



## SSREC Annual Report April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

### I. Membership

As of March 31, 2023 we had 178 shareholders (minus 1 deceased whose estate donated his share, and 1 member who moved away and was reimbursed) for a total of 176 active members. As the market has changed, and the price of solar panels has decreased, it is no longer reasonable to do bulk purchases. The main reasons for becoming a SSREC member now are:

- i) support our general advocacy and education work;
- ii) support our advocacy with BC Hydro and intervenor status with the BC Utilities Commission
- iii) obtain an assessment of the solar capabilities of people’s location
- iv) support community solar installation in the future.

The geographic distribution of membership, compared to 2021/22 is below.

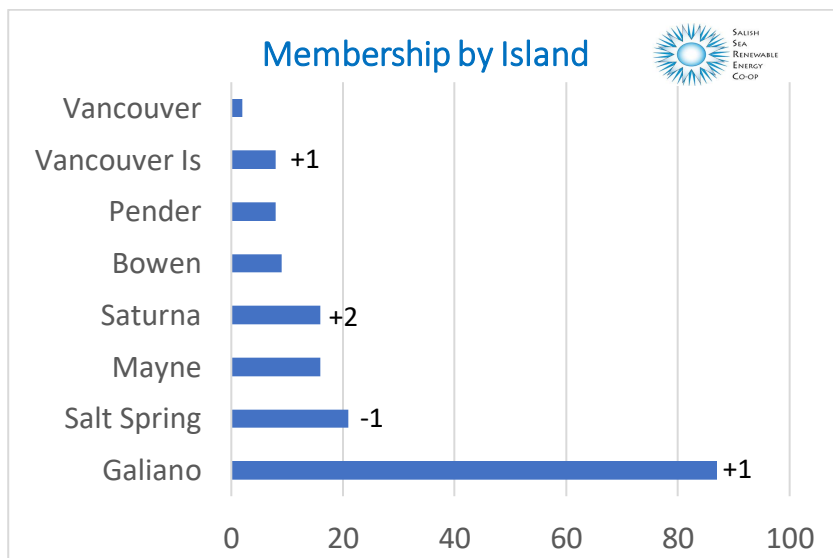


Figure 1: SSREC membership by Gulf Island

## II. Governance

Directors and Officers:  
Chair and Treasurer - Risa Smith  
Secretary – David Osborne

Directors at large

- Mike Hoebel
- Stephen Rybak
- Elizabeth Latta
- Tom Mommsen

## III. Installations in 2022-2023

- 7 members installed new solar on their homes this year.
- We performed 48 assessments for our members and a few for non-members
- The total number of systems for SSREC members at the end of March 2022 was 111. In addition, we had one member who moved to the east coast, and we reimbursed her share, and another who passed away and his estate donated his share.
- The SSREC-supported systems have a total capacity of 870 kW (up from 826 kW in 2021/22), and produce about 900,500 kWh of electricity annually, up from 847,500 kWh in 2021/22.
- The savings in carbon dioxide release over mega-hydro amount to 297 tonnes per year (up from 280 tonnes per year in 2020/21).

Table 1: Community Solar Installations in British Columbia

<b>Community</b>	<b>Total kilowatts capacity</b>
SSREC members (2016-2022) – (~3000 modules)	870
Saltspring Island High-School	24
Nelson Hydro (community-owned utility)	62
T'Sou-Ke First Nation	77
Alert Bay Solar Initiative	79
Central Saanich Firehall	138
Hudson's Hope Municipality	500
Sun Mine (Kimberley, BC - now owned by Teck)	1000
Tsilhqot'in First Nations (2019)	1250
Haida Gwaii (2024)	3400

BC: 5.15 million inhabitants: less than 9,000 kW solar capacity under the Net Metering program  
Minnesota 5.49 million inhabitants: 850,000 kW community solar

## IV. Status of Net Metering in BC

There are still myths floating around about net metering. BC Hydro does support net metering. The most recent Utilities Commission Decision in 2021 was:

- to remove restrictions on how much solar a home-owner or business can install as long as it's less than 100 kW capacity
- Continue to credit overages throughout the year and, on an annual basis, payout annual net overages (i.e. net contributions of energy to the grid) on March 31 (unless a homeowner/business applies for a different date for reconciliation – a one-time change)
- Continue to pay excess energy provided to the grid at the rate of \$0.099/kWh until 2024 for pre-2019 installations and to pay installations after 2019 at wholesale rates. Although the wholesale rate had been \$0.03 to \$0.04, in 2022 it went up to \$0.1061. In a way this was an 'own-goal' by BC Hydro, as overages from installations post 2019 actually were paid out at a higher rate than the pre 2019 installations. All customers will receive the wholesale rate past April 2024.

