

A bill for an act

relating to energy; modifying provisions relating to power transmission lines, renewable energy obligations, and related activities and costs; amending Minnesota Statutes 2006, sections 216B.16, subdivision 7b; 216B.1645, subdivisions 1, 2; 216B.243, subdivision 8, by adding a subdivision; Minnesota Statutes 2007 Supplement, section 216B.1645, subdivision 2a.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 216B.16, subdivision 7b, is amended to read:

Subd. 7b. **Transmission cost adjustment.** (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the commission may approve a tariff mechanism for the automatic annual adjustment of charges for the Minnesota jurisdictional costs of new transmission facilities that have been separately filed and reviewed and approved by the commission under section 216B.243 ~~or~~, are certified as a priority project or deemed to be a priority transmission project under section 216B.2425, or are charges from a regional transmission organization that are incurred by the utility for network integration transmission facilities owned by other transmission owners.

(b) Upon filing by a public utility or utilities providing transmission service, the commission may approve, reject, or modify, after notice and comment, a tariff that:

(1) allows the utility to recover on a timely basis the costs net of revenues of facilities approved under section 216B.243 or certified or deemed to be certified under section 216B.2425 or exempt from the requirements of section 216B.243;

(2) allows the utility to recover on a timely basis the charges from a regional transmission organization that are incurred by the utility for network integration transmission facilities owned by other transmission owners;

(3) allows a return on investment at the level approved in the utility's last general rate case, unless a different return is found to be consistent with the public interest;

~~(3)~~ (4) provides a current return on construction work in progress, provided that recovery from Minnesota retail customers for the allowance for funds used during construction is not sought through any other mechanism;

~~(4)~~ (5) allows for recovery of other expenses if shown to promote a least-cost project option or is otherwise in the public interest;

~~(5)~~ (6) allocates project costs appropriately between wholesale and retail customers;

~~(6)~~ (7) provides a mechanism for recovery above cost, if necessary to improve the overall economics of the project or projects or is otherwise in the public interest; and

~~(7)~~ (8) terminates recovery once costs have been fully recovered or have otherwise been reflected in the utility's general rates.

(c) A public utility may file annual rate adjustments to be applied to customer bills paid under the tariff approved in paragraph (b). In its filing, the public utility shall provide:

(1) a description of and context for the facilities included for recovery;

(2) a schedule for implementation of applicable projects;

(3) the utility's costs for these projects;

(4) a description of the utility's efforts to ensure the lowest costs to ratepayers for the project; and

(5) calculations to establish that the rate adjustment is consistent with the terms of the tariff established in paragraph (b).

(d) Upon receiving a filing for a rate adjustment pursuant to the tariff established in paragraph (b), the commission shall approve the annual rate adjustments provided that, after notice and comment, the costs included for recovery through the tariff were or are expected to be prudently incurred and achieve transmission system improvements at the lowest feasible and prudent cost to ratepayers.

Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 216B.1645, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1. **Commission authority.** Upon the petition of a public utility, the Public Utilities Commission shall approve or disapprove power purchase contracts, investments, or expenditures entered into or made by the utility to satisfy the wind and biomass mandates contained in sections 216B.169, 216B.2423, and 216B.2424, and to satisfy the renewable energy ~~objectives~~ obligations set forth in section 216B.1691, including reasonable investments and expenditures made to:

(1) transmit the electricity generated from sources developed under those sections that is ultimately used to provide service to the utility's retail customers, including

studies necessary to identify new transmission facilities needed to transmit electricity to Minnesota retail customers from generating facilities constructed to satisfy the renewable energy ~~objectives~~ obligations, provided that the costs of the studies have not been recovered previously under existing tariffs and the utility has filed an application for a certificate of need or for certification as a priority project under section 216B.2425 for the new transmission facilities identified in the studies;

(2) provide ancillary services to generation facilities that satisfy the renewable energy objectives and standards including, but not limited to, storage facilities for renewable energy that contribute to the reliability, efficiency, or economics of the renewable facilities; or

~~(2)~~ (3) develop renewable energy sources from the account required in section 116C.779.

Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 216B.1645, subdivision 2, is amended to read:

Subd. 2. **Cost recovery.** The expenses incurred by the utility over the duration of the approved contract or useful life of the investment and expenditures made pursuant to section 116C.779 shall be recoverable from the ratepayers of the utility, to the extent they are not offset by utility revenues attributable to the contracts, investments, or expenditures. Upon petition by a public utility, the commission shall approve or approve as modified a rate schedule providing for the automatic adjustment of charges to recover the expenses or costs approved by the commission under subdivision 1, which, in the case of transmission expenditures, are limited to the portion of actual transmission costs that are directly allocable to the need to transmit power from the renewable sources of energy. The commission may not approve recovery of the costs for that portion of the power generated from sources governed by this section that the utility sells into the wholesale market.

