

The following is the email OPA Announcement

Final price for ground-mounted solar PV projects announced

Thank you to all microFIT applicants who submitted feedback and information during the recent consultation period. The Ontario Power Authority has announced that it has finalized the price for the new microFIT ground-mounted solar price category at 64.2 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh). This price applies to microFIT ground-mounted solar applications submitted after noon on July 2, when a new price category was proposed.

We have also announced that **all ground-mounted solar applications submitted prior to noon on July 2, 2010, will receive the original price of 80.2 cents/kWh whether or not they have received a contract or a conditional offer.** We recognize that many applicants had already made significant investments in their solar PV systems and, as a result, the new price category may have caused an undue hardship.

Because of the delay in processing applications, **ground-mounted solar applicants who submitted applications prior to noon on July 2 will also have until May 31, 2011, to install and request a connection for their project before higher domestic content requirements are required.**

The microFIT team is now working to process all applications it has received. **You still need to resubmit your application, and you have until September 7, 2010, to do so.** If you resubmitted your application prior to July 31, it will be processed by the end of September. If you resubmitted in August, you will hear back from the OPA by the early fall. Resubmitted applications will be processed before new applications in the order they are received.

Please note that you must resubmit your application before the deadline in order to receive the 80.2 cents/kWh price. If you have already resubmitted your application, you don't need to resubmit it again. If you don't resubmit by the deadline, your application will be withdrawn from the program. Any eligible new application for a ground-mounted solar project you may submit in the future will receive 64.2 cents/kWh.

Based on feedback received during the 30-day consultation period, the OPA also made the following announcements:

To improve communication and increase transparency, the OPA is establishing a microFIT program advisory panel that will provide advice on program evolution, including the two-year review process. The panel will be made up of industry, academic and other stakeholder representatives.

Commercial aggregators (e.g., businesses that lease land or rooftops from individuals for multiple renewable energy projects) will no longer be allowed to participate in the microFIT program. This will ensure that the microFIT program is focused on its original purpose – encouraging homeowners, farmers, farm co-operatives, First Nations, small businesses and institutions such as schools to own and develop small renewable projects.

The panel will make recommendations, on an expedited basis, about appropriate contracting provisions for aggregators to reflect the unique nature of commercial micro projects. This will help ensure that commercial aggregators can continue to participate in the clean energy economy but do so outside of the microFIT program structure.

To implement these changes, the OPA is updating the microFIT application form, and new applications will be accepted beginning on Friday, August 20. Applications will then be open to individuals who are the registered owner of the property on which the generating facility is to be located and certain other entities. Other eligible participants will be discussed by the microFIT advisory panel. Existing applications can continue to be managed and resubmitted during this time.

[MicroFIT: Rant of my Own](#)

23 July 2010 Richard Copeland

The announcement for the reduction of the FIT rate for solar microFIT is basically going to accomplish two things. A very blatant disregard for ethics and morals by the Ontario Government and the killing of the Solar Energy Business in Ontario. It may be legal to renege of the offerings of a FIT rate, but to lead people on with website information of getting back within 30 days or 60 days and then no days, but allowing the construction to continue to save time, is reprehensible. This is a government not to be trusted for a second. No doubt the industry players have already backed off & one must wonder how much of the outstanding recent job growth in this province was tied up in this boondoggle. Where are the 50,000 jobs and new manufacturing to come from next?

The FIT penalty for ground mount basically takes out the cornerstone supporting small solar. Small solar had to be done in great numbers if it were to become big business. The higher microFIT rate remains for roof top mounted systems, few of these will ever see 10KW in size. When was the last time you saw a roof top capable of taking 50 or 60 of 2-1/2 foot by 5 foot panels?

