

Martin Adelaar: Input to the Ottawa Area Sub-region IRRP

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The Ottawa Area Sub-region IRRP forecasting methodology and analysis is comprehensive and I leave it to others to weigh in on the granular aspects of your approach. Rather, I feel it's highly important to veer somewhat from your feedback structure and focus on what I believe to be an immediate and enormous system change opportunity.

Specifically, there are several very large land developments and redevelopments underway, or soon to start in Ottawa, that will significantly add to the Ottawa region electricity demand but, conversely, also offer the unique opportunity to provide zero carbon distributed energy resources (DER) through community energy and community wealth building models. These land developments include: LeBreton Flats, Tunney's Pasture, Kanata North, Confederation Heights, Lansdowne 2.0, Booth St, Gladstone Village, 1495 Heron Rd and Manor Park. What is required is a major rethink of how to meet the projected electricity demand through these models which will generate significant community wealth through various economic multiplier benefits.

The UK government defines community energy as follows: *Community energy typically involves people collaborating with others in their local area to generate low-carbon heat and electricity, use local power, or reduce their energy usage. Community Energy England describes it as the delivery of community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by communities or through a partnership with commercial or public sector partners.*

Community ownership and investment models are growing internationally, e.g., community solar (gardens) are being delivered in several US States and being implemented in Nova Scotia. There are many economic multiplier benefits of community DER ownership models, including:

- Energy services for all residents and business (including tenants) in the new developments will be more affordable, equitable (available to all), predictable and stable.
- Local residents (both tenants and owners) could benefit from renewable energy credits and other revenue streams.
- Various forms of local enterprises will have the opportunity to own and govern their energy services and reap the financial benefits accruing from their use.
- The resiliency and reliability of energy services in the community will be strengthened.

- Local goods, services and fair wage labour would be used in the development and operations of the energy systems.

Consider evidence presented to the UK government by Ethex which, since 2013 has been a major player in the UK providing enabling finance to more than 40 community energy organizations across the country. They referenced a UK Government report which notes that “community energy projects deliver 12 – 13 times the community benefits in terms of money staying locally to deliver jobs, demand reduction activities, energy efficiency and fuel poverty work, which brings carbon, wellbeing, health and cost saving benefits”.

A 2022 report by Dunskey for the Ontario IESO showed that zero carbon DER could cost effectively meet all new electricity demand in Ontario. I therefore urge the IESO to consider community ownership and investment of zero carbon DER energy supply as a practical community wealth building opportunity that should be considered for these developments. I recommend that the local benefits of community energy projects be formally recognized as a material consideration in your planning decisions.

I suggest the IESO and Hydro play a leadership role by assembling the all or some of the aforementioned large Ottawa developments as “mini-IRP” projects and creating the policy and regulatory and legal conditions under which zero carbon DER delivery can gain a foothold in these developments. Furthermore, I urge the IESO and Hydro Ottawa to lead in bringing together the key stakeholders, i.e. owners, developers, community energy suppliers and others to make this happen. Creating the necessary policy and regulatory and legal conditions should build on the recommendations from OREC and other intervenors to this IESO process. Finally, there are several sources and pathways by which the development and scale-up of community energy can be de-risked.

To recap, right now, here in Ottawa, we are at a legacy building “once in a lifetime” moment. This is a chance to put Ottawa on the map as a national and international innovator and leader for community wealth building. The alternative would be a legacy of lost opportunity.