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MicroFIT news – OPA Finalizes price for new ground-mounted solar category

On Friday July 2nd 2010 the Ontario Power Authority (OPA) announced a proposal to implement a new tariff class for ground-mounted microFIT solar PV projects as opposed to roof-mounted projects. The initial materials made available from the OPA expressed concern that the return rate of these ground-mounted projects was above what the OPA considered to be acceptable. The proposal suggested a new rate of 58.8 cents per KWh and the initial plans were to have the new tariff class apply to all projects that had not yet been approved. This would have impacted over 10 thousand projects that were already awaiting OPA approval. The July 2nd announcement also started a 30 day public consultation period which ended on August 3rd. On behalf of our many clients HERE! participated in all the consultation conference calls and prepared a written submission to the OPA, which can be found at http://haltonenvironment.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/HERE_OPA_submission.pdf

On Friday, August 13 the OPA released their final decision and set the new tariff class price for ground-mounted microFIT solar PV projects at 64.2 cents per kilowatt-hour. The OPA also considered the strong feedback that was provided; expressing the point of view that making the new tariff rate class apply to those applications already submitted was unfair. The OPA has now decided that the new ground-mounted tariff will only apply to applications submitted after noon on July 2. All applications submitted prior to that time will be eligible to receive the original 80.2 cent per KWh rate.

Although it was a difficult month for many awaiting their conditional offer or wanting to install a ground-mounted installation, we feel that the outcome that has been reached is fair and that the OPA has considered many of the perspectives shared with them during the consultation process. To us this demonstrates that the government is serious about the solar energy industry in Ontario. They have renewed their commitment to transparency and now have an improved understanding of what really is going on in the Ontario solar marketplace. With the implementation of a new stakeholder advisory panel we feel the risk of a similar situation like this occurring again is very low.

Listed below are a few quick facts about the OPAs decision. For more information, please view the OPA news release, found at <http://www.powerauthority.on.ca/>. We will continue to participate in teleconferences and update you with further details.

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- The new price category is effective immediately for eligible projects with applications submitted after noon on July 2, 2010, when a new price category was proposed.
- Eligible ground-mounted applications submitted prior to noon on July 2, 2010, will receive the original price of 80.2 cents/kWh even if they have not yet received a conditional offer. Also these applicants will now have until May 31, 2011, to install and request a connection for their projects before the higher (60%) domestic content requirements will be required. Note: projects who applications were submitted after 12 noon on July 2nd will still have to meet the higher Ontario content levels required as of January 1st 2011.
- The OPA is establishing a microFIT program advisory panel that will provide advice on program evolution, including the two-year review process. The panel will be made up of industry, academic and other stakeholder representatives.
- Commercial aggregators (e.g., businesses that lease land or rooftops from individuals for multiple renewable energy projects) will no longer be allowed to participate in the microFIT program. Commercial aggregators can continue to participate in the clean energy economy but do so outside of the microFIT program structure. (Details on the implementation of this program change are still being finalized.)
- New microFIT applications will be accepted once again beginning on Friday, August 20.
- The OPA has committed that ground-mounted applications already submitted before July 2nd will be processed by the end of September.

Upcoming HERE! Events

HERE! Focus Group

This is the last chance to sign-up to participate in the HERE! Focus Group. Feedback from those on our contact list is very important to us. Please let us know what you think could make HERE! a more useful resource for you. The focus group takes place in our office in downtown Oakville on Thursday August 19 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Refreshments will be provided. Please email here.office@gmail.com to register.

HERE! Renewable Energy Tour

HERE! will be hosting a renewable energy tour in Acton on Sunday, August 29 from 1-4 p.m. The tour features a brand new 10 KW dual-axis tracking installation and roof-mounted 4.6 KW installation installed by Solar Direct Canada, as well a geothermal system. Talk to homeowners, vendors, and HERE!'s renewable energy experts and see working systems up close. Please email here.office@gmail.com to register.

HERE! Renewable Energy Fair

HERE! will be having a renewable energy fair on Saturday September 11 from 1:00-4:00 at the Halton Regional Centre on Bronte Road in Oakville. The displays at the renewable energy fair will cover every facet of renewable energy, including financing, geothermal and solar installations, energy audits, and energy conservation tools.

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