

Ministry of Energy

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Sessional Paper No. P-31

Petition related to banning solar farms on agricultural land (Sessional Paper No. P-31),
Mr. Yurek (Tabled April 16, 2012).

The Green Energy Act (GEA) has made Ontario a North American leader in clean energy. Our clean energy economy has attracted over \$27 billion in investment for the province and created over 20,000 new jobs for Ontarians at a time when our economy needs it most.

Our clean energy strategy represents a shift in Ontario's electricity policy direction to what's important: building our clean energy economy, creating jobs and cleaning up the air we breathe. At the heart of the GEA is North America's most comprehensive Feed-in Tariff (FIT). On October 31, 2011, we launched our scheduled review of the FIT program, which considered a wide range of issues including local consultations and the Renewable Energy Approval (REA) process.

We heard from thousands of Ontarians, including municipalities, Aboriginal communities, industry, environmental and consumer groups – all interested in helping make build a cleaner, more sustainable electricity system for the future. We've responded with recommendations that address their concerns and will continue to encourage a strong renewable energy sector in this province.

There is an opportunity for municipalities to play a greater role in the development of renewable energy across the province. Following the FIT Two-Year Review, a new priority points system will encourage greater community and Aboriginal participation and will prioritize projects with municipal support. A focus on local community and Aboriginal projects ensures that projects are rooted in the community and investment returns remain there.

The FIT Two-Year Review report also clarifies and strengthens the rules on project siting to address municipal concerns and protect the environment, such as banning ground-mount solar photovoltaic systems (of any size) in residential areas and lands bordering residential areas.

The report also enhances protection of agricultural lands by banning ground-mounted solar (over 10kW) on prime agricultural land (class 1, 2 and 3) with no zoning exemptions and expanding the restrictions to include organic and mixed soils.

The FIT Two-Year Review report can be viewed at:

<http://www.energy.gov.on.ca/en/fit-and-microfit-program/2-year-fit-review/>

Building a clean energy system is part our government's plan to create and support jobs for Ontario families while ensuring we have the electricity we need to power our homes, schools, hospitals and our economy.



The Honourable Christopher Bentley
Minister