

Ontario farm families deeply concerned with OPA's rate change proposal for rural solar projects

Members of AGRIS Solar Co-op are looking for the Government to live up to the commitment made to farm family applicants as part of the October 2009 launch of its much-touted microFit program.

A recent announcement by the Ontario Power Authority suggested that farm families may receive an 'unreasonable' return on their investment as they pursue farm income diversification through ground mounted solar projects.

"AGRIS Solar Co-op Members are certain that the Government's announcement did not intend to adversely affect farm family applicants to the microFit program. However, hundreds of rural solar projects are now in jeopardy as a result of this unexpected rate change announcement" said Jim Campbell, Secretary of the Board, AGRIS Solar Co-op.

AGRIS is contacting the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs seeking an urgent face-to-face meeting to offer complete transparency on the expected rates of return of their farm-based ground-mounted solar projects.

"Even if these projects were to go forward at the original price, no co-op member farm family was going to see returns in the range suggested in the announcement's media coverage" added Mr. Campbell.

"In the end, we expect that the Government will live up to their earlier commitment to Ontario's farm family applicants and stay with the 80.2 cents rate promised" concluded Mr. Campbell.

AGRIS Solar Co-op is focused on facilitating participation among the farm community, in the government's MicroFIT program. AGRIS Solar Co-op is an offshoot of AGRIS Co-op, a 1,200 member agricultural FS Cooperative based in Southwestern Ontario. Since launching in April AGRIS Solar Co-op has welcomed over 650 members and continues to grow. The Co-op continues to receive interest from Windsor to Ottawa and everywhere in between as farmers and rural landowners embrace the model as the most effective and efficient way to participate in the MicroFIT program.

On behalf of the Board of Directors AGRIS Solar Co-operative Inc.

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