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GROWING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Access to high-speed broadband internet is a critical enabling condition for sustainable development of small businesses, attracting residents who utilize the internet for distance work, and attracting new industries that rely on high-speed internet. Broadband access is one part of a larger effort to build a stronger, more diverse, resilient and sustainable economy for the future across Minnesota.

THE PROBLEM

Access to high-speed broadband internet is this generation's opportunity to make a leap similar to rural electrification in the 1930s. High speed internet is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. Greater Minnesota needs access to the broader economy and opportunities to develop products and services that are value-added and retain profits in the community. Greater Minnesota's public health and economic stability can be improved by extending to it the best modern information infrastructure available.

According to the Governor's Task Force on Broadband, 20% of rural Minnesota households lack access to high-speed broadband. There are a number of success stories on which to build, in meeting the goal of universal access to high-speed internet for all Minnesota residents. Lake and Cook Counties are being wired with fiber-optic cable to the door of every residence and business.

The economic development facilitated by broadband internet access encourages high-wage, high skill jobs and value-added businesses. Small manufacturers, farmers, and entrepreneurs all benefit from connection to the information economy.

THE SOLUTION

It's time to increase statewide investment in the information infrastructure that will power the growing, sustainable economy of tomorrow. Seize the opportunity to fully fund broadband development and bring all of Minnesota into the 21st Century information economy.

► **Fund the Border to Border broadband initiative to make sure no community is left behind. This includes support for Governor Dayton's request of \$100 million in 2016 for the Broadband Development Grant Fund, for broadband infrastructure statewide.**

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GREAT PROGRESS, GREATER BENEFITS IN MINNESOTA'S CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

Progressive energy policies have made Minnesota a Midwest leader in building a clean energy economy, and demonstrated that cutting carbon pollution grows jobs, reduces waste, cleans our air, and generates economic opportunities for all Minnesotans.¹ Renewable energy and energy efficiency industries are growing at a faster rate than the rest of the economy in our state, employ more than 15,300 Minnesotans, and pay 43% more than the average Minnesota job.²

Minnesota's path to achieving a carbon-free economy is open, and the urgency and economic benefits are unmistakable.^{3,4} Late in 2015, Congress extended federal tax credits for wind and solar, credits that are expected to spur more than \$73 billion of investment in the U.S. through 2020 and continue Minnesota's clean energy growth.^{4,5} Minnesota's in-state clean energy production from wind increased from 1.8% in 2001 to 16% in 2014, representing a doubling, re-doubling, and doubling again in just 13 years.⁶ Minnesota's solar growth curve is steeper still. Having quadrupled between 2010 and 2014, the amount of Minnesota's installed solar power is projected to increase more than 18-fold between 2014 and December, 2016.^{5,7}

The importance of continuing our clean energy transition goes beyond delivering economic, health, and other direct benefits to Minnesotan citizens.⁸ By maintaining our policies and capitalizing on existing and emerging opportunities in how we generate, deliver, manage, and use electricity, Minnesota can meet its goal to cut carbon pollution 80% economy-wide by 2050, as directed in state law. In achieving our forward-looking carbon pollution reduction goals, Minnesota will carry its weight in the national and global efforts to build a better tomorrow.

¹ Camdus. *The Aggregate Economic Impact of the Conservation Improvement Program 2008-2013*. Prepared for the Minnesota Department of Commerce. October 2015. <http://mn.gov/commerce/industries/energy/efficiency/>

² Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. "Minnesota Clean Energy Economy Profile." October 2014. <http://mn.gov/deed/data/research/clean-energy.jsp>

³ Bloomberg Business. "Wind Power Now Cheaper Than Natural Gas for Xcel, CEO Says." October 23, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-10-23/wind-energy-cheaper-than-natural-gas-for-xcel-ceo-fowke-says>

⁴ Minnesota Power's Integrated Resource Plan. Filed September 1, 2015.

⁵ Midwest Energy News. "A year after launch, community solar picking up pace in Minnesota." December 11, 2015. <http://midwestenergynews.com/2015/12/11/a-year-after-launch-community-solar-picking-up-pace-in-minnesota/>

⁶ American Wind Energy Association State Wind Energy Statistics for Minnesota.

⁷ Fresh Energy estimate, based on proposed utility scale solar projects, Made in Minnesota and Solar Rewards incentive availability, and conservative estimate of community solar gardens that are likely to make it through interconnection by the end of 2016.

⁸ Op-ed in Star Tribune. "How tackling climate change will pay off." December 23, 2015. <http://www.startribune.com/how-tackling-climate-change-will-pay-off/363426141/>