The claims made by the current Energy Minister impostor is that these microFIT systems will cost the ratepayers a billion dollars. Where's Smitherman when you need him? Not quite \$3/4B over 20 years the way I see it. And if the driving force behind the changes made by these cowards is the complaints of ratepayers, they might want to do their homework first, homework being the missing ingredient in this government's modus operandi. If all the 16,000 systems were installed and approved, if they averaged 8KW per system by size and had 4.3 hours per day sun - their contribution to the ratepayers would be a whopping 9/100 of a cent per KWHr. Wow rate payers! There's something to really get upset about. I'll bet all those complaining ratepayers are just lusting for the next infinitely costly nuke.

The government numbers appear either dishonest or a fabrication towards an end already decided. The program is to cause reductions in RE costs and it may be that has happened long before the 2 years initially anticipated. To discuss the cost of a ratepayer KWHr in 20 years, in terms of today, is foolishness unless you are forecasting the future selling price as well. What will a KWHr of electricity cost in 2020 or 2030? What will be the difference between a microFIT KWHr in 2020 versus a purchased one at home. They will diverge to a degree. With a global population expected to increase by 50% by 2050, there will be a very large stress on resources for energy production. Costs will rise.

richard

[Add your comment](#)

[MicroFIT: Another hung out to dry](#)

21 July 2010 Richard Copeland

I have been away again and have fallen behind in all the things I do, whatever they actually, really are. Much has gone on with gardens and much of the sustainable activity shift has gone to Adam's place with the additional livestock. I intend to catch up on all this but given the time frame for the OPA mess I'm publishing a letter from Lois Campbell, another casualty of the OPA's unethical decisions.

Her letter follows:

Dear Editor:

The Ontario Power Authority (OPA) has finally published a rationale with some figures in it to justify the surprise price-cut to the rate of return being offered for ground-mount solar in the Ontario MicroFIT program: <http://microfit.powerauthority.on.ca/Program-updates/rationale.php>

These figures don't make sense to homeowners or anyone in the Solar PV business and will only increase distrust toward this Liberal government and the MicroFIT program.

The first issue I have is with the numbers themselves.

The chart under-reports installation costs and overestimates output for ground-mount solar PV systems. AND they failed to compare the costs and efficiencies of roof top installations to ground-mount of the

same size, which should have been the focus of the chart. The figures are unsubstantiated and I'm certain, false. Why?

We know the costs. Our buying group shopped around.

My husband and I have already spent tens of thousands more than that on a ground-mount NON tracker system that is already installed on our property. We know. We're making payments on the loan.

Before the July 2nd price-cut announcement, we read statements like this on the OPA MicroFIT website: Guaranteed rate for 20 years. A scheduled rate review in August 2011. Allow 30 days to receive a conditional offer. No one will be refused where grid capacity allows. Nowhere did I see "This offer is not really available because we won't give you a contract before we change the offer.

Which brings me to the second issue. The Liberals want to make ordinary farmers and citizens look greedy by skewing the figures. They want us to look foolish to have trusted them. If the OPA and the Liberals think we were foolish to have trusted them, is anyone smart to trust them? The rate made sense. It doesn't now, but without public outcry we are stuck with it. Do the Liberals want anyone to sympathize with us? No they want it to look like they are saving Ontario from tricky greedy people like us, but it's not working the way they had hoped, I hope.

At the end of the "consultation period", we hope the Liberals will see that the best way out of this public relations mess (with any semblance of their credibility intact) is for the OPA to actually listen to the people. The obvious way to reduce the collateral damage in the media is by honoring all of the applications that were pending at the rate that was offered when the applications were made. I heard it on BNN that the amount of money at stake is extremely small compared to Hydro's overall energy and infrastructure budget.

My second issue is that we have been told that "LOTS" of applicants have reapplied at the lower rate, but once again we were given no numbers. We have to either trust the OPA and the Minister (again) and assume that "lots" of people have reapplied because they like the lower rate. Or we can assume that "lots" of people are reapplying because they have already invested and/or have systems in place. Who else can you sell your power to? "Lots" of people must be in the same position we are with money already spent or other commitments made based on the original Solar PV MicroFIT "no deal" deal.

