

414 Nicollet Mall Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401

October 17, 2016

## -VIA ELECTRONIC FILING-

Daniel P. Wolf Executive Secretary Minnesota Public Utilities Commission 121 7<sup>th</sup> Place East, Suite 350 St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

RE: INITIAL COMMENTS
COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO FEES CHARGED ON QUALIFYING FACILITIES
DOCKET NO. E999/CI-15-755

Dear Mr. Wolf:

Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy, appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in this proceeding regarding the metering fees applied to customers with Qualifying Facilities (QF). In these comments, we wish to focus on what we believe are the key questions raised in this inquiry and briefly respond to some of the concerns raised by parties about the discovery process in this proceeding.

Over the past 30 years, our QF metering fees have been lawfully collected. We have adhered to the statutory provisions authorizing metering fees and complied with the approval process for the establishment of such fees. Thus, in our opinion, the objections raised by parties to these fees and the recommendation to provide a refund to customers should not be upheld. We also point out that Minn. Stat. 216B.23 prohibits a retroactive review of lawfully established and collected fees. Furthermore, as indicated in our June 6, 2016 Reply Comments, the Company's QF metering fees have been in place for several years and a retroactive review of these fees would likely indicate a need for a fee increase. However, we reiterate our opinion that a retroactive review goes beyond the scope of this inquiry.

Notwithstanding the concerns raised by parties regarding the reasonableness of our QF metering fees, we believe there are two fundamental questions before the Commission:

- Shall we view QF metering fees as a legitimate component of the interconnection costs incurred when a QF customer voluntarily enters into a net metering arrangement with the Company; and
- Shall we change the cost allocation practice in place for the past 30 years and decide to prospectively collect incremental metering costs associated with the QF services from all customers rather than solely from QF customers?

In response to the first question, our Reply Comments provide clear evidence supporting the treatment of QF metering fees as an interconnection cost. In fact, Minn. Stat. 216B.164 (Cogeneration and Small Power Production) specifically addresses this point as follows:

## Subd. 8.Interconnection required; obligation for costs.

(b) Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to excuse the qualifying facility from any obligation for costs of interconnection and wheeling in excess of those normally incurred by the utility for customers with similar load characteristics who are not cogenerators or small power producers, or from any fixed charges normally assessed such nongenerating customers.

Some parties have argued that metering fees are a mechanism to recover fixed costs and should not be solely allocated to QF customers. However, these arguments do not reflect a full reading of the record and do not negate the above-referenced statute.

In response to the second question, we are open to a review of the current policy and practice if the Commission deems this as appropriate. We maintain, however, that the current allocation of QF metering costs is supported by the record. For example, our Solar\*Rewards tariff expressly states that the customer is responsible for the metering costs associated with the installation of their DG system:

## Minnesota Electric Rate Book, Section 9, Sheet No. 34.

Customer will pay a monthly metering charge under the Company tariff elected by the Customer, provided in Exhibit 2, and according to meter installation requirements in Section 5b. The monthly metering charge pays for the cost and installation of a bi-directional meter at the Service Address which measures electricity delivered by the Company to the Customer and energy received by the Company from the Customer, and the associated billing, operating and maintenance expenses.

We believe our June 6, 2016 Reply Comments provide sufficient detail to demonstrate that the Company's metering fees are reasonable based on the valid and incremental costs of providing the required metering service for customers voluntarily opting into this program. If interested parties wish to review our future QF metering charges,

there is an option to do so in conjunction with our annual cogeneration and small power production tariff filing early next year.

Finally, along with other parties, we express concern regarding the role of discovery in this inquiry. The Commission's Notice of October 13, 2015 stated that one purpose of the inquiry was to allow Staff to issue discovery:

On page 7 of its September 21, 2015 Order in that docket, the Commission directed Commission staff to "ask each investor-owned utility, cooperative, and municipal utility to indicate whether it applies a charge to net-metered or distributed-generation customers that is not applied to other customers, and if so, when it began assessing that charge and in which docket(s), if any, the charge was approved by the Commission." The Commission also authorized staff to request additional information as staff deems appropriate.

The December 23, 2015, Notice establishing the comment schedule in this docket re-stated the substance of the above quotation and also asked for comments based on the responses to the Commission's discovery requests. However, once the Energy Freedom Coalition of America (EFCA) submitted its discovery requests, the process became unclear. In particular, we are uncertain whether any interested party is entitled to submit discovery requests in this matter, and whether such discovery shall be limited or broad in scope. Nevertheless, after EFCA narrowed the scope of its discovery request, Xcel Energy then provided a response which we think was appropriate and went beyond the requirements in this docket.

