

## Additional Funding for Solar PV Projects

The purpose of the request at April 10th council committee meeting was to seek Council's approval of additional funding for the solar PV installations at the North Shore Recreation Centre and the Central Colchester Wastewater Treatment Facility.

In August 2020, Council passed a motion in support of the Municipality applying to the Climate Change Mitigation stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) for Solar Energy for Municipal Buildings. Staff applied to ICIP for funding to put solar PV at four locations: the Tatamagouche Library, the Central Colchester Wastewater Treatment Facility (CCWWTF), the West Colchester United Arena in Debert (WCUA), and the North Shore Recreational Centre in

Tatamagouche (NSRC).

In October 2021, Council passed a motion confirming the Municipality's commitment to financing its share of the project cost for four municipal solar projects pending a successful application to the ICIP program. Council approved \$533,733 for eligible capital expenses, plus \$5,000 for legal fees and \$20,000 in staff time, which are ineligible for ICIP funding.

In March 2023, the Municipality of Colchester was awarded up to \$1,460,596 for this project from the ICIP program, equivalent to 73.33% of the projected cost.

In Fall 2023, after the design & build contract was awarded for the project, construction began on the roof-mounted solar system at the Tatamagouche Library and was

completed by early 2024. Construction for the 500kW solar farm at the CCWWTF began in Fall 2024 and finished in March 2025. The installation of solar PV at the two arenas is scheduled to be completed by Fall 2025.

Staff were seeking Council's approval for an additional \$148,836 for the ICIP Solar Energy for municipal Buildings project, for the following purposes: In September 2024, a necessary change order for the CCWWTF project valued at \$36,519 pushed the total project cost over budget by \$23,209.

Council Committee recommended Council approve \$148,836 in the 2025/26 capital budget to bring the CCWWTF project under budget and cover the cost of a ground-mounted solar installation at the North Shore Recreation Centre.

## Ontario, P.E.I. Join Nova Scotia to Remove Barriers

*Continued from page 1* new legislation, they have effectively removed barriers through a combination of steps, including amendments to existing legislation, ministerial notes and other correspondence.

Nova Scotia is hopeful this has been achieved and will work with each to assess whether the sum total of these steps do, in fact, effectively and permanently remove all barriers.

Nova Scotia's Free Trade and Labour Mobility within Canada Act specifically addresses: goods manufactured, produced or approved for use in a reciprocating province or territory, which will be treated the same as those produced in Nova Scotia; this will eliminate additional fees or testing requirements for goods from these provinces and territories; service providers and licensees



properly certified or licensed in a reciprocating province, who will be recognized as if they are licensed in Nova Scotia if they are in good standing with no outstanding complaints in a reciprocating jurisdiction; must register with the equivalent Nova Scotia regulator and obtain licensing or certification or insurance and this ensures that businesses providing services can operate across provincial borders without the burden of additional licensing or certification.

More than \$530 billion worth of goods and services move across provincial and territorial borders every year - equal to 20 per cent of Canada's gross domestic product - inter-

provincial exports contribute about 17 per cent of Nova Scotia's gross domestic product and make up about half of Nova Scotia's total exports (about 48 per cent of all goods and services); in 2023, the value of Nova Scotia's interprovincial exports was nearly \$29 billion.

Ontario is the largest market for Nova Scotia's goods and services in Canada.

In Canada, Prince Edward Island is Nova Scotia's largest market on a per capita basis, followed by New Brunswick. Last year, one-third of Canadian businesses participated in internal trade by buying or selling goods across provincial or territorial borders.

## Thriving Together

By Elizabeth Peirce

**Creating energy independence in Nova Scotia communities.**

Could paying your power bill help build a new recreation centre, fund a seniors' program, or get a road paved in your town?

It could if you lived in Antigonish, Mahone Bay, or Berwick, Nova Scotia; three towns with co-ownership of Alternative Resource Energy Authority (AREA), a municipally owned renewable energy corporation that powers homes, businesses, and community optimism.

The AREA story began in 2014 when the three communities joined forces to develop the 10-turbine Ellerhouse Wind Farm, which would supply 40 per cent of their electricity needs. Under Nova Scotian law, the municipal electric utilities owned by each town were not allowed to set up an independent power utility within Nova Scotia Power's jurisdiction. To work around this roadblock, "they created a municipal corporation that wasn't a utility but that was a power generator that could then sell the power to the municipalities," explains Meg Hodges, manager of Partnerships and Community Engagement with AREA.

"Instead of our town residents paying their power bill to Nova Scotia Power, they pay their power bill to the town, much like you would pay your water bill," she says.

Since municipalities have few options to create capital other than through taxation, the AREA model allows them to allocate funds for community projects via municipal electricity charges. As a result of this model, money stays in local communities rather than ending up in the pockets of shareholders.

Hodges first became involved with AREA in 2019, when funding became available for community solar energy production. A councillor for the municipality of Kings at that time, since 2023, she has been working full time with the company. In the past five years, large-scale photovoltaic (solar cell) projects have been constructed in the three founding communities, on land considered unsuitable for other developments.

"In Berwick, we have a solar garden on a fairly swampy piece of farmland that was unproductive for agriculture; there's about 5 megawatts of solar there," Hodges says. "In Antigonish, there's about 1.8 MW of solar on a partially decommissioned landfill, and in Ma-

hone Bay there's about 1.5 MW on land that is within their wastewater utility treatment site."

Hodges adds that AREA is helping all area utilities get to net zero, hoping to be the first area in Canada to reach that goal.

"Our mandate is to help these towns have a cleaner, more stable energy [source] than they would get from Nova Scotia Power alone," she says.

Now that these innovative solar projects are up and running, Hodges and AREA are working on strengthening relationships among Maritime communities with similar energy goals.

"I've been working with Maritime municipal electric utilities in Saint John, Perth-Andover, Edmundston, and Summerside, along with Antigonish, Berwick, Mahone Bay, and Riverport to create the Maritime Municipal Electric Utility Alliance (MMEUA)," Hodges says.

As a group, she says they'll be looking at ways to work on joint procurement and joint funding through ACOA or other larger funding agencies that individually they might not have access to, adding that she hopes the funding will aid the transition to automated metering and billing, among other things.

"We're looking forward to moving into the 21st century with the rest of the big guys," Hodges says.

To this end, the MMEUA has joined forces with the Smart Grid Innovation Network, an organization that advocates for the transition to cleaner energy sources to create a strategic plan for modernizing operations.

"They've come to some of our meetings and just looked at us in awe, and have said, 'No one else in Canada is trying to work together; everyone else is trying to buy each other out, outcompete and monopolize,'" she says.

This collaborative spirit is key to the long-term survival of entities like AREA, according to Hodges.

"If there's anything we've realized, it's that working in silos is not sustainable, and as global pressures and supply chains continue to create chokeholds on the energy industry, we need to be working together. We all thrive together, and we all struggle together, so we might as well be working alongside each other."

**The Climate Story Network is an initiative of Climate Focus, a non-profit organization dedicated to covering stories about community-driven climate solutions.**

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