuel generation.

LPI looks forward to reviewing the Company's reply comments and 2024 forecast petition, and hopes the Company will endeavor to provide the information requested in paragraphs 4-5 (including footnote 13) herein, which will, undoubtedly, assist stakeholders in evaluating these important proceedings.

By copy of this letter, all parties have been served. Also attached is a Certificate of Service.

Very truly yours,

Stoel Rives LLP

/s/ Andrew P. Moratzka

Andrew P. Moratzka

APM:cal Enclosures

cc: Service List

119239967.5 0064591-00006

Docket Number(s): E015/RP-21-33; E015/GR-21-335; E015/M-22-216; E015/M-21-60; E015/M-21-61

Date of Request: October 28, 2022

Requested From: Minnesota Power

Response Due: November 9, 2022

By: Large Power Intervenors (Andrew P. Moratzka and Riley A. Conlin)

Information Request No. 5000

a. Please update the data captured in Appendix L of the Company's pending Integrated Resource Plan (PUC Docket No. E015/RP-21-33), including the Company's requested increase in PUC Docket No. E015/GR-21-335 and other rate increases approved since the filing of the Company's Integrated Resource Plan Initial Filing. Table 1 from Appendix L is reproduced below as a representative sample.

Rate Class Impacts \1	2021	2022	2023	2024
Residential (average rate,				
cents/kWh)	12.114	12,114	12.114	12.114
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.180	0.145	0.158
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.49%	1.20%	1.31%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.02	\$1.28	\$1.03	\$1.12
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General Service (average				
rate, cents/kWh)	12.053	12.053	12.053	12.053
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.180	0.145	0.158
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.49%	1.20%	1.31%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.09	\$4.72	\$3.78	\$4.10
Large Light & Power				
(average rate, cents/kWh)	9.434	9.434	9.434	9.434
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.156	0.130	0.140
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.66%	1.38%	1.49%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$5.22	\$374.16	\$309.92	\$335.11
	1			
Large Power (average rate, cents/kWh)	7.223	7.223	7.223	7.223
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.002	0.055	0.035	0.041
Increase (%)	-0.03%	0.76%	0.48%	0.57%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$1,140	\$32,828	\$20.752	\$24.674
Average impact (\$7 month)	-91,140	φ 3 2,020	φ20,752	φ24,074
Lighting (average rate,	1			
cents/kWh)	19.086	19.086	19.086	19.086
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.005	0.238	0.182	0.202
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.25%	0.95%	1.06%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.04	\$1.85	\$1.41	\$1.56
Average Weighted Increase				
(cents/kWh)	-0.002	0.099	0.074	0.083
Avg Weighted Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.15%	0.86%	0.96%
Notes: 1/ Average current rat				
based on 2020 base rates fro				
015/GR-19-442) with 2021 es				

015/GR-19-442) with 2021 estimated cost recovery rider rates and estimated 2021 FPE and CPA factor added. CPA factor is not applied to Large Power Class.

Docket Number(s): E015/RP-21-33; E015/GR-21-335; E015/M-22-216; E015/M-21-60; E015/M-21-61

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b. Referring to the response in subpart (a) above, please provide a second updated Appendix L chart to include all of the information in response to subpart (a) and the Company's planned or expected increases over the same period.

c. Using the updated information produced in subparts (a) and (b) above, please explain how the Company's projected rates achieve the state's policy goal that rates be 5% below the national average for all customer classes pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 216C.05, subd 2(4).

d. Using the updated information produced in subparts (a) and (b) above, please explain how the Company's projected rates comply with the state's policy goal to ensure competitive electric rates for energy-intensive, trade-exposed customers pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 216B.1696.

RESPONSE:

a. Refer to the Table 1(a) below for the requested updates. The updated Average Current Rates by year include the Company's requested increase in MPUC Docket No. E015/GR-21-335 and other actual rates and approved rate increases since the filing of the Company's Integrated Resource Plan Initial Filing. The "Increase (cents/kWh)" and "Average Impact (\$/month)" are the original increases of the Preferred Plan as filed in the Company's Integrated Resource Plan Initial Filing. The "Increase (%)" is now calculated relative to the updated Average Current Rates, as opposed to being relative to only 2021 as in the original table. Otherwise, the original billing units, allocations and methodologies are unchanged from the initial filing.

