



BC Hydro's New Solar Rate Splits the Value of Home Energy, SolarEnergies.ca Analysis Finds

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British Columbia's new rooftop-solar rules mark a larger change than the end of traditional net metering, according to a new SolarEnergies.ca analysis. BC Hydro is now treating ordinary surplus electricity and controllable grid support as two different products: exported solar receives a fixed price, while batteries and other flexible devices can earn separate rewards for responding when the grid needs help.

The change took effect July 1, 2026, after approval by the British Columbia Utilities Commission. New self-generation customers now receive 10 cents per kilowatt-hour for excess electricity delivered to BC Hydro under Rate Schedule 2289. The former Rate Schedule 1289 banked surplus kilowatt-hours that could offset later consumption, allowing summer solar production to help cover electricity used in less sunny months.

?The simple version is that the grid is no longer a one-for-one seasonal battery for new solar customers,? stated Vitaliy Lano, owner of SolarEnergies.ca and the publication behind Canada Goes Solar. ?Solar still reduces a bill, but the timing of household consumption now matters much more. A homeowner needs to

know how much power will be used directly and how much will be sold for 10 cents.?

The BCUC said the new price better reflects the value of electricity supplied to BC Hydro and reduces subsidization by customers who do not participate in net metering. New customers and existing customers who accepted BC Hydro's solar rebate moved to the self-generation rate on July 1. Other legacy customers may remain on the previous rate for up to 10 years from the date they originally joined the program.

BC Hydro says its solar rebate can offset the financial effect of the rate change for an average residential participant. Yet averages cannot predict the result for every property. Two homes with the same array can produce different savings if one runs an electric vehicle charger, heat pump or other loads during sunny hours while the other exports most of its production.

The new export rate is fixed rather than time-variable. That means it should not be described as direct payment for sending electricity at the most valuable hour. BC Hydro is paying for flexibility through separate initiatives. Its Peak Saver program rewards customers for reducing or shifting demand during designated events and can automatically adjust eligible thermostats, electric-vehicle chargers and batteries. The utility also lists battery rebates of up to \$5,000 for eligible units enrolled in Peak Saver.

BC Hydro is separately testing a virtual power plant involving 200 residential batteries in Sun Peaks and Harrison Mills. The batteries can be coordinated remotely to provide backup power and supply stored electricity during peak demand. The utility says the pilot will help determine whether household batteries can improve resilience and defer costly grid infrastructure.

?A battery should not be sold as an automatic fix for the new export rate,? Lano commented. ?It has a purchase price, energy losses and a limited service life. Its real value can include backup power, higher self-consumption, time-of-day savings, rebates and grid rewards. Those pieces need to be calculated separately.?

California offers an early warning and a possible preview. Its net-billing system usually pays less than the retail price for daytime exports but can pay more during valuable evening hours. The California Public Utilities Commission reported that nearly 70% of customers entering its net-billing tariff had paired batteries with solar by the end of 2024. British Columbia's fixed export rate is different, but both systems increase the importance of consumption timing and storage.

Australia provides a clearer example of paying for flexibility. New South Wales offers an incentive for connecting eligible household batteries to a virtual power plant, with individual contracts specifying how much capacity can be accessed, when it may be dispatched and what the owner receives.

BC Hydro's Power Smart 2.0 plan points in a similar direction. The utility plans to invest more than \$1 billion over three years in efficiency and demand-response offers, targeting 800 megawatts of capacity savings by fiscal 2030. Its programs suggest that a kilowatt-hour available during a grid constraint may eventually be valued differently from an uncontrolled midday solar export.

Lano added, "The important change is not that solar stopped working. It is that the value calculation became more specific. Good proposals should show onsite use, exports, the applicable purchase rate, the 10-cent sale price and any battery rewards without blending them into one optimistic payback number."

SolarEnergies.ca recommends that B.C. homeowners request hourly or monthly production-and-consumption estimates before signing a solar contract. Quotes should clearly identify which BC Hydro service rate is assumed and should treat introductory battery incentives separately from recurring savings. The publication will continue tracking RS 2289, Peak Saver and the residential virtual power plant pilot as real performance data becomes available.

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Solar Energies In Canada SEIC

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