

## **JAZZ Solar Solutions**

JAZZ Solar Solutions Inc. (JAZZ) is a team of skilled and experienced specialists that develop innovative renewable energy solutions utilizing solar PV, battery, and other relevant renewable energy technologies. The team also provides engineering, procurement, construction, and project management services for the renewable energy projects developed for clients.

JAZZ has worked closely with over 20 Ontario First Nations, farmers, schools, commercial businesses, and homeowners. JAZZ has developed over 500 solar PV projects, predominantly in Ontario, totalling more than 30MW and has delivered 10 Community Energy Plans for First Nations. These accomplishments have provided a wealth of knowledge, experience, and industry recognition.

### **Overarching Question**

**What policy options and actions should the government consider in the integrated energy resource plan to achieve Ontario's vision for meeting growing energy needs, keeping energy affordable and reliable, ensuring customer choice, and positioning us to be an energy superpower?**

There are several specific changes to policy in Ontario to ensure affordable, reliable energy which is the customer's choice. In working for First Nations across Ontario it is important to note that each community is unique. What that translates into is that First Nation engagement with communities is critical. Not only for any generation projects, but also transmission and distribution projects that are occurring in a Community's territory. JAZZ's engagement with Communities has also made it clear when the definition of territory is used it does not just mean the reservation lands, but also the identified traditional territories.

Specifically, policy can support and promote Indigenous-led and majority-owned renewable energy projects to increase energy production. Defining Indigenous-led is also a critical element to this and it is encouraged that the Ontario government engage with multiple Indigenous communities to understand this definition. Mandating generation developers to engage with Indigenous communities in a meaningful way and to respect the UNDRIP through Free, Prior, and Informed consent for renewable projects on or near Indigenous territories

Another policy action that would ensure customer choice and positioning Ontario to be a leader and an energy superpower would be community net-metering and/or Community Solar/Renewable Energy. There are many structures to this and a complete review of this program is highly recommended.

JAZZ Solar's experience in working for Indigenous communities is also to ensure that energy is affordable through equitable energy policies such as subsidies for low-income households. Specifically a review with the Ontario Energy Board on how applicants apply for the OESP program. Often this demographic is unable to apply and needs support.

### **Planning for Growth**

#### **1. What actions should be prioritized to enhance planning across natural gas, electricity, and other fuels?**

A review of the electricity generation sources and whether there are alternatives to using natural gas. There are many innovative avenues to maintain sustainability for Ontario's energy mix, including focusing on renewable energy, paired with battery systems to support reliability. Focusing on renewable energy as the driver for generation in Ontario aligns with many Indigenous community goals. It is recommended that the Ontario government engage Indigenous communities at all stages of the planning process and not after decisions have been made. Many communities are starting to deploy net-zero initiatives and are already taking initiatives that should be fully supported to enhance sustainability for their Community's energy generation and consumption.

#### **2. Are there opportunities to enhance the province's approach to procuring electricity generation supply to better serve this priority?**

JAZZ Solar highly recommends supporting and promoting Indigenous-led and majority-owned renewable energy projects to increase renewable energy production. Adopting long-term procurement that incentivizes First Nation participation is key to success, especially with the structure of the grid in Ontario. Spanning many Indigenous territories and acknowledging that as procurement continues to ensure the energy transition is a success.

JAZZ also recommends putting a priority on DER projects, creating energy at the source of the need of generation. This includes programs like rooftop renewable energy (Solar) and also reviewing key programs like Community Solar/Renewable Energy or Community Net-metering.

### **3. What actions should government consider to promote greater access to electricity and accelerate grid-connections?**

The Ontario government should review the connection process, costs and communications that the distributors are following across Ontario. Specifically treating DER projects equally (anything above 10kW) is not taking into consideration that a DER that is specifically designed for a net-metering system is not injecting significant amounts of energy onto the grid and the cost for connection should not be the same as a larger scale project. It would also be critical to review how access to grid-connections can be enabled for Indigenous Communities, specifically prioritizing diesel-dependent areas, such as remote Indigenous communities, in grid connections and communities that are in a growth pattern but only have a single-phase connection to the grid.

