



Peace Energy Renewable Energy Cooperative
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Watt's Happening

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 2021

President's Message: *we're on the right side of history!*

It is my great pleasure to reach out to the members of Peace Energy Cooperative as the current president to give you an update on the happenings of our board and staff. Welcome to the autumn of 2021!

We have been in the midst of a 1000-member drive and have happily crossed the 600-member milestone! Welcome to all of our new members and hello and welcome back to all our long-invested supporters!

We hope to see you in our new online communities and our *Save With Solar* webinars. Please, continue to follow Peace Energy – A Renewable Energy Cooperative on social media and share our online offerings with your friends.

Our endeavour to grow our membership has led to a series of exciting media projects. Please, check out our YouTube video series *“Voices of Peace Energy”*. These feature compelling and diverse messages from members advocating belonging to our cooperative and their move to solar. We have a commissioned art series to highlight and express the aims of our cooperative. We have been working very hard to freshen our website and now have functions that make purchasing memberships and enrolling in our regular webinars quick and easy.

We continue to reach out to potential

solar customers and continue to be known for our world-class, reliable, and custom-designed systems. Most importantly, intensive time and focus have been dedicated to the development of a potential investment-worthy business opportunity with our proposed Alberta Community Energy Project (ACEP) a utility-scale solar farm for our members. See the update later in this newsletter.

SUMMER STUDENT IN PEACE RIVER

This summer, we welcomed student Ammon in the Peace River office. We thank him for his summer's work with us and wish him well in his studies as he goes back to school this fall.

We are happy to say that our Dawson Creek office continues to consist of the amazing team of Don Pettit Executive Director, Tammy Lawrence Office Administrator and Greg Dueck Solar Consultant. The hard-work and energy of the Dawson Creek team is exceptional!

GLOBAL HEATING TAKES HOLD

This summer has featured significant heat waves, droughts, floods, and fires near homes and points all around the globe. Connections between our actions and outcomes has never been more apparent through these global

warming events.

One of the beautiful, enduring qualities of belonging to Peace Energy Cooperative all these years for me has been finding and then executing doable actions. When it seems that governments and billionaires use broken compasses, there is something someone like me, and you, can do.

ONE THING PEOPLE CAN DO IS JOIN THE COOPERATIVE!

For a \$200 lifetime membership share, anyone can be part of our for-profit cooperative that prides itself on quality solutions, education, and direct action in the critical transition to renewable energy. *And a membership in Peace Energy Co-op makes a great gift!*

Here's the thing for me: I am going to be around enjoying life for a long time, hopefully. But I do know that one day that will change and I will take comfort in having been part of something meaningful to me, my children and their children too. Our artwork, videos and our state-of-the-art wind and solar installations will stand up to the critical lens of time and will be on the right side of history. I am happy, as are many in our membership, to be able to take comfort and pride in this.



Like us on Facebook and please share this newsletter.

Sincerely,
Joanne Dueck, President



Virtual AGM: Saturday Sept. 25, 10:00 am PST

Electronic voting: *a first!*

As we continue to grow and change with the times, your PEC team is preparing for the 2021 virtual Annual General Meeting to be held on Saturday, September 25th.

This year we are trying out something many other Credit Unions and cooperatives are now using: voting for new directors held on-line before the AGM. This greatly simplifies the actual AGM meeting, and allows the membership to welcome our new directors at the AGM since we will all know who they are!

There are two incumbents who plan to seek re-election: Joanne Dueck (Dawson Creek) and William Lindsay (Hudson's Hope). Both seats are 3-year terms.

