

# Minnesota's New Energy Generation

## The Youth Vision for a Sustainable Society

### Our Opportunity

**The youth of Minnesota** recognize the grave threat that global warming poses to our own common future. It will drastically impact ecological, economic, and social systems in unforeseeable ways, and failure to respond holds grim consequences for us all.

**Global warming** is overwhelmingly the result of human actions. Although our industrialized society emerged only a few generations ago, our use of carbon-intensive fuels has already begun to destabilize our earth. The further development of this fossil fuel economy is only quickening our pace towards an unstable future.

**Our choices** have led us down an unsustainable path, but we can choose a new future, one founded on energy efficiency, local economies, and clean and renewable energy sources. This future presents us with great challenges, but even greater opportunities. We can improve the land that we rely on and reap the benefits of a more stable and plentiful world.

**Justice is central** in our vision for a new energy future. A system in which communities are left behind as others advance towards a better future is inherently unsustainable. Our climate solutions will empower all people to live in sustainable prosperity.

**Minnesota can lead** the nation and the world by demonstrating the possibilities that a sustainable society can offer. We face many of the same challenges as other regions, but we possess an abundance of clean, renewable resources, and a coalition of communities that exude unrivaled people-power.

**We resolve** to undertake this fundamental challenge together. Minnesota farmers, labor leaders, businesses, nonprofits, fishers, urban citizens, church leaders, and representatives are all invested in creating a sustainable society in Minnesota that serves the needs of all people. By uniting these efforts, the new energy generation can build a just and prosperous future for all.

### Our Challenge

**Global warming** is already visibly affecting Minnesota. Our winters are warmer and our summers are drier and punctuated by floods. Wildlife habitats are diminishing, consequentially decreasing hunting, fishing, and camping opportunities for Minnesotans. These trends will continue and worsen if we do not challenge our society's practices.

**Our fossil fuel economy** is unsustainable and unjust. We currently rely on foreign oil and coal to power our society. The supplies of these one-time-use energy sources are dwindling, which drives up the prices of all market goods and hurts consumers. The dangerous extraction of fossil fuels harms human communities and wildlife habitats, while the trade of such fuels creates economic inequalities and undermines America's geopolitical position.

**The suburbanization** of Minnesota's cities requires excessive amounts of land and energy and intensifies socioeconomic divides. Without strong community centers and local economies in

suburbs, many are forced to commute to urban centers for work and entertainment, which worsens road congestion and air pollution, reduces the productivity of workers, and increases road-maintenance expenses.

**Farm industrialization** threatens the health of our land by encouraging farming practices that erode our soils and dramatically increase air, water, and carbon pollution. Rising energy prices and our focus on producing energy-intensive corn for ethanol is causing a rapid rise in food prices. Small family farmers have little ability to compete with large agribusinesses, and many rural families have slowly lost their ability to make a living from their land.

**We cannot sustain** our system in its current form, which presents us with a unique challenge: to build a new energy future that is structured around renewable energy, smart design, and efficient, clean production.

## Our Ideals

**Another future is possible.** We can take actions and enact policies that will build a clean and just energy future. The people of Minnesota are capable and prepared to institute this future.

**Minnesota's natural resources**, such as its fertile soils, abundant waters, strong winds and sunny skies hold great potential to fulfill our needs and those of future generations, if we use them wisely. Our use of these resources now must not inhibit their future use.

**The solutions** to global warming that we institute must neither be temporary nor false. All alternatives to our system must be truly renewable, clean and cost-effective.

**A shift** to a new energy future will not be quick or simple, but the action that we take now will unleash possibilities that far surpass what currently seems possible.

**Our framework** will treat economics, social justice, and ecological sustainability as indivisible, and we will always build upon one system as an enhancement to the whole.

**With every step**, we will act in alignment with the ideals that we hold.

## Our Actions

**Minnesotans can create** this sustainable and just future if we join together and take the following actions. These are not our requests for businesses, taxpayers, or the government, but rather opportunities that we see for collaboration that will benefit all. The youth of Minnesota are prepared to work with any and all other entities to make these proposed actions a reality.

**We will implement ambitious carbon reduction policies** that prioritize the development of clean and renewable technologies, promote energy-efficiency, and set high and achievable targets for emission reductions. In order to enact these policies in a way that will benefit our economy and our environment, the following steps must be taken:

- **A regional cap and trade system** must be established and implemented immediately to fulfill the Midwest Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord. Minnesota can take a leadership role in the process of creating a regional model and passing it through Minnesota legislature. This system should utilize market forces to make emission reductions more economically feasible for all.

- **Carbon credits** must be auctioned to ensure transparency and fair competition, with proceeds financing a state sustainability fund that would support clean energy development, energy-efficiency initiatives, mass transit expansion and urban and rural restructuring projects.
- **A state carbon oversight agency** must be formed to implement Minnesota's carbon reduction plan. The agency would be encourage balanced growth and investment, ensure energy diversity and system reliability, protect workers and the environment, reward consumers for their carbon reductions, and establish a fair framework for emerging technologies.
- **Renewable energy development** must be prioritized and adequately funded so that Minnesota may meet and exceed its groundbreaking Renewable Energy Standard of 25% renewable energy by 2025.
- **Our emissions targets** must shift as more advanced scientific analyses of global warming emerge to accurately reflect what we, as a society, must strive to achieve. However, our current goal of 80% carbon emission reductions by 2050 is a great first step towards a cleaner future.

