
Media Release

For Immediate Release

DATE: November 14, 2023

Summerland Energy Centre official opening

SUMMERLAND – The Summerland Energy Centre officially opened today, the culmination of eight years of planning and project execution on the Okanagan’s first utility-scale solar and battery storage facility.

The \$6.98 million project was completed on-time and on-budget with \$6,000,000 in funding coming from the Canada Community-Building Fund (formerly the Federal Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund) and \$980,000 from the District’s electrical utility capital reserve.

Distinguished from more routine renewal energy projects due to its innovative battery storage component, the Energy Centre encompasses a solar array with 412kW solar power capacity, 1MW of battery storage, 3.56 MWh power supply, and upgrades to the existing electrical system.

The facility feeds power directly to the grid and can also release stored power as needed to provide resiliency for critical infrastructure and allow for daily ‘peak shaving’ on the purchase price of wholesale power.

The location of the Summerland Energy Centre at the site of the former Municipal Works yard on the ‘toe’ of Cartwright Mountain sets the stage for an adjacent eco-village, to be built to special environmental certifications promoting objectives such as reduced water and energy use, healthy lifestyles, protection of threatened species, and a diversity of housing types.

The District of Summerland is offering a public tour of the Summerland Energy Centre on Saturday, November 18 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. If you are interested in joining the tour, please sign up at this link: <https://signup.com/go/rgtoVvH>. Details of how to get to the Energy Centre and where to meet will be shared 2 days prior to the tour to those who have signed up. Please register by November 16th.

Quotes

“Our government is continually striving to build more sustainable and more resilient communities. The completion of the Summerland Energy Centre symbolizes our commitment to delivering funds to funding projects that support that goal. The solar energy and storage facility will not only increase energy security and provide resiliency for critical infrastructure in the District, but will enhance the local economy, showcase sustainable technology, and facilitate more eco-friendly projects in the future. We will continue to invest in green and innovative projects for a brighter tomorrow.”

~Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities.

“Summerland is known for its scenic beauty, wineries and world-class recreation, attracting people from across the globe. Its continued growth depends on reliable, sustainable infrastructure. This new facility gives people in Summerland energy independence and security from supply shortages, helping to cut bills, create jobs, enhance the local economy and make the District of Summerland a leader in cleantech.”

~Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Municipal Affairs

“The Summerland Energy Centre directly benefits everyone in the community, since every resident, business and farm pays for electricity. Besides demonstrating leadership in local sustainability and achieving a level of control over our future energy needs, the opportunity for peak shaving means we can start seeing a return on our investment almost immediately, not ten years down the road.”

~Mayor Doug Holmes, District of Summerland

“On behalf of the Wildstone/Skyfire Joint Venture team, it has been an honour to work with the District of Summerland and ATCO in the development, design, and construction of the Summerland Solar and Storage Project. This is a historic project, being the first of its kind in the Province, and we commend the District for their forward approach to sustainability. Thank you for choosing and putting your trust in our team; we look forward to working with the District of Summerland again.”

~Marcel Olsthoorn, Project Manager, Wildstone Construction Group

Background

As one of five local governments in B.C. to own and operate an electrical utility, the District of Summerland purchases wholesale power and resells it to Summerland residents and businesses. For many years, the utility suffered from underinvestment and as a result its ‘infrastructure deficit’ is higher (i.e., older) than other municipal infrastructure. In 2015, Council prioritized a renewed commitment to the electrical utility and proposed the idea of generating a small quantity of power from renewable sources to help control costs and provide stabilization for the grid. Subsequent research concluded that solar would be the best first step as it was a proven technology and relatively simple to implement.

Initial feasibility study funding was provided in 2016 through the Province’s Rural Dividend Program. In 2018, the \$6 million federal grant from the Canada Community-Building Fund was approved. In 2022, following a competitive tendering process, the District awarded the project contract to a joint venture of Wildstone Construction Group and SkyFire Energy along with other area contractors.

On Sept 21, 2023, the Community Energy Association presented the District of Summerland with a Climate & Energy Action Award for the development of the Energy Centre. It’s the second time in the three years that Summerland has received the award – in 2021, the District was recognized for its corporate climate action initiatives.

The Summerland Energy Centre is part of an overarching Integrated Solar Project that also includes the installation of rooftop solar panels on Municipal Hall and the George Ryga Arts and Cultural Centre, and a distributed generation (net-metering) program where residential utility customers can connect their home renewable energy source to the Summerland grid.

View here for more details and a timelapse video of the construction of the Summerland Energy Centre:

<https://www.summerland.ca/your-city-hall/climate-action/solar-and-battery-facility>

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Contacts:

Graham Statt
Chief Administrative Officer
250-404-4043
gstatt@summerland.ca

Zoe Ducklow
Communications Officer
604-270-8226 Ext. 222
zducklow@ubcm.ca





