



## News Release

For Immediate Release

### **Summerland Solar+Storage Project Update – Preferred Site Identified**

Community invited to update meeting May 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, at Centre Stage Theatre

April 30, 2019 Summerland, BC

The District of Summerland has reached a major milestone in the development of the Summerland Solar+Storage Project: the identification of the prime potential site. Following a thorough review of all District-owned property, the District's former Public Works yard & storage area located at 13500 Prairie Valley Road/12591 Morrow Street/Denike Street was found by Council to offer the best balance of appropriate zoning, long-term land use, environmental protection, fit with the project objectives and available co-benefits.

Summerland's Solar+Storage Project includes a 1MW solar array with 2MW of battery storage to be sited on approximately 5 acres of land within the District's municipal boundaries. The Project will provide localized benefits to Summerland's electrical utility systems and ratepayers, and provide resiliency for critical infrastructure. It will be a showcase for utilizing cleantech that other municipalities can look to.

A large portion of the preferred site has been previously disturbed, including a large paved section in an area where trees and vegetation have already been removed. Materials leftover from previous industrial-type uses are scattered throughout the site. The Project provides an opportunity to remediate the historical impacts and to return the disturbed area of the site to productive use.

The area surrounding the site is highly valued for recreational uses. As such, one of the potential co-benefits of the Project is the addition of recreational amenities such as maps, trail signage, picnic benches, charging stations for e-bikes, informational kiosks, garbage and recycling bins.

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

Staff will be providing the community with an update of the Summerland Solar+Storage Project's progress to date, a review of the preferred site, and a discussion about next steps at a public meeting taking place May 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, at Centre Stage Theatre (9518 Main St.). The meeting is open to the public, and interested parties are encouraged to attend. Residents can also be added to the District's solar energy email list by contacting [climate.action@summerland.ca](mailto:climate.action@summerland.ca)

## Quote

District of Summerland

*"Summerland's Solar+Storage Project is unique to the Okanagan and is just one step in the District's plan for sustainable initiatives that make the community more resilient. The next important step in this project is to share the District's preferred site with the community. There are a number of reasons that Council supports this location. Personally, high on my list is the potential to repurpose this previously developed site that is not currently in use."*

– Mayor Toni Boot



## **Links**

For more information regarding Summerland's Integrated Solar Project, as well as illustrative images of the preferred site, visit [www.summerland.ca/solar](http://www.summerland.ca/solar)

## **Contacts**

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## Summerland Integrated Solar Project – Background

The District of Summerland has been conditionally awarded \$6,000,000 in funding from the federal Gas Tax Fund to support the Solar+Storage Project. This funding represents almost 85% of the total expected project costs. 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.

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 FortisBC and resells it to their customers, which sends dollars and jobs outside of the community and leaves customers susceptible to price increases. 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

Once the site selection has been finalized by Council, the \$6M funding provided by the federal Gas Tax Fund is expected to be released. This funding 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, addition of recreational amenities, 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 FortisBC, 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.