



## News Release

For Immediate Release

### ***District of Summerland to Receive \$6M in Funding for Integrated Solar Project***

Project made possible thanks to Federal Gas Tax Fund

March 9, 2018 Summerland, BC

The District of Summerland has received conditional approval for up to \$6,000,000 in funding from the Federal Gas Tax Fund to support the development of a 1MW solar array with 2 MW of battery storage to be sited within the District's municipal boundaries. The solar+storage project will provide localized benefits to Summerland's electrical utility systems and ratepayers, provide resiliency for critical infrastructure, and will be a showcase of utilizing cleantech that other municipalities can look to.

By generating solar energy locally, the District of Summerland will strengthen its existing utility resource, enhance the local economy and create jobs, increase energy security and independence, support innovation, and attract new residents and visitors. Further, this project will form the basis for an integrated, long-term approach to sustainable energy management within the District, which will provide ongoing opportunities for job creation, community involvement, and partnerships with local businesses, schools, and not-for-profit groups.

The District has previously received \$100,000 in grant funding from the Province of British Columbia's Rural Dividend Program to complete the initial phases of developing the project: site assessment; feasibility, solar resource, and interconnection studies; and public consultation initiatives. The \$6M earmarked from the Federal Gas Tax Fund will be provided depended upon the completion of the feasibility study and the securing of all funding necessary to complete the project. If the conditions are not met by March 2019, the funding will be rescinded. This additional funding would support the engineering, procurement, and construction of the 1MW solar array and 2MW of battery storage once the initial studies are complete and the community has been thoroughly consulted. The total project cost is estimated at \$6,980,000, which includes \$1.4M for upgrades to Summerland's existing electrical system; the District will contribute the funds required beyond the \$6M grant from its electrical utility capital reserve fund.

Each year, the Government of Canada provides over \$278 million in funding for local government infrastructure across British Columbia through the Federal Gas Tax Fund. The Union of BC Municipalities administers the Federal Gas Tax Fund in British Columbia in partnership with the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

## Quote

Mayor Peter Waterman, District of Summerland

"The District of Summerland is incredibly proud to be selected to receive this funding in support of our Integrated Solar Project. Our community has indicated an immense amount of support for our electrical utility to begin generating power locally from renewable sources, and for us to take our energy future into our own hands. The economic opportunities this project will provide to Summerland cannot be understated, and we look forward engaging our residents in the process so their vision for this project can be fully realized."

Director Wendy Booth, President, Union of BC Municipalities

"Communities across BC are looking for funding to replace, upgrade and expand local infrastructure. The federal Gas Tax Fund is accelerating the pace of infrastructure renewal through the transfer of close to \$3 billion since 2005 for projects in our province. I appreciate the Government of Canada's long-term commitment to fund priorities identified by BC local governments."



## **Links**

To see the full list of projects approved under this intake, visit <https://news.gov.bc.ca/16553>

To learn more about the federal Gas Tax Fund visit: <http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/plan/gtf-fte-eng.html>.

For more information regarding Summerland's Integrated Solar Project, visit [www.summerland.ca/solar](http://www.summerland.ca/solar)

## **Contacts**

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## Summerland Integrated Solar Project – Background

The District of Summerland is one of only five municipalities in British Columbia to own their electrical utility. Currently, the District purchases power wholesale from Fortis BC and resells it to their customers, which sends dollars and jobs outside of the community and leaves customers susceptible to price increases by Fortis. It also means that Summerland has no control over the sourcing of the community's electrical energy, which may compromise the District's ability to achieve their greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets (33% less than 2007 levels by 2020, and 80% less by 2050) and other climate action objectives.

Looking to the future, The District of Summerland wishes to become a leader in the utilization of renewable energy to create economic benefits for the community and achieve their climate action goals. To advance these aims, the District developed the *Summerland Integrated Solar Project* - a multi-faceted approach to maximizing the utilization of available solar resources that includes:

- Build a detailed project plan for the development of District-owned solar energy generation resources in the most beneficial way(s) possible and prepare for implementation of the plan
- Create an affordable and easy-to-navigate pathway for residents and businesses to install solar technologies on their property
- Establish an energy efficiency program that provides resources and education to residents and businesses about sustainable energy use, and incentivizes them to save energy

In spring 2017, over 100 residents attended a community conversation on solar energy and provided overwhelming support for the District to pursue a solar energy project. Through a \$100,000 grant from The Province of British Columbia's Rural Dividend Program, the District is working through the initial stages of implementing the Integrated Solar Project. Currently, a series of studies and stakeholder engagement events are being conducted to determine the most beneficial site(s) for the project from a technical, social, economical, and environmental perspective.

Once a site is selected by Council, the \$6M funding provided by the federal Gas Tax Fund will be used for: the detailed design of the project; completion of necessary upgrades to Summerland's existing electrical utility infrastructure; site construction; and the procurement and installation of the solar array, batteries, and their controls. The District will also investigate the opportunity to include co-benefits such as habitat restoration, brownfield restoration, and pollinator habitat creation into the project design.

Summerland's Integrated Solar Project will provide immediate job opportunities through the design and installation of the solar array and the associated site preparation, and will also provide an ongoing opportunity for new jobs to be created as the equipment will need to be operated and maintained over time. Further, it is anticipated that the battery storage component of the project will not only result in a reduction of the monthly peak demand charges paid to Fortis (savings that can then be passed to ratepayers), but will also provide system resiliency benefits that will extend the service life of the electrical utility's equipment and infrastructure.

By investing in a local solar energy project, Summerland will have more independence and security from energy price shocks or supply shortages, and money spent on energy by the community will remain in the community to help stimulate the local economy. In addition, in order to garner the most possible benefit from the solar array and batteries, Summerland will be promoting smart energy use and conservation throughout the community.

Staff will be providing Council with an update of the Summerland Integrated Solar Project's progress to date and seeking their direction on next steps for the project at the March 12<sup>th</sup> Committee of the Whole meeting, taking place at 9am in Council Chambers at Municipal Hall (13211 Henry Avenue). The meeting is open to the public. Residents can also be added to the District's solar energy email list by writing [climate.action@summerland.ca](mailto:climate.action@summerland.ca)