

# Watt's Happening? #266

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## GOOD NEWS for the holiday season



*Wind and solar are by far the fastest growing energy sources world wide. Finally, BC is about to join the move to a much cleaner energy world.*

Left: the silver blades of Bear Mtn. Wind Park, two of the 34 3MW turbines. Right: Peace Energy Co-op installing solar on the author's roof.

**Y**ES oh valued readers, it's time for some good news, and nothing but good news! (well, more or less...)

### BC APPROVES BIG WIND

Finally. More wind power for the Peace Region, more wind power for the province!

Yes, nine large wind projects have just been approved, totaling 1531 megawatts (MW)! 400 MW are in the Peace Region, the rest scattered across Vancouver Island, the south and central interior and the north coast.

That's enough to power 430,000 homes and will boost BC's energy supply by 8%. That's a lot! That's \$6 billion in private capital investment with \$3 billion under First Nations ownership. That's 2000 jobs annually during the construction period that starts now and will reach full production capacity in 6 years, maybe less.

### NOTHING IS PERFECT

The one point of some concern is the waiving of environmental assessments so these projects can go directly to permitting.

Questionable, but the province is in a hurry, trying to meet their rapidly growing electrical demand as we move to electric transportation and phase out gas for heating and cooking. And there won't be much help from Site C's 1100 MWs, which is earmarked to help green up the province's extremely carbon intensive LNG project. Hopefully this new power won't go there too!

### A GOOD START

The province now has about 500 MW of wind operating, all in the Peace Region, so another 400 MW is welcome (Bear Mountain Wind Park was the first at 102 MW). We've known for over 20 years that the Peace has around 10,000 MW of wind easily

developed, so this picks up where the province left off about 15 years ago.

BC says the average price for power from these projects is about 40% lower than BC Hydro's last call for clean power, which makes sense, as the cost of wind (like solar) has continued to come down as efficiency and mass production have continued to go up.

### **FIRST NATIONS WIND ENERGY!**

The high degree of First Nations equity ownership (on average over 50%) is brilliant and oh so necessary, showing a real commitment to reconciliation and opportunities for long-term revenue.

West Moberly First Nations and Saulteau First Nations are high-level partners in the 400 MW of wind to be installed in the BC Peace Region. Congratulations and well done!

### **SOLAR REBATES TOO!**

If you live in BC, generating your own solar power to reduce your electrical bills just got easier thanks to new BC Hydro solar rebates. More good news!

For home solar you can get up to \$5000 for a solar power system and up to another \$5000 for batteries if you want some energy storage. (Battery storage is NOT necessary for grid-tied solar).

For businesses and multi-family buildings, up to \$25,000 for solar panels and another \$25,000 for battery storage systems, and for social housing, Indigenous communities and remote micro grid communities up to \$150,000 for panels and storage. Not bad!

### **SOLAR GRID TIE WORKS**

The BC Hydro self-generation program (it used to

be called "net metering") is designed for folks who want to reduce their electricity bills and gain energy independence by generating their own electricity. You stay connected to the grid, so grid power is there if you need it.

Right now there are more than 8,900 BC Hydro customers on the self-generation program, most of them using solar. Some add battery storage to store excess energy for their own use or as backup during a power outage.

With BC Hydro now promising a "call for clean power" every two years or so, we can expect to see more, larger solar projects come on-line soon, and with these rebate incentives a surge in small solar too.

### **THE PLANET IS 40% ZERO CARBON**

A Bloomberg NEF 2023 energy analysis saw 40% of the world's electricity coming from zero-carbon sources. This includes hydro and nuclear (yuk!), both of which are growing world wide very slowly if at all, but includes 14% from solar and wind which are growing very, very rapidly.

This 14% milestone is set to be exceeded yearly, as nearly 91% of added global net power capacity is now from solar and wind (they are the cheapest and cleanest energies ever!), while fossil fuels now contribute only six percent of power production growth – the lowest level on record.

So there's my good Christmas news from the world of clean energy. From all of us at Peace Energy Cooperative, we hope that you will find peace, comfort and love during this holiday season. Merry Christmas and a happy **Renewable Year!**

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