



Member Profile | Local Initiative for Future Energy (LIFE) Co-operative

The Local Initiative for Future Energy (LIFE) Co-operative is a renewable energy co-operative (REC) formed in 2006, with the aim of enabling communities to invest in renewable energy projects.

The co-op was an early advocate for Ontario's Green Energy Act and Feed-in Tariff (FIT) program, and was among the first of Ontario's co-ops to incorporate as a REC.

LIFE was successful in applying and receiving FIT contracts on 18 solar PV projects, which it owns in partnership with farmers and other businesses, with over 3000 kW capacity in total. LIFE also developed and co-financed the 500 kW Moorefield Wind Project near Teviotdale, in Wellington County, one of only a handful of community owned wind turbines in Ontario.

While its office and biggest PV projects are in the Region of Waterloo, LIFE (with its partners) also own projects in Wellington, Dufferin, Huron, and Bruce Counties. Most of LIFE's members are found in the same areas, though membership is open to residents of Ontario generally, in accordance with the FIT program rules.

The co-op's investors – most of whom are also co-op members – receive dividends based on the profitability of the co-op portfolio as a whole. In recent years LIFE has issued dividends between 3% and 6% on its "Class A" shares.

Through LIFE's Community Fund, the co-op also distributes, to local charities and groups working on energy and the environment, an amount equal to 10% of the dividends paid to investors each year. Applications to the Fund are invited until November 15, with funds to be awarded by the end of the year. Interested parties can find more information at www.lifecoop.ca/lifescommunityfund.

A volunteer board of directors oversees the co-op strategy and vision, and day-to-day operations are managed by LIFE's General Manager, Shane Mulligan, who has been with the co-op since 2010.

The co-operative's members and board played a leading role in early efforts to change the policy landscape in Ontario around renewable energy, and the co-op takes some pride in that. With Ontario's new government moving to dismantle the Green Energy Act and withdraw support for renewables, LIFE sees an opportunity to lead again into new ways to meet future community

energy needs, including to build resilience in the face of climate change and to continue the shift away from fossil fuels, especially in off-grid and backup power applications.

LIFE is now looking to meet with new partners and site owners who want to share knowledge and thinking about local energy security and the future. Mulligan describes the current feeling: “As in past, LIFE feels we cannot wait for the government to make policy to enable or encourage the right action on energy – it’s necessary to lead the way, and encourage communities to look at building infrastructure to enable greater self-sufficiency and resilience.”

Learn more about LIFE. <http://www.lifecoop.ca/>