In conclusion, we appreciate the Commission's interest in understanding the current metering fees applied to QF customers. We believe the record shows that the QF metering fees contained within our tariff sheets meet the legal and process approval requirements set by statute and relevant Commission Orders. We understand that some parties may wish to explore revisions to the current statutory and regulatory treatment of QF metering fees, and we are willing to participate in such a discussion if the Commission wishes to do so.

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 216.17, subd. 3, we have electronically filed this document, and served copies on all parties on the attached service list. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this filing at <a href="mailto:amy.s.fredregill@xcelenergy.com">amy.s.fredregill@xcelenergy.com</a>. or 612-215-5367.

Sincerely,

/s/

AMY S. FREDREGILL, MANAGER RESOURCE PLANNING AND STRATEGY

## **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, Carl Cronin, hereby certify that I have this day served copies of the foregoing document on the attached list of persons.

- <u>xx</u> by depositing a true and correct copy thereof, properly enveloped with postage paid in the United States mail at Minneapolis,
   Minnesota,
- <u>xx</u> electronic filing

Docket No. E999/CI-15-755

Dated this 17	<sup>7th</sup> day of (	October :	2016
/s/			
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Christopher	Schoenherr	cp.schoenherr@smmpa.or g	SMMPA	500 First Ave SW Rochester, MN 55902-3303	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Dean	Sedgwick	N/A	Itasca Power Company	PO Box 457  Bigfork, MN 56628-0457	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
David	Shaffer	DShaffer@MnSEIA.org	Minnesota Solar Energy Industries Project	2952 Beechwood Ave Wayzata, MN 55391	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Doug	Shoemaker	dougs@mnRenewables.or g	MRES	2928 5th Ave S Minneapolis, MN 55408	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Mrg	Simon	mrgsimon@mrenergy.com	Missouri River Energy Services	3724 W. Avera Drive P.O. Box 88920 Sioux Falls, SD 571098920	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Trevor	Smith	trevor.smith@avantenergy.	Avant Energy, Inc.	220 South Sixth Street Suite 1300 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Beth H.	Soholt	bsoholt@windonthewires.or g	Wind on the Wires	570 Asbury Street Suite 201 St. Paul, MN 55104	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Cary	Stephenson	cStephenson@otpco.com	Otter Tail Power Company	215 South Cascade Street  Fergus Falls, MN 56537	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Eric	Swanson	eswanson@winthrop.com	Winthrop Weinstine	225 S 6th St Ste 3500 Capella Tower Minneapolis, MN 554024629	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Thomas P.	Sweeney III	tom.sweeney@easycleane nergy.com	Clean Energy Collective	P O Box 1828  Boulder, CO 80306-1828	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Steve	Thompson	BADEMAIL- stevet@cmmpa.org	Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency	459 S Grove St Blue Earth, MN 56013-2629	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC

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Pat	Treseler	pat.jcplaw@comcast.net	Paulson Law Office LTD	4445 W 77th Street Suite 224 Edina, MN 55435	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Sam	Villella	sdvillella@gmail.com		10534 Alamo Street NE Blaine, MN 55449	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Roger	Warehime	warehimer@owatonnautiliti es.com	Owatonna Public Utilities	208 South WalnutPO Box 800 Owatonna, MN 55060	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Paul	White	paul.white@prcwind.com	Project Resources Corp./Tamarac Line LLC/Ridgewind	618 2nd Ave SE  Minneapolis, MN 55414	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Jason	Willett	jason.willett@metc.state.m n.us	Metropolitan Council	390 Robert St N Saint Paul, MN 55101-1805	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Randi	Winter	rwinter@felhaber.com	Felhaber Larson	Felhaber Larson 220 South Sixth Stree Suite 2200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Cam	Winton	cwinton@mnchamber.com	Minnesota Chamber of Commerce	400 Robert Street North Suite 1500 St. Paul, Minnesota 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Robyn	Woeste	robynwoeste@alliantenerg y.com	Interstate Power and Light Company	200 First St SE  Cedar Rapids, IA 52401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC
Daniel P	Wolf	dan.wolf@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	121 7th Place East Suite 350 St. Paul, MN 551012147	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Thomas J.	Zaremba	TZaremba@wheelerlaw.com	WHEELER, VAN SICKLE & ANDERSON	44 E. Mifflin Street, 10th Floor Madison, WI 53703	Electronic Service		OFF_SL_15-755_Official Service List _PUC