

February 23, 2021

Representative Rick Hansen  
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources  
Finance and Policy Committee  
407 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for H.F. 1255

Dear Chair Hansen,

The Partnership on Waste and Energy (Partnership) is a Joint Powers Board consisting of Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties, formed to address waste management and energy issues. Emerald ash borer (EAB) is now identified in 26 Minnesota counties and continues to spread. Communities are removing and replacing ash trees as quickly as funding will allow to slow the spread of EAB. The challenge of properly managing the surge of waste wood created as we battle EAB is one of the urgent concerns of the Partnership.

H.F. 1255 provides for an extension of the power purchase agreement between Xcel Energy and St. Paul District Energy. We strongly support this bill and see it as necessary to help manage wood waste.

Counties are charged with the responsibility of managing solid waste. The volume of waste ash wood that is being generated is challenging our communities' capability to properly manage it. Where infestation occurs, local governments face a growing burden to remove and replace ash trees and properly manage the ever-increasing volume of wood waste that is resulting from the EAB infestation.

While the Partnership supports the multi-faceted response outlined in the EQB [2019 Emerald Ash Borer in Minnesota Report](#), we recognize that the steps that need to be taken are rolling out slowly or are on hold for want of resources. We urge the state to ramp up funding and prepare a collaborative statewide EAB plan, but in the meantime, we have to do something with the growing volumes of wood waste.

We can't landfill the wood waste. We can't open burn the wood waste. Our only practical outlet at this time is to provide wood as a fuel for the St. Paul District Energy facility. It is essential that the power purchase agreement between Xcel and St. Paul District Energy be extended. This will allow additional time to use waste wood responsibly.

We understand that the extension of the power purchase agreement between Xcel Energy and St. Paul District Energy is short-term. Nonetheless, we support this extension as an important tool as we work together to find additional approaches for responsibly managing waste wood.

Sincerely,

*Victoria A. Reinhardt*

Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County  
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy

Cc. Peter Strohmeier, Committee Administration  
Commissioner Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County  
Commissioner Fran Miron, Washington County