**We will build a clean energy economy** that lifts people out of poverty and creates opportunities for all Minnesotans through a sustainable and just future. A movement to re-industrialize and create thousands of environmentally-constructive jobs will bring immediate benefits to workers, communities, and society at large. Our policies and programs must make stable, family-wage, green collar jobs available to workers with all ranges of education and skills, which we can accomplish with these initiatives:

- **Sustainable biofuels** present a win-win situation for Minnesota's farmers, consumers, and environment, and the Clean Energy Minnesota platform and the Reinvest in Minnesota program must be supported and adequately funded. The use of perennial grasses rather than corn or soybeans in biofuel production minimizes the need for expensive fossil fuel inputs.
- **Incentives for sustainable farming practices**, such as the use of buffer crops, drip irrigation, integrated pest management, and organic farming techniques must be provided in order to sustain our land's productive capacity and build local food economies.
- **The Midwest ISO** must be reformed in order to adequately support the scale of renewable energy we can produce. Both urban and rural economies can be reinvigorated by the expansion of wind energy production, but our electricity grid cannot currently distribute wind energy efficiently across the state.
- **New and existing factories** must be tooled to create clean energy technologies such as wind turbines and serve as strong centerpieces for local communities. We can draw in manufacturers by providing tax breaks for green industries and by supporting upgrades to existing industries.
- **A green collar workforce** can build the infrastructure for a renewable energy future and create opportunities for many people. We encourage the Minnesota State Government to join the Apollo Alliance and train a new generation of workers.
- **Minnesota Clean Energy Municipal Tax-Exempt Bonds** should be authorized and issued to finance carbon-reduction building projects including renewable energy development and purchases, energy-efficiency projects, and metropolitan light rail systems.

**We will invest wisely** to generate a clean energy future. We must stop worsening global warming by wasting money on antiquated and harmful technologies; instead, we must prioritize solutions that will end climate change and build strong and sustainable economies. We can avoid common and dangerous pitfalls by taking these actions:

- **A moratorium on all new coal-fired power plants** must be implemented by the Minnesota State Government. It is vital to the success of Minnesota's RES and carbon reduction targets that we do not permit the construction of the Bigstone II or Mesaba coal plants and further invest in expensive and dirty energy sources. We cannot reasonably allow the development of

these power plants to occur, as it will effectively eliminate all other gains that we have made towards creating a sustainable society.

- **Unsustainable and unproven technologies**, such as Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS), must not be used to allow for the expansion of fossil fuels. CCS is prohibitively expensive, and very few of our nation's existing or proposed coal plants are equipped to use it.
- **Nuclear energy** is an unsafe, unsustainable, and unwise investment. It is not cost effective without prohibitive subsidies, has a long construction time frame, and sparks several public health concerns and national security issues.
- **Subsidies for corn ethanol** must be redistributed towards more sustainable biofuel research and production. Corn-based ethanol is not fuel efficient, economically viable, or environmentally sound.
- **Dirty energy sources** must be decommissioned as we replace our baseload power source with renewable energy. A statewide decommissioning plan must be written to ensure our eventual independence from fossil fuels.
- **Carbon offsets** are not a real solution to global warming. We must base our efforts on carbon reductions and long-term planning rather than short-term fixes.

**We will rebuild Minnesota's infrastructure** to meet the needs of a new energy economy. Our urban and rural roads, bridges, and water systems can be upgraded to support sustainable, multi-purpose use, and we can implement the technology that will enable us to live and thrive on renewable energy. These changes can grow from our collaboration on the following items:

- **All new buildings** must be required to meet strict energy-efficiency codes, such as the Minnesota GreenStar certification. Sustainable building methods will prevent future energy waste.
- **Existing buildings** must be retrofitted to reduce carbon emissions and lessen energy costs for homeowners and businesses. We must support citizen initiatives to implement community-based energy-efficiency projects and independent revolving funds to meet the Next Generation Plan, which requires energy suppliers to increase efficiency by 1.5% each year.
- **Our transportation infrastructure** must be updated to include more productive multi-transit networks including bicycle routes, local bus and light rail systems and regional high-speed rail to reduce carbon output, decrease road congestion, and improve job access for all people.
- **Cities** must create concrete, collaborative plans to redesign urban areas. Local governments, businesses and citizens can strengthen communities and encourage sustainable lifestyles by smartly planning urban and suburban growth.
- **Clean car legislation** proposed by Clean Energy Minnesota, which will reduce carbon emissions from cars and light trucks by 30 percent by 2018, should be adopted and enacted into law by the Minnesota Legislature.

## Our Vision

**We can solve global warming.** We have everything we need: the resources, the ideas, and the people. Together, we can and will build a sustainable Minnesota and be a role model for the world.

**This is our shared vision.** We represent all Minnesotans who want a healthy economy, empowered communities, and a just and sustainable society, and we are willing to work together to make our vision a reality.

**We are the new energy generation.** Our ideals are inseparable from our actions. We see the opportunities and accept the challenges. We choose this vision as our new future.