Of all the people in our buying group who applied at about the same time we have one who got the original deal, one who just made it under the wire at the end of June, and the rest who are stuck. One is even feeding in without getting any payment and no direct communication from the OPA. All we were missing was a conditional contract from the OPA. We need your help.

To read more and sign a petition go to www.microfitaction.com/.

Lois Thomson
Ottawa

[Comments \(2\)](#)

[MicroFIT : Tom's letter referenced yesterday](#)

09 July 2010 Richard Copeland

This is Tom Adamchick's letter as referenced in yesterday's blog:

Dear Minister Duguid:

Re: MicroFIT application MAMCQY1 – Thomas Ambrose Adamchick

We submitted our MicroFIT application for a ground mounted PV system on March 2, 2010. We made several unsuccessful attempts to obtain details on the status of our application. We were surprised and

shocked to finally receive any meaningful word from the OPA MicroFIT staff on July 2, advising that the offer for ground mounted PV systems had been reduced to 58.8 cents per kWh, and that there would be a 30 day additional waiting period.

This “program update” amounts to the final step of a bait and switch. Ontarians who were paying attention and wanting to do their part to help supply green energy for Ontario were promised 80.2 cents per kWh.

To assist you with our time line, as of July 3 we have been waiting 124 days. Add 30 more days and presumably the clock starts all over again.

According to OPA, “the MicroFIT program was designed on the principle of a reasonable rate of return.” Mr. Minister, what was considered a reasonable rate of return in March 2010, and what is it now, and why has the offered price been reduced so drastically in such a short period? What will it be if and when our application is finally approved?

According to their July 2 communiqué, “OPA believes the proposed new category is fair, reasonable, more accurately reflects the costs associated with these types of projects and maintains the long-term stability of the program.”

Fair? Besides the obvious bait and switch, the 30 day review period adds even more delay. OPA is asking us to reapply and wait and clearly state we want a pole mounted system. We clearly specified a pole mount in our application 124 days ago. And there is the issue of the rapidly passing construction season.

Fair? For months we have heard from friends and neighbours who had their conditional offers with much shorter waiting periods. A program like this needs to be seen to be fair, dealing with applications on a first come, first served basis. Those who somehow queue jumped got offers at 80.2 cents per kWh. That kind of behaviour by OPA doesn't seem fair and reasonable, and won't help with the sustainability of the program.

Fair? When we were considering whether to participate, we were reassured on the OPA website that the program would undergo a review in 2 years, implying that the promised rates would be in place for that period, ample time for our application to be processed.

The MicroFIT program has offered an opportunity for those concerned about energy supply and climate change, to do something positive. It's a constituency the McGuinty government should not take for granted or alienate. This flip flop mostly affects rural Ontario and will set back your Cabinet colleagues' efforts to gain traction with a rural strategy. This is not the type of action that builds trust.

Yours with deep disappointment in the government and OPA,

Tom Adamchick

cc. Jim McCarter, Auditor General of Ontario

[Comments \(1\)](#)

[MicroFIT JP writes](#)

08 July 2010 Richard Copeland

The following letter was written by JP DeGrandmont to John Yakabuski, our local MPP & energy critic for the conservative party in the Ontario Legislature. JP is one of the more fortunate microFIT participants in that his system was honoured at the 80.2 cent FIT. There has been much discussion on this but I am at a loss to find anything on this in the main stream media. There is a reference to a letter in JP's letter which I do not have. When I get it I will post it at a later date. JP's letter:

Gentlemen and Ladies

The recent announcement of a proposed rate review by OPA brings to

mind the quaint expression: "send in the clowns". A two year government engagement to encourage citizens to participate in a 20 year contract is currently under review because the rate of return is now under scrutiny. What kind of planning went into this program; how were the parameters determined; how could they possibly establish such a convoluted, disjointed and disfunctionnal multi-level administrative system. In the driver's seat we find, the Premier's office; the Minister's Office; Ontario Energy Board; Ontario Power Authority; Electrical Safety Authority; and finally, Hydro One: Microfit Office; Regional Office; and, Field Offices.