Sec. 4. Minnesota Statutes 2007 Supplement, section 216B.1645, subdivision 2a, is amended to read:

Subd. 2a. **Cost recovery for owned renewable facilities.** (a) A utility may petition the commission to approve a rate schedule that provides for the automatic adjustment of charges to recover prudently incurred investments, expenses, or costs associated with facilities constructed, owned, or operated by a utility to satisfy the requirements of section 216B.1691, provided those facilities were previously approved by the commission under section 216B.2422 ~~or~~ 216B.243, or 216B.243, subdivision 9. The commission may approve, or approve as modified, a rate schedule that:

(1) allows a utility to recover directly from customers on a timely basis the costs of qualifying renewable energy projects, including:

- (i) return on investment;
- (ii) depreciation;
- (iii) ongoing operation and maintenance costs;
- (iv) taxes; and
- (v) costs of transmission and other ancillary expenses directly allocable to

transmitting electricity generated from a project meeting the specifications of this paragraph;

(2) provides a current return on construction work in progress, provided that recovery of these costs from Minnesota ratepayers is not sought through any other mechanism;

(3) allows recovery of other expenses incurred that are directly related to a renewable energy project, including but not limited to expenses for energy storage, provided that the utility demonstrates to the commission's satisfaction that the expenses improve project economics, ensure project implementation, or facilitate coordination with the development of transmission necessary to transport energy produced by the project to market;

(4) allocates recoverable costs appropriately between wholesale and retail customers;

(5) terminates recovery when costs have been fully recovered or have otherwise been reflected in a utility's rates.

(b) A petition filed under this subdivision must include:

(1) a description of the facilities for which costs are to be recovered;

(2) an implementation schedule for the facilities;

(3) the utility's costs for the facilities;

(4) a description of the utility's efforts to ensure that costs of the facilities are reasonable and were prudently incurred; and

(5) a description of the benefits of the project in promoting the development of renewable energy in a manner consistent with this chapter.

Sec. 5. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 216B.243, subdivision 8, is amended to read:

Subd. 8. **Exemptions.** This section does not apply to:

(1) cogeneration or small power production facilities as defined in the Federal Power Act, United States Code, title 16, section 796, paragraph (17), subparagraph (A), and paragraph (18), subparagraph (A), and having a combined capacity at a single site of less than 80,000 kilowatts; plants or facilities for the production of ethanol or fuel alcohol; or any case where the commission has determined after being advised by the attorney general that its application has been preempted by federal law;

(2) a high-voltage transmission line proposed primarily to distribute electricity to serve the demand of a single customer at a single location, unless the applicant opts to request that the commission determine need under this section or section 216B.2425;

(3) the upgrade to a higher voltage of an existing transmission line that serves the demand of a single customer that primarily uses existing rights-of-way, unless the applicant opts to request that the commission determine need under this section or section 216B.2425;

(4) a high-voltage transmission line of one mile or less required to connect a new or upgraded substation to an existing, new, or upgraded high-voltage transmission line;

(5) conversion of the fuel source of an existing electric generating plant to using natural gas; or

(6) the modification of an existing electric generating plant to increase efficiency, as long as the capacity of the plant is not increased more than ten percent or more than 100 megawatts, whichever is greater; ~~or.~~

~~(7) a large energy facility that (i) generates electricity from wind energy conversion systems, (ii) will serve retail customers in Minnesota, (iii) is specifically intended to be used to meet the renewable energy objective under section 216B.1691 or addresses a resource need identified in a current commission-approved or commission-reviewed resource plan under section 216B.2422, and (iv) derives at least ten percent of the total nameplate capacity of the proposed project from one or more C-BED projects, as defined under section 216B.1612, subdivision 2, paragraph (f).~~

Sec. 6. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 216B.243, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 9. **Renewable energy standard facilities.** The requirements of this section do not apply to a generation facility that is intended to be used to meet or exceed the obligations of section 216B.1691; provided that, after notice and comment, the commission determines that the facility is a reasonable and prudent approach to meeting the utility's obligations under that section. When making this determination, the commission may consider the size of the facility relative to the utility's total need for renewable resources, alternative approaches for supplying the renewable energy to be supplied by the proposed facility, the facility's ability to promote rural economic development, maintain electric system reliability, maximize greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and minimize costs to consumers, and other criteria as the commission may determine are relevant.