

February 17, 2021

Senator David Senjem
Chair, Senate Energy and Utilities Finance and Policy Committee
3401 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for S.F. 1047

Dear Chair Senjem:

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 they can to slow the spread of EAB. The challenge of disposing of the mountain of waste wood created as we battle EAB is one of the urgent concerns of the Partnership.

S.F. 1047 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 the responsible authority for managing solid waste. The volume of waste ash wood that is being generated is overwhelming our capability to properly dispose of 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.

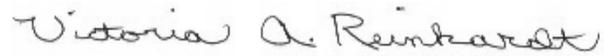
While the Partnership supports the multi-faceted response outlined in the EQB [2019 Emerald Ash Borer in Minnesota Report](#), we recognize that the steps that need to be taken are rolling out slowly or are on hold for want of resources. We urge the state to ramp up funding and prepare a collaborative 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 has been 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 outlet for our current best practices for managing waste wood.

We hope you will work with us to find additional approaches for managing ash wood waste. In the meantime, thank you for authoring this bill to extend the current power purchase agreement between Xcel Energy and St. Paul District Energy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Victoria A. Reinhardt".

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

cc: Darrin Lee, Committee Administrator
Commissioner Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County
Commissioner Fran Miron, Washington County