Taxpayers who have chosen to participate in the Government's Microfit Program are expected to commit tens of thousands of dollars while navigating through a maze of bureaucratic & disconnected offices which are generally accessible only through "call centres" with no direct knowledge or ability to respond. The resulting chaos and unexplained and lengthy delays have tended to jeopardize this commendable government initiative.

The recent announcement by OPA suggesting a review of rates barely six months into a two year process is pretty hard to swallow. OPA appears to lament that the response has been too favourable. A claim of 16,000 applicants appears to be the basis for this review. How was this project planned? How many applicants did they plan for? Will the rate be again be subject to premature review should the number of applicants reaches 20,000? 25,000? etc....

This entire scenario is beginning to resemble and smell like the federal "gun registry boondoggle" and the Premier of Ontario's abominable "E-Health" scandal.

Attached, please find a copy of the letter sent to the Minister by an acquaintance of ours, Mr. Tom Adamchick of Golden Lake. Tom is the proud owner of a ground mount system which has no solar panels. His project is on hold due to the complexity and unpredictability of the process which is now even more dubious in light of the unexpected rate review proposal by OPA.

I think that the government is going to face an onslaught of comments and criticisms by not only Microfit suppliers and suppliers-in-waiting (that means us and everyone still in process) but also all the contractors who face financial commitments based on the original government promise of .802 cents per kw/hr.

regards, jp

[Add your comment](#)

[MicroFIT mayhem : OPA as Green Energy Killer](#)

04 July 2010 Richard Copeland

The following posting is of an email sent to microFIT applicants under the Green Energy Acts' microFIT program. The actual realisation of what the email says is the good news. OPA (Ontario Power Authority) say that Ground Mounted microFIT Solar systems (10 KWp max) are less costly than originally forecast and therefore the cost per KWhr can come down. That is what we want to see - driving down the costs of renewable energy is one of the purposes of the microFIT program in the first place, & realised in this case, very quickly.

The bad news is that OPA has unadvisedly, and I put forward unethically, made this announcement retroactively. There are a large number of applicants out there (and I include some of our local Matawatchan folks) who made their investment decisions based on 80.2 cents per KWhr and have been waiting several months for an OPA response that should have happened in a 30-60 day time frame. In the case of the Matawatchan group all 4 participants signed up with the same contractor to get the best price as a buying group, and did this at the same time. Some will now get 80.2 cents and others may get 58.8.

It is the outrageous lack of communications with OPA and their incomprehensibly strange retroactive announcement that has created this dilemma. Any change in feed-in-tariffs should be announced well in advance of a buying decision to be made by the supplier (system owner) to enable a rigorous financial assessment of the viability of a project. For example projects submitted after a date of July 5th would be appropriate for a 58.8 cent price per KWhr.

MicroFIT solar systems are now installed & running with Hydro & ESA approvals but no contract from the uncommunicative OPA. We need to appreciate that no 2 systems will be installed at necessarily the same cost, & that a financial analysis based on an understood revenue stream is needed for a decision. Many have done this at 80.2 cents.

There is no moral ground for our 'progressive' Ontario Government to allow the folks at OPA to screw up this program and damage the financial stability of forward thinking Ontario residents. Grandfather these systems by date immediately, bask in the victory of reducing cost and do the right thing by the people who have embraced Green Energy and risked their money on a brighter future.

richard

THE FOLLOWING IS THE EMAIL FROM OPA IN ITS ENTIRETY:

Dear microFIT Applicant,

New Price Category Proposed for microFIT Ground-Mounted Solar PV Projects

Last October the Ontario Power Authority launched the successful microFIT Program. Participation in the program is very popular and it has vastly surpassed expectations. In fact, more than 16,000 applications have been submitted, with a large majority being for ground-mounted solar projects.

To help ensure the program remains sustainable the OPA has proposed a new price category for microFIT ground-mounted solar PV projects. Ground-mounted solar PV projects of 10 kilowatts or less will be eligible to receive a proposed price of 58.8 cents per kilowatt-hour (¢/kWh). Rooftop solar PV projects, as defined in the microFIT Rules, version 1.4, will continue to be eligible for 80.2 ¢/kWh.