- **Nominations for these positions closed on August 25th. Voting will begin September 1, 12:00 noon PDT and close September 10, 12:00 noon PDT.**
- **Voting will be done electronically 24 hours per day during the voting period.**
- **As a member you will have received full instructions on how to vote electronically (it's really easy) but if you have questions or issues just call Tammy at 250-782-3882 or email admin@peaceenergy.ca.**
- **Every member is eligible for a single vote (1 member =**

member+joint member)

- **To be qualified to vote, each member must have their own email address *to ensure equality of votes*.**
- **If the first-named member is unable to vote, then the vote can be give by the second named person (the joint member). A ten-day advanced notice providing the joint member's email address must be provided to Peace Energy Co-op so the voting system has time to be updated.**

You will also receive soon, if you have not already, the 2021 AGM Agenda and Financial Statement, plus info on how to attend the Virtual AGM on September 25 at 10:00 am PST. Because voting will already be complete, the AGM meeting should be short and to the point. Executive Director Don Pettit will present a "Year In Review" Powerpoint that will, with photos and words, give you a good sense of our efforts, challenges and accomplishments over the last year, as well as new directions.

Please attend if at all possible, and bring any questions, concerns or suggestions to the meeting. We very much welcome your input!

Directors do what?

During this era of the world's clean energy transition, it's exciting to be a director of a renewable energy cooperative that is actually doing something concrete to address the climate crisis. But what exactly does a director do?

Directors serve on a volunteer basis for a 3-year term. (Actually, each director is "paid" with a portion of a share in the Cooperative for attending each meeting.) Directors can serve for two consecutive terms but then must step down for a term before putting their name forward for re-election. That means the terms for some Directors expire and a new member must step forward to take their place and stand for election. Also, some

directors step down out of necessity, other commitments, etc., so there are sometimes vacancies that need to be filled through board appointments between AGM elections.

As a Director, you help make financial decisions and set overall goals and directions for the Cooperative. Some Directors take on research projects or other helpful activities that they are interested in, but the actual time commitment required is small: just one evening meeting per month, plus perhaps another hour or two per month to review material sent to you from time to time. Attendance is now via Zoom which actually opens up directorship to any member from anywhere in Canada! Pretty cool.



Commissioned artwork by Richard Bell, Fort St. John, BC

Peace River office to be closed

MOTION TO THE BOARD from Director Wanda Laurin: I would like to move that we close the Peace River office as of September 30, 2021.

Why? With the unfortunate loss of employee Jenn Ford due to health reasons and the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, the PEC Peace River (PR) office has cost us much more than it has brought in. We have managed to keep the office open part time with volunteers, and most recently our summer student employee Ammon, but they all report almost no traffic at the office over the last year and a half and very few inquiries.

MORE COST THAN BENEFIT

During the last year and a half (April/20 to Aug/21) the PR office has cost us approximately \$30,000 for rent, wages and other expenses. During that same time our membership income has been just \$4800, showing a loss of about \$25,000. There were some PR area solar sales over that time of course, but none of them came directly through the PR office and were instead inspired by our *Save With Solar* webinars, social media and word of mouth.

Wanda and the Dawson Creek office staff feel that to turn this around we would have to hire a full-time employee

who could bring the office to life with extended effort and community outreach. But the expense of finding, hiring and training this ideal person is presently beyond our financial and time resources, and *as it now looks we may not need an office there at all!*

ORIGINAL PURPOSE

You will remember that the purpose of the PR office was to build PEC membership and enthusiasm for ACEP, while developing our solar market there. We feel that other, much less expensive options can now carry these goals forward without the office and the paid personnel needed to run it.

Our plan to develop the Peace River area solar and membership market into the future is to host live open house-style events and presentations regarding PEC and ACEP, assuming Covid restrictions ease over time, plus use other low cost advertising methods (such as our on-going *Save With Solar* webinars and our social media postings) to keep our presence there alive, but run these efforts from the Dawson Creek office. We see this approach as a significant cost and time savings without the need for an expensive office and personnel to run it. We have the kind permission from the building owner to end our lease two

months early on Sept. 30/21. Thanks to our new telephone system, calls will be automatically routed to the Dawson Creek office. Almost all of the office furniture was borrowed and will be returned/sold or stored with little effort and no expense.

LETS BUILD ON WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED THERE

This plan is based on the fact that we have already established ourselves in the PR area to a significant degree, with dozens of new members and several prominent solar sales in the area.

“We need only continue to build on what we have already accomplished there,” explains Director Wanda Laurin. “At this time, an office in Peace River is an unnecessary expense.”

