

Minnesota Senate



Minnesota House of Representatives

October 30, 2017

Chairman Rhonda K. Schmidlein
Vice Chairman David S. Johanson
Commissioner Irving A. Williamson
Commissioner Meredith M. Broadbent
U.S. International Trade Commission
500 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C.

RE: Crystalline Silicon Photovoltaic Cells, Whether or Not Partially or Fully Assembled Into Other Products, TA-201-75

Dear Chairman Schmidlein, Vice Chairman Johanson, and Commissioners Williamson and Broadbent:

We are writing as a bipartisan group of Minnesota leaders – members of the State Legislature, the Administration, and local government – to renew our opposition to the imposition of any extraordinary trade measures on imports of solar cells and solar modules from Canada. As we explained to the Commission in July, imposing safeguards measures against our Canadian partners would cause direct and immediate harm to Minnesota workers.

Our constituents have benefitted significantly from the contributions by the Canadian solar industry to the U.S. economy and workforce. Accordingly, we appreciated and were heartened by the Commission's negative injury determination with respect to Canada rendered on September 22. We now ask the Commission to follow through on this negative injury finding and, following its past precedent, recommend to the President that imports of solar cells and solar from Canada be excluded from any safeguards measures.

As Minnesota Senators Paul Gazelka and David Tomassoni testified at the Commission's injury hearing in August, the economies of Minnesota and Canada are closely intertwined and have enjoyed a long history of mutual cooperation and investment. Such cooperation and investment continues to play a critical role in the Minnesota economy. We invest in Canada, and Canada invests in us.

Indeed, as we wrote in July, the investment by Canadian solar module producer Heliene Inc. in the Mt. Iron solar panel plant saved U.S. manufacturing jobs that otherwise would have been lost with the departure of the plant's previous operator, Silicon Energy. Minnesota's Iron Range has historically relied on the iron ore mining and logging industries, but the region now faces an urgent need for new investment and economic diversification. Not only has manufacturing moved away from the Iron Range in recent years, but the region's robust mining industry has been undercut by cheap imports of metals from abroad. There is no question that Heliene's arrival from Canada saved manufacturing positions that otherwise would have been lost in the Iron Range, created new jobs, and even managed to double production.

These benefits extend well past just the Iron Range. There are over 2,800 solar jobs in Minnesota, and solar installation jobs account for more than one in three of these positions. Minnesota continues to expand its residential, utility-scale, and commercial solar installations—installation jobs increased 224% last year alone.

Heliene's commitment to the people of Minnesota has expanded since we last wrote to the Commission. Originally, Heliene planned on a 100 MW per year factory that would manufacture solar photovoltaic system modules and add 75 additional jobs over the course of six months. *Heliene today envisions adding another 90 jobs to its Mt. Iron plant.*

Having seen first-hand the Minnesotan work ethic and dedication to excellence, Heliene hopes to invest in and develop a solar cell factory of 200 MW per year—this would double the size of the Mt. Iron plant and involve high-value, "clean tech" manufacturing. This renewed and enhanced commitment to Minnesota would present exciting opportunities for our workers, and specifically for the Minnesota solar industry and its supporters.

As we previously explained, imposing safeguards measures against our Canadian friends would put an end to the promise of a healthy and growing solar industry in Minnesota. Workers across the industry, from factory assemblers to residential installers, would suffer. The Mt. Iron plant, in particular, manufactures solar panels that contain components of Canadian origin. More generally, cooperation and investment between Canadian and U.S. firms in technologically advanced industries like clean energy require the ability to move components (such as solar cells and modules) across borders.

We are deeply grateful that the Commission is working hard to protect American workers. But, we reiterate that safeguard remedies on Canadian would be a blunt measure that would ultimately do more harm than good.

As a bipartisan group of representatives holding diverse political views, we thank the Commission for its vigilance and dedication to supporting industry and manufacturing in the United States and for its thoughtful consideration of a sector that is important to Minnesota. We are grateful that the Commission has taken our views into account, and that it correctly concluded that our Canadian solar manufacturing partners are not injuring the U.S. industry. We now urge the Commission to see that no additional barriers to Canadian solar panel cooperation arise as a result of the investigation.

Please let us know if we can do anything further to support the Commission in this important matter. On behalf of our Minnesotan constituents, thank you again for your attention to our views.

Yours sincerely,



Senator Paul Gazelka
Majority Leader, Minnesota Senate



Senator Tom Bakk
Minority Leader, Minnesota Senate



Senator David Tomassoni



Senator Carrie Ruud



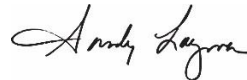
Senator Justin Eichorn



Representative Jason Metsa



Representative Dale Lueck



Representative Sandy Layman



Representative Rob Ecklund



Steve Giorgi, Executive Director
Range Assoc. of Municipalities and Schools



Commissioner Mark Phillips
Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation

Senator Paul Gazelka, Majority Leader of the Minnesota Senate
95 University Ave W., Suite 3113, St Paul, MN 55155 – 651.296.4875