



Canadian Labour Congress

Congrès du travail du Canada

www.canadianlabour.ca

www.congresdutravail.ca

THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS



LE CONSEIL DES CANADIENS

www.canadians.org

1-800-387-7177

Drawing from **GREEN, DECENT AND PUBLIC**, a joint report by the Canadian Labour Congress and the Council of Canadians, this is one of a set of four fact sheets. These fact sheets aim to inform and activate actions supporting green job creation in Canada – check out the **‘TAKE ACTION’** section!

**1. Opportunity in Crisis: Decent Green Jobs** **2. Energy Efficiency and Renewable Power Potential** **3. Public and Community Ownership Examples** **4. Advantages of Public and Community Ownership**

## 3. PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP EXAMPLES

### WHAT IS PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP?

There is a growing pattern of renewable power expansion in the private sector across Canada, yet public and community ownership has distinct advantages. Public and community power can be delivered on different scales and includes prominent roles for public utilities and local ownership.

Three essential characteristics that will maximize the advantages of public and community power are: ownership structures that are democratically accountable; not profit-driven; focused on meeting local electricity needs or electricity for the provincial grid.

### PUBLIC UTILITIES AND GREEN POWER

Provincially owned utilities such as Crown corporations and municipally owned utilities should continue to play an important role in power generation, but increasingly from renewable sources. A number of public utilities are already producing low emission power from existing hydroelectric. In particular, public utilities can and should play an important role in owning large scale renewable energy projects. Given the current economic crisis and global credit collapse, the public sector is well placed to financially support and invest in these capital-intensive projects.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

SASK POWER RUNS CANADA’S SECOND LARGEST WIND FARM, A 150 MEGAWATT CENTENNIAL WIND POWER FACILITY THAT HAS 83 TURBINES. EACH TURBINE PRODUCES 1.8 MW OF POWER, ENOUGH ELECTRICITY TO SERVE 69,000 SASKATCHEWAN HOMES.<sup>1</sup>

### TURNING ON COMMUNITY POWER

Much of the future for renewable energy development will be on a smaller scale, amenable to local ownership and control. Community power means power is generated, distributed and controlled locally.

There are significant opportunities for institutions that are democratically accountable to communities to own renewable power generation including municipalities, regional districts, First Nations and Aboriginal ownership. They can work with companies to build a facility which they own and operate.

Partnerships between local and provincial public bodies can blend local accountability with experience in the generation and delivery of electricity and the capacity to borrow needed capital. The Columbia Basin Trust model in BC is an example of a public-public partnership of renewable power.<sup>2</sup>

## LET'S MAKE IT A CO-OPERATIVE

Co-operatives are consumer or member-based groups where each person or local business has pooled capital to fund a project. All co-operatives are guided by certain values and principles. They have voluntary or open membership, democratic member control, autonomy and independence, an emphasis on education and training and concern for the community.<sup>3</sup> Being non-profit and having a one share, one vote rule will help co-operatives maintain these values.

The successes of the co-operative model in expanding renewable power projects have been notable in Denmark and Germany. The Middelgrunden offshore wind farm in Denmark (20 turbines) is an excellent example of a successful partnership between a local utility and member-based co-operative.<sup>4</sup>

### DID YOU KNOW?

AN EXAMPLE OF A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN A CO-OPERATIVE AND A PUBLIC UTILITY IS THE WINDSHARE PROJECT BETWEEN THE TORONTO RENEWABLE ENERGY CO-OPERATIVE AND TORONTO HYDRO WHICH JOINTLY OWN A WATERFRONT WIND TURBINE AT TORONTO EXHIBITION PLACE.<sup>5</sup>

## EVERY SMALL BIT MAKES A DIFFERENCE: DECENTRALIZED ENERGY

Decentralized energy refers to energy generated at or near the point of its use. It includes examples such as smaller scale renewable energy generation like solar panels, solar water heaters and small wind turbines as well as cogeneration. Cogeneration makes use of wasted heat to supply nearby heat needs or provide useful electricity; it can be used on a small scale such as in homes or institutions like hospitals, hockey rinks and in larger-scale applications for industry and power generation.<sup>6</sup>

There are significant opportunities for public and community ownership of decentralized energy. Public utilities and municipalities can own and operate a portfolio of decentralized energy generation systems that are rented to nearby institutions and residents. Government buildings can feature the use of cogeneration and decentralized energy systems. There are also positive opportunities in the private sector such as solar panels on homes and businesses and industrial co-generation.

## TAKE ACTION: KEEP IT PUBLIC! GREEN JOBS NOW!

**Talk to your municipal councillor:** Is your municipality “greening” municipal buildings? Is there a municipal energy retrofitting program, does it target low income households? Are there plans to own renewable power projects?

**Talk to your provincial government representative:** What are provincial plans for reducing reliance on fossil fuel generation and expanding public and community ownership and control of renewable energy generation? Is there a provincial retrofit program?

**Talk to your federal government representative:** Do they support a national plan for green house gas emission reductions and a national municipal retrofitting program? How are they ensuring an end to federal subsidies for fossil fuels, tough energy efficiency standards and financial support for public and community-owned renewable energy projects?

*Tip: There is a list of policy recommendations in Green Decent and Public that will improve energy efficiency and support public and community ownership. For more information about this topic, or to read the full report, Green Decent and Public please visit: the Council of Canadians at [www.canadians.org/GDPReport](http://www.canadians.org/GDPReport) and the Canadian Labour Congress at [www.canadianlabour.ca](http://www.canadianlabour.ca)*

## NOTES