## V. New Net Metering Application by BC Hydro

BC Hydro (BCH) will submit another net metering rate application to the BC Utilities Commission in the coming winter, expected to be heard early in 2024. As before, we will partner with other solar groups in the province as interveners. BCH have been conducting several surveys with net metering customers, customers at large and organizations (including SSREC). It's difficult to determine what the intentions of BC Hydro are, as they are asking, via their surveys, for opinions on several options, where most people will not understand the subtleties of including:

- Demand charges
- Different rates for different customers
- Time-of-use charges
- Feed-in-tariff
- Changing to instantaneous netting, which means that the inputs and outputs to and from the grid are measured instantaneous – this results in a loss of ability to bank kilowatt hours through the summer and use them up in the winter. Proposals for daily or monthly netting have also been made
- Rewards for battery storage

We provided our members with explanations of the terms in the surveys and with potential responses from our viewpoint, on request from several members.

We attended two BC Hydro engagement sessions, one for industry reps and one for the public, on their evolving application (March and April, 2023). In the industry session, the Brattle Group, a US based consultancy, provided a summary of their report on the state of net metering in other (mostly US) jurisdictions, commissioned by BC Hydro. BC Hydro has not made the report available, but the summary given was very focussed on profitability and the efforts of utilities to limit or abandon net metering. We questioned some of their findings. Curiously, the Brattle Group has just published a new study (May 2, 2023) on distributed energy or Virtual

Power Plants (VPP) providing data that US Utilities could save \$15 to \$35 billion in capacity investment by taking a distributed energy approach over 10 years. VPPs include community installations and community net metering. Figure 2, below, presents an interesting picture on the value of solar to utilities. The previously alleged cost-shifting from solar customers to non-solar ratepayers (a complete red herring to start with) no longer features! Curiously, Brattle does not put any monetary value on energy resilience which is an inherent strong point of VPPs.

**The VPP could provide the same resource adequacy at a significant cost discount relative to the alternatives.**

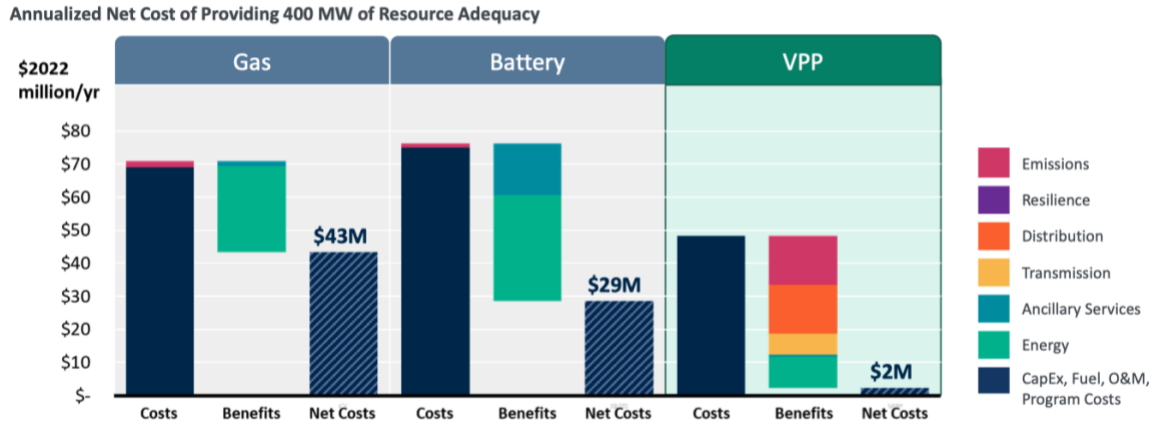


Figure 2: The value of solar to utilities. Source: Brattle Group. 2023. *Real Reliability*.

This supports what we have been saying about distributed energy, solar and community net metering, but was not part of the presentation the Brattle Group made at the BCH information sessions.

## VI. Engagement with BC Hydro

BC Hydro has followed up with us, seeking to develop a relationship and better understand our priorities for net metering, specifically community (virtual) net metering and distributed generation. On May 25 we (Kjell Liem, Tom Mommsen, Risa Smith) met with Chris Sandve, director of regulatory division. We emphasized the importance of expanding the program to include Community Net Metering (CNM). Chris agreed to fund a contract with a CNM expert, of our choice, to better understand how other jurisdictions are addressing CNM. Our first choice, John Farrell from Institute of Self Reliance (Minnesota), is not available and we are still discussing a possible contractor.

It seems to us that BCH is more open to net metering, specifically CNM (VNM) than in the past. This appears to be a result of the hiring of Diana Stevenson, the new senior VP for customer affairs. It may also have something to do with BC Hydro's recent admission that in about 2030, their generation system will incur power curtailment due to lack of water and they have to look for alternatives/supplementary supply.

## VII Other Advocacy

Tom Mommsen and Peter Nix have made a presentation to North Cowichan Regional District, who are considering a solar strategy. A second follow-up meeting is set for Aug, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023.

## VIII Public Education

We did not have any public presentations in 2022/23. However, we did write an article on electric vehicles, published in the Galiano Active Page, that sought to correct several myths about electric vehicles and also explain the advantages of charging at home with solar. We have a draft for a more detailed article in the works.