JAZZ Solar works for a few communities that are looking at growing their commercial and residential buildings, but are constrained due to the capacity serviced to the community through a single-phased connection, while a three-phase connection would enable growth and prosperity to its residents.

It also should be noted that the government should actively respect UNDRIP and uphold FPIC of Indigenous communities whose traditional territories host or are potential hosts of transmission lines.

### **4. What steps can the government take to ensure that transmitters have the certainty they need while keeping costs low?**

Recognize that success of transmission lines on and near Indigenous territories depends on trust and relationships built through early and frequent engagement with Indigenous communities

### **5. What policy guidance should the government provide regarding natural gas and low-carbon alternatives?**

Prioritize Indigenous communities in supporting and funding low-carbon alternatives

## **6. How can the government best support Indigenous leadership and participation in energy planning and projects?**

While JAZZ is not an Indigenous member and can only make suggestions based upon discussions with the communities it works for, we give some guidance. It is highly recommended that the government is actively pursuing conversations with the Indigenous Leadership in regards to energy projects. Some thoughts for the government to consider:

- Respect the UNDRIP and advance FPIC for energy planning and projects on or near Indigenous land
- Engage Indigenous communities early and often in the energy planning process
- Utilize different engagement strategies for Indigenous leadership and community members
- Create meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for Indigenous community members
- Create opportunities for training and skills development in the renewable energy sector for Indigenous community members
- Respect and incorporate Indigenous Worldviews and Traditional Ecological Knowledge into renewable energy projects where appropriate.
- Prioritize relationships and trust over timelines and profits.

## **7. What cooperation opportunities exist across jurisdictions?**

Cooperation is rooted in communication and conversations. It is important for all the governing parties to allow and promote Indigenous communities to collaborate with each other across artificial provincial and territorial borders, such as through resource and knowledge sharing. There are opportunities for creative solutions to energy problems across Ontario and it would be critical to include Indigenous communities in that conversation.

## **8. What types of technical information and forecasts would best support sector participants and energy consumers?**

As Indigenous Communities are among the fastest demographic in Canada, their communities are also expanding. Through government initiated consultation,

government bodies can learn what energy needs communities have to meet the growing demands.

### **Affordable and Reliable Energy**

#### **1. What further steps should the government take to enable informed energy use?**

The government should inform Indigenous communities often about grants, loans, rebates, and energy credits for which First Nations members and communities are eligible for through multiple channels.

#### **2. What actions could ensure EV support in the electricity system?**

Provide opportunities for Indigenous communities to become revenue-generating owners of EV-chargers, particularly in Middle and Northern Ontario where EV-charging infrastructure is lacking. By enabling EV Chargers the government is encouraging EV adoption, both with the general public and in Indigenous communities.

Incentivize Vehicle-to-Grid Technology: Promote the development and adoption of Vehicle to Grid technology, allowing EVs to supply power back to the grid during high-demand periods, improving grid resilience and optimizing energy use.

#### **3. How can the government empower customers to install innovative technologies?**

#### **4. What specific actions could position DERs to support system needs?**

It is critical for the government of Ontario to ensure that DER adoption by Indigenous communities is supported. A review of a First Nation community net-metering program would create adoption of DER. Incentivizing capacity building by offering incentives for consumers and businesses to install DERs like solar panels, home batteries, and small-scale wind turbines, ensuring adequate supply and reliability during peak demand times.

#### **5. What actions can maintain an affordable energy system?**

### **Becoming an Energy Superpower**

#### **1. What opportunities should Ontario consider as a clean energy leader?**

To be a leader in clean energy Ontario must consider Indigenous communities and their participation in ownership of clean energy assets. Ontario should learn from their experiences and continue to support successful and scalable renewable energy in and owned-by Indigenous communities. Jurisdictions outside of Ontario, both in Canada and abroad, have planned and executed innovative policies and programs to promote renewable energy. Ontario should investigate and pilot these policies, such as community net metering.