

Charged Up / En charge

Accelerating Canada's renewable energy revolution

The opportunity

Through the Paris Agreement, nations around the world have come together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to keep the global average temperature from rising more than 2 C over pre-industrial levels. Although transitions are never easy, leaders at all levels of government have stepped up to take decisive climate action. More than 160 cities in North America have committed to achieving 100 per cent renewable energy by mid-century.

Renewables are now the largest source of new power capacity worldwide. Prices of wind and solar power have fallen sharply, and demand is taking off in communities and nations. Growth is skyrocketing in China, India, the U.S. and Europe. Denmark is forecast to have 70 per cent of its electricity generated from variable renewable sources by 2022. This kind of innovation is creating new jobs and economic opportunities while protecting the climate.

Polling shows that 70 per cent of people in Canada support a quick shift to renewable energy. Within the David Suzuki Foundation community, that level of support rises to 98 per cent. However, when asked to name a single renewable energy project, 90 per cent of our community were unable to do so, which means renewables are largely distant and irrelevant to people's daily lives.

The program

Charged Up aims to build a strong, connected and inclusive renewable energy movement necessary to achieve the larger transition we need in Canada.

Working with Canadian communities and organizations throughout the country, Charged Up is about:

- Telling the stories of communities doing inspiring work to bring on renewable energy to show people the transition is already happening.
- Helping more communities become active producers of renewable energy rather than passive ratepayers or consumers.
- Raising the level of citizen participation in shaping our energy systems — in energy efficiency as well as production.
- Creating a network of renewable energy champions who want to see more projects on the ground.
- Inviting people at the structural level to call for regulations, policies and programs that will enable more communities to deploy renewable energy.

The stories



Photo: David Dodge (Green Energy Futures)

Oil and gas workers go solar with Louis Bull Tribe in Maskwacis, Alberta

Desmond Bull, band councillor of Louis Bull Tribe in Maskwacis, Alberta, looks at the newly installed solar panels on his community's daycare and smiles.

"It's important to me that this is clean energy," he says. "It shows our responsibility in creating sustainability for the next seven generations — our grandkids, their grandkids."

Louis Bull Tribe partnered with a group called Iron & Earth on this project to provide hands-on solar installation training to some of their members. They also extended an invitation to fellow oilsands workers from neighbouring communities who wanted to expand their skill sets to broaden job prospects. Together, both groups are working side by side to move away from coal-fired electricity and toward a self-sufficient, renewable energy future.



Photo: Emily Fister (*David Suzuki Foundation*)

Powering homes with wind energy in Oxford County, Ontario

Miranda Fuller looks over the 10 turbines on Gunn's Hill Wind Farm in southern Ontario's Oxford County, a lush region of farmland and small cities between London and Kitchener. The project started running late last year and now produces enough electricity to power some 6,700 local homes. It's Ontario's first community-sponsored wind farm.

For Fuller, executive director at the Oxford Community Energy Co-op, the project is a successful exercise in myth-busting. "Some locals didn't support it," she says. "But since it was built, we're not seeing much pushback. People fear what they don't know, so you need to give people factual information. There's been a shift in attitude since the project became operational."

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