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Updated Table 1(a): Estimated Average Rate Impacts of Preferred Plan Relative to Actual and Projected Average Rates

Rate Class Impacts \1	2021	2022	2023	2024
Residential (average rate, cents/kWh)	12.867	15.442	15.565	15.565
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.180	0.145	0.158
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.17%	0.93%	1.02%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.02	\$1.28	\$1.03	\$1.12
General Service (average rate, cents/kWh)	12.807	15.368	15.491	15.491
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.180	0.145	0.158
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.17%	0.94%	1.02%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.09	\$4.72	\$3.78	\$4.10
Large Light & Power (average rate, cents/kWh)	10.187	12.281	12.491	12.491
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.156	0.130	0.140
Increase (%)	-0.02%	1.27%	1.05%	1.13%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$5.22	\$374.16	\$309.92	\$335.11
Large Power (average rate, cents/kWh)	8.040	9.490	9.605	9.605
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.002	0.055	0.035	0.041
Increase (%)	-0.02%	0.58%	0.36%	0.43%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$1,140	\$32,828	\$20,752	\$24,674
Lighting (average rate, cents/kWh)	19.840	23.721	23.937	23.937
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.005	0.238	0.182	0.202
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.00%	0.76%	0.84%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.04	\$1.85	\$1.41	\$1.56
Average Weighted Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.002	0.099	0.074	0.083
Average Weighted Increase (%)	-0.02%	0.88%	0.65%	0.73%

Notes: 1/ 2021 average rates are based on 2020 base rates from Minnesota Power's last rate case (E-015/GR-19-442) updated with 2021 actual FAC, CPA and cost recovery rider rates. CPA factor is not applied to Large Power Class. 2022 average rates are based on 2020 base rates above updated with an 18.22 percent increase per the Company's current rate case (E-015/GR-21-335), and approved FAC with true-up, CPA rate and currently in-place cost recovery rider rates. 2023 average rates are

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based on 2022 average rates above, assuming in-place 2022 FAC and costs recovery rates continue. 2024 average rates are assumed the same as 2023 rates above.

b. Refer to the Table 1(b) below for the requested updates. The updated Average Current Rates by year include the Company's requested increase in MPUC Docket No. E015/GR-21-335, other actual rates and approved rate increases since the filing of the Company's Integrated Resource Plan Initial Filing, and expected 2023 rate changes that have been filed, but not yet approved for the Fuel Adjustment Clause rates, Renewable Resources Rider rates and Transmission Cost Recovery rider rates. The "Increase (cents/kWh)" and "Average Impact (\$/month)" are the original increases of the Preferred Plan as filed in the Company's Integrated Resource Plan Initial Filing. The "Increase (%)" is now calculated relative to the updated Average Current Rates, as opposed to being relative to only 2021 as in the original table. Otherwise, the original billing units, allocations and methodologies are unchanged from the initial filing.

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Updated Table 2(b): Estimated Average Rate Impacts of Preferred Plan Relative to Actual and Projected Average Rates

Rate Class Impacts \1	2021	2022	2023	2024
Residential (average rate, cents/kWh)	12.867	15.442	15.660	15.660
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.180	0.145	0.158
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.17%	0.93%	1.01%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.02	\$1.28	\$1.03	\$1.12
General Service (average rate, cents/kWh)	12.807	15.368	15.587	15.587
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.180	0.145	0.158
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.17%	0.93%	1.01%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.09	\$4.72	\$3.78	\$4.10
Large Light & Power (average rate, cents/kWh)	10.187	12.281	12.515	12.515
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.003	0.156	0.130	0.140
Increase (%)	-0.02%	1.27%	1.04%	1.12%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$5.22	\$374.16	\$309.92	\$335.11
Large Power (average rate, cents/kWh)	8.040	9.490	9.701	9.701
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.002	0.055	0.035	0.041
Increase (%)	-0.02%	0.58%	0.36%	0.43%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$1,140	\$32,828	\$20,752	\$24,674
Lighting (average rate, cents/kWh)	19.840	23.721	24.032	24.032
Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.005	0.238	0.182	0.202
Increase (%)	-0.03%	1.00%	0.76%	0.84%
Average Impact (\$ / month)	-\$0.04	\$1.85	\$1.41	\$1.56
Average Weighted Increase (cents/kWh)	-0.002	0.099	0.074	0.083
Average Weighted Increase (%)	-0.02%	0.88%	0.65%	0.72%

