

# County of Paintearth

## Renewable Project Concerns

### Government Briefing

Oct 3, 2023

#### Issue:

Renewable projects across the province have been an area of concern for both residents and municipalities in that they are being approved without due consideration for municipal planning procedures. Further, there is concern surrounding the reclamation of renewable projects and the degradation of prime agricultural land being taken out of production indefinitely.

#### Background:

The Alberta Utilities Commission has been granted the sole authority of granting approval for the construction of renewable projects on private land. While the province has put a hold on these projects to determine next steps for a more comprehensive regulatory framework, there are a number of ideas that the County would like to present to the Government for consideration.

#### Suggestions:

The Government may consider the following in their deliberations for creating a regulatory framework that best serves the province, landowners, and municipalities as we see an increase in renewable projects.

1. Introduce a requirement for cash-funded bonds regarding reclamation responsibilities for renewable energy developments as part of the general approval process for solar and wind, similar to what is in place for environmental license approvals for sanitary landfills. This would ensure landowners who are party to an agreement with developers of these projects are not held responsible for reclamation. This would also result in prime agricultural land being put back into production faster and more reliably.
2. Consideration should be given to the loss of prime agricultural land. There are examples of solar projects co-existing with agriculture in a variety of ways and this could perhaps be incentivized over more intensive solar projects on a certain class of farmland via regulation. This would also create more economic activity in the municipalities where the land is located.
3. A province-wide planning overlay that allocates a specific quantity of power production per zone in predetermined boundaries that accounts for the quality of cropland balanced with the amount of sunlight/wind. This could promote development in areas that have a lower quality of agricultural land over developments in prime land while still accounting for the needs of any such renewable project.
4. Incentivize renewable projects that address local power requirements first, to discourage losing arable land for projects that are intended to export to other provinces, or to the United States. The fact that we are losing cropland in order for that power generation to not be used where it is generated, but purely for profit, results in essentially exporting our prime agricultural land with no benefit to the community.