Wanda is a long time resident of the Town of Peace River and has been our volunteer ambassador there for a number of years. She has been closely in touch with our PR office and devoted many volunteer hours to help it along. Wanda’s motion was passed unanimously by the Board of Directors in late August.



Around the world, solar farms are successfully being combined with agriculture. The rapidly growing field of “agrivoltaics” uses solar farms for grazing, bee keeping, as well as growing shade-loving crops under the solar arrays.

ACEP solar farm update: *slow progress amid setbacks*

Wholly owning a Peace Energy Co-op solar farm, funded by our members and providing long-term income to the Co-op and our member/investors has been a dream and goal of your Co-op board for several years. **It is exciting to see the proposed Alberta Community Energy Project moving forward:**

- We have a good long-term land lease at an excellent location 2.5 km south west of the Town of Peace River, Alberta;
- The environmental assessment of this land is on-going and should be complete by the end of this year;
- We continue to work with Solas Engineering Consultants based in Calgary, Alberta who have provided financial modeling support for ACEP. We expect to continue to use Solas to assist us in many ways, such as finding industrial/commercial off-takers for the solar power ACEP will produce and/or the environmental attributes it will create such as carbon credits;
- We are actively designing a larger version of ACEP (4 MW as well as the original 2 MW) to investigate the economies of scale this would bring;
- Once the 4 MW design is complete, we will be contracting ATCO to begin the Phase One grid interconnect study. This study will tell us approximately what it will cost to connect to the local grid, one of the larger missing pieces of our ACEP financial plan;
- *We have received \$20,000 in much appreciated grant funding from the Co-operators Co-operative Development Program (Saskatchewan) towards ACEP studies;*
- *We have gratefully received a \$2400 donation from the Coalition for Nuclear Free Alberta.*

- *We have received a generous loan from our first “Angel Investor,” a long-time PEC member. This loan was given as support to PEC with no direct financial benefit to the investor. Thank you Angel Investor!*

... but we have also had some significant setbacks and challenges:

- Covid-19 Pandemic. There is no doubt that the pandemic has had a negative financial effect on your Cooperative, increasing costs while reducing income. To help, we have applied for and received financial assistance from the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy, and the Canada Emergency Business Account all of which have helped us through these difficult times. But the pandemic has reduced our ability to spend money on necessary ACEP studies and consultants, slowing progress;
- In June 2021 the Alberta Utilities Commission discontinued the distribution-connected generation (DCG) credit. Cancelling this income stream has a significant impact on ACEP’s business plan. This was an unexpected blow and has caused us to re-work our business plan and look at both larger and smaller cooperatively-owned solar projects, as well as other revenue streams from these projects.

In spite of these setbacks and difficulties, our vision is strong and continues to attract positive attention from across western Canada and positive support from our members. “Angel Investors” tell us in no uncertain terms that our members have confidence in our efforts and share our vision for a clean energy future, owned by and benefitting local communities.



PEC commissioned artwork by Richard Bell, Fort St. John, BC





Christian Eschenburg stands in front of his new 7 kW grid-tied array on his rural property near Hudson's Hope, BC.



We will soon be installing a 7.7 kW grid-tied roof-mount array for Christine Southerland in Fort St. John, BC. Christine will also be running her two electric bicycles from her array, and will be charging her new Chevy Bolt EV through a Grizzly Level 2 EV charger which we are also supplying and installing. Congratulations Christine for taking big steps towards an all-electric, zero emission solar powered lifestyle!



Left: We have just completed a shop-mounted 6.4 kW grid-tied array for Brian Hohner near Manning, Alberta. Going solar is another step in Brian's long-term effort to achieve a more sustainable lifestyle.



Stan Eason near Charlie Lake, BC now is the proud owner of a 7.9 kW grid-tied array mounted on his shop/garage.



We have just designed and supplied an off-grid 2.9 kW solar upgrade for the off-grid system at the Pat O'Reilly Outdoor Environmental Study Centre at Gwillim Lake, BC.