

Building a stronger Alberta



September 26, 2007

Alberta government unleashes province's wind power

Calgary... Alberta's wind producers received a major boost from the provincial government with the removal of the 900 MW threshold on wind power generation.

"This government supports the development of renewable and alternative energy sources and through this action, Alberta will continue to lead the nation in clean, sustainable wind-generated electricity," said Energy Minister Mel Knight. "This important step is significant given the unique challenges in managing wind integration in Alberta."

In 2006, the 900 MW threshold was put in place by the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) as a temporary measure to ensure the reliability of Alberta's electric system as additional wind