

# Ontario's Renewable Energy Co-operatives

There are 27 renewable energy co-operatives in Ontario producing approximately 10 TWh of renewable energy for the province through wind, solar and biofuel systems - enough energy to power approximately 600,000 homes in Ontario. Renewable energy co-operatives are an important part of the supply mix in Ontario.

The Ontario Minister of Energy has stated that he wants to meet the challenges of energy supply and affordability in Ontario with innovation. Renewable energy co-operatives are great incubators of innovation with the ability to scale production and do so affordably. With the energy needs of the province poised to increase exponentially, with the introduction of new technologies, such as electric cars and the thousands of new housing units planned for Ontario, **it is important to encourage energy innovation.**

Ontario's renewable energy co-operatives have **identified two regulatory policies that are suppressing energy innovation** today - regulations that prevent net metering and virtual net metering.

## Opportunities for Improved Energy Regulation

- In Ontario today, there are over two million multi-unit dwellings with individual meters (45 per cent of Ontario's homes) and many of these are rental homes for modest-income Ontarians. Within this category of multi-unit dwellings, there are over 550 rental housing co-operatives in the province housing 125,000 people. With energy costs climbing, a change in energy policy to allow for a renewable energy strategy for these buildings will **save Ontario's modest-income families hundreds of dollars per year.**
- Additionally, there are many families in Ontario who do not have access to a roof or the capital required to install a full renewable energy system, but they want to invest in renewable energy to offset their individual hydro costs, increase energy production for the province and reduce the carbon footprint of their community. There are no energy investment options today that reward an individual's energy production investment through energy offsets to their hydro bill.

## The Solution

- Change existing net metering regulations to allow modest-income multi-unit buildings like rental housing co-operatives to generate renewable energy on their property and share the credits with all tenants in the building. Return energy credits to the building through a common account so that energy credits can be transferred to individual household meters. Calculate credits based on the rate class of the generation account (in this case, the common account for the building), and then transfer it as monetary credits to each family's bill. This would avoid any issues with accounts in different rate classes.
- Allow for the transfer of monetary value from renewable energy installations to multiple customers in the community by introducing so called virtual net metering regulations. This would allow energy credits for any excess generation to be sold to other customers in the community. Allow for these credits, administered by Local Distribution Companies, to offset the hydro costs of these customers.

## The Benefits to the Province

- Encourages affordable community investments in more efficient energy retrofits and building improvements, such as air conditioning, by providing a mechanism to offset costs
- Solar installations can be on schools, housing co-ops and businesses, or on vacant land or parking areas adjacent to these facilities, to reduce community energy costs, maximize the usage of community assets and create jobs and job training in new energy technology application
- Allow more community members to participate and benefit from renewable energy generation projects through more equitable access to clean energy investment
- Provide the opportunity for modest-income Ontarians to participate in energy production to reduce their costs and stimulate their local economies
- Would provide a non-wire alternative solution for grid constrained areas