The proposed new price category will better reflect the lower costs to install a ground-mounted solar PV project versus a rooftop project. It will provide a price that enables future project owners to recover costs of the projects as well as earn a reasonable return on their investment over the long term.

There will be a 30-day comment period on the proposed new price. microFIT application intake will

continue during that time.

You are being advised of this change because you have applied for a microFIT solar PV contract but have not yet received a conditional offer. Consistent with the microFIT Rules version 1.4, if your solar PV project is a rooftop project, your contract offer will be at the original price of 80.2 ¢/kWh. A rooftop project is one that is being installed on the roof of an existing permanent building, such as a home, small business or other institution. Please review the definition of "Rooftop Facility" in the microFIT Rules, version 1.4. If your solar PV project does not comply with the definition of a rooftop facility, it is considered a ground-mounted project, and you will be offered a contract under the proposed new price category.

The microFIT program was designed on the principle of a reasonable rate of return. Program uptake to date has surpassed what the OPA had anticipated when it launched the program. More than 16,000 applications have been submitted. Virtually all of the projects are for solar PV, and the size of the projects indicates that the majority of applications are for ground-mounted, rather than rooftop, projects.

The cost to install a ground-mounted solar PV project is lower than the cost to install a rooftop project. This proposed new price for ground-mounted solar PV projects will provide ground-mounted solar generators with the same reasonable rate of return that other generators will receive over the 20-year term of their contracts. The OPA believes the proposed new price category is fair, reasonable, more accurately reflects the costs associated with these types of projects and maintains the long-term stability of the program.

The Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure supports this decision because it ensures that the microFIT Program is meeting its program goals and is providing proper value to generators and ratepayers. The OPA believes it is in the best long-term, sustainable interests of the program, generators and ratepayers that a proposed new price category be created now so the program can realize the value it was intended to deliver.

A separate communication will provide instructions on how you are to indicate on your microFIT application whether your project is a rooftop or a ground-mounted project. You will then need to resubmit your application. Ground-mounted applications will be processed following the 30-day comment period.

More information is also available on the [microFIT website](#).

The OPA will be holding webinars on July 6 and July 8, 2010 to discuss the introduction of this proposed new price category and answer questions. The OPA will also accept comments by e-mail and regular mail. Details on how to participate in the webinars or submit comments can be found on the [microFIT website](#).

Regards,
FIT Team

[Comments \(2\)](#)

[Back to normal my !#@&](#)

04 July 2010 Richard Copeland

In my blog of two weeks ago, I titled the entry as "Back to Normal", that was before all hell broke loose. Audrey's brother, the youngest of our generational bunch passed away unexpectedly and too quickly due to undiagnosed cancer. It was a tough time, Audrey away for almost a month and me sporadically. Blogging took a back seat.

We are home again, just winding up a Canada Day weekend with family and our middle daughter has just headed home with 2 of our grandkids, leaving us with something like we were used to before all these happenings. Always seems that the same is no longer the same when major changes take a hard run at life.

As a catch up for the whole month of June energy wise: 2% on propane (no surprises), didn't run the generator in June even though the last half was less than stellar for solar energy. Had to do with few people around I suppose, using less energy.

There is MicroFIT news on the home front and it isn't good. Seems OPA has sent out an email notice informing ground mounted owners to be (and they need to understand also that completed projects are in place) that the tariff rate will be 58 cents instead of 80.2 per KWhr. We are talking retroactive pricing. How does this happen to what was a good program? I will have some further discussion and post the email content soon.

richard

[Add your comment](#)

[Back to normal](#)

14 June 2010 Richard Copeland

It is about time I caught up a bit on what's happening around here. The microFIT activity has been very time consuming and now is the time to get back to abnormal. My normal anyway.

I didn't report on the month of May at month end. Briefly, it was great. Propane consumption at 1% and generator gas at 5 litres, those 5 litres consumed for the maintenance activity of battery equalization. May was so great that I'm afraid it could have been our dog days of summer, since June seems to be coming up with the duck days.