Notes: 1/ 2021 average rates are based on 2020 base rates from Minnesota Power's last rate case (E-015/GR-19-442) updated with 2021 actuals FAC, CPA and cost recovery rider rates. CPA factor is not applied to Large Power Class. 2022 average rates are based on 2020 base rates above updated with an 18.22 percent increase per the Company's current rate case (E-015/GR-21-335), and approved FAC with true-up, CPA rate and currently in-place cost recovery rider rates. 2023 average rates are

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based on 2022 average rates above, updated for expected, filed but not yet approved 2023 FAC with true-up, new 2022 RRR rates assumed as of 3/1/2023 and new 2023 TCR rates assumed as of 1/1/2023. 2024 average rates are assumed the same as 2023 rates above.

c. Minnesota Power strives to meet all Minnesota policy goals as well as state requirements. The projected rates for the IRP are projected rates for Minnesota Power and do not include projected rates for the national averages that would be compared for evaluating Minn. Stat. § 216C.05, subd 2(4) or competiveness under Minn. Stat. § 216B.1696. Related to Minn. Stat. § 216B.1696, the Company voluntarily implemented an Energy Charge Credit to eligible Large Power customers without the need for any other customers to pay a surcharge. Because of this, when the EITE discount is discontinued, effective with final rate implementation in the current rate case, the Commission can continue to "ensure competitive electric rates for energy-intensive trade-exposed customers" by incorporating the discount into the final rate design.

Related to the energy policy statement in Minn. Stat. § 216C.05 subd. 2(4) that "It is the energy policy of the state of Minnesota that...retail electricity rates for each customer class be at least five percent below the national average," Minnesota Power is extremely sensitive to keeping rates for its industrial customers and all other customer classes competitive and affordable. In developing its rate increase proposal for each customer class, Minnesota Power considered the Commission's stated energy policy goals and desired regulatory outcomes, including reasonable rates that are affordable for customers.

As previously stated in the current rate case, Minnesota Power would prefer to have its industrial rates (the Large Power and Large Light and Power classes) and rates for all other classes reflect the CCOSS results but also recognizes that a transition is needed over time to avoid overly burdensome impacts on any particular class of customers and that there are rate impacts associated with this current IRP that will need to be allocated to all customer classes.

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d. See response to (c).

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Carmel Laney, hereby certify that I have this day served a true and correct copy of the following document(s) to all persons at the addresses indicated below or on the attached list by electronic filing, electronic mail, courier, interoffice mail or by depositing the same enveloped with postage paid in the United States Mail at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

LETTER COMMENT SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE LARGE POWER INTERVENORS

In the Matter of Minnesota Power's Petition for Approval of the Annual Forecasted Rates for its Rider for Fuel and Purchased Energy Charge PUC Docket No. E-015/AA-21-312

Dated this 17th day of April, 2023.

<u>/s/ Carmel Laney</u> Carmel Laney

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David	Cartella	David.Cartella@cliffsnr.co m	Cliffs Natural Resources Inc.	200 Public Square Ste 3300 Cleveland, OH 44114-2315	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312
Greg	Chandler	greg.chandler@upm.com	UPM Blandin Paper	115 SW First St Grand Rapids, MN 55744	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312

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Steve W.	Chriss	Stephen.chriss@walmart.c om	Wal-Mart	2001 SE 10th St. Bentonville, AR 72716-5530	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312
Generic Notice	Commerce Attorneys	commerce.attorneys@ag.st ate.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	445 Minnesota Street Suite 1400 St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312
Riley	Conlin	riley.conlin@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 S. 6th Street Suite 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312
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Lisa	Daniels	lisadaniels@windustry.org	Windustry	201 Ridgewood Ave Minneapolis, MN 55403	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312
Richard	Dornfeld	Richard.Dornfeld@ag.state .mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	Minnesota Attorney General's Office 445 Minnesota Street, Suite 1800 Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312
J.	Drake Hamilton	hamilton@fresh-energy.org	Fresh Energy	408 St Peter St Ste 350 Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312
Brian	Edstrom	briane@cubminnesota.org	Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota	332 Minnesota St Ste W1360 Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_21-312_AA-21- 312

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First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
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