But little to complain even at that. A few fill ups of the portable watering tanks at the pond took place early in the month, but the rains have been good enough to cut back on the human intervention on watering activity. Actually cut to zero. Crops are doing very well, the second crop of radishes in, the peas very close to a crop, the second coming of the greens. Weeding is on for now and not enough hands for that, but we are at it. Some crops, like the peas, can reach a point where the importance of weeding diminishes, as the plants grow higher. In the case of peas it is stringing that takes the stage and we are running new & higher strings every 4 days. Onions and garlic have been successfully weeded. Can you believe I sliced a good size onion tonight at dinner, one that we stored in the cold room and it was our own from last year's crop.

The garlic, now rescued from an onslaught of all weeds imaginable, continues to have brown tips on the foliage. Adam says it is a lack of nitrogen, but it is in the location where we had planted nitrogen fixers last year (legumes). I'm not sure what organic solutions there are for adding nitrogen, but with the G meetings about to happen this is not the time to go out and purchase nitrogen fertilizers.

richard

[Add your comment](#)

[MicroFIT Ground Mount Solar Review Part 4 of 4](#)

08 June 2010 Richard Copeland



enphase Monitor



Ken Reads his Meter

And so, is the proof in the pudding? Yep. These systems definitely work & the outputs gained from each system are well within expectations. As it turns out now, I have friends with a newly developed appreciation for a sunny day, beyond just the pure enjoyment of the weather.

The clean up on each site was done, Power 1 sent in a bobcat and some folks and back filled at the footings and smoothed out the grounds and trenching. As the wild grasses take over the newly landscaped areas will revert quickly to their natural and pleasing states.

The first weeks of nervousness are not over as all consult their monitors and compare with the meter. Bill's smaller system is picking up about 30-32 KWhrs per sunny day while the larger systems are producing about double that – as one would expect. At \$0.802/KWhr the math isn't tough. The discrepancies between the monitors and the meters are yet to be understood fully but are not an area of concern. With Ken's monitoring producing error codes that indicate there are problems with the grid side of things is only mildly of concern. Bill's system is likewise giving out error codes saying things like Grid Instability or AC Voltage out of Range. It may be that the inverters shut down for a minute period of time having 'seen' an error and then reboot to synchronize. The reboot process would produce a difference in readings between the meter and monitor. But our local grid may be in poor working order, & there may be more to report on that over time.

As mentioned the local user monitor can be connected via the internet to a website owned by enphase and the monitoring and reporting can be provided by the site. Given the IP address and a password one can monitor from afar and also get some descriptive graphics. There is a cost for this of about \$7.00 per year per inverter. Power 1 provides one free year to their customers.

The house monitor picks up the data which is carried on one of the electrical lines from the solar array and provides key data for the owner's use. In the monitor photo on this page you can see the IP address (if used) the present output, the accumulated output and at the far right the number of panels producing power. In this case all 57, which tells you at a glance that everything is working.

If one inverter is not working a home based connected computer will tell you which panel is not energized and if you are not at that level of computer sophistication, a quick check outdoors of the indicator light on each inverter can guide you to find the problem. Maintenance looks simple, and I know from my own experience from being off-grid, that the probability of experiencing a problem, after the first month or so, becomes less likely with time.

And so the new energy barons are becoming more comfortable with their investments each passing day. Things are so new that no one has yet experienced a payment for energy sold. Cloudy days are a bit of a bummer but then rain is needed for our gardens. These ground mounted arrays take up very little space on farm sized lands. There is comfort in their silent sharing and quiet production of electrical energy. They are no more an eyesore to the property than a tree. Both effectively produce energy without compromising our environment. Hats off to JP & Juliette, Bill & Jamie, Ken & Jo and Donnie and Margie. The attached files are photos of different stages of the projects. Other photos are present in the previous 3 blogs as well as other blogs beginning with the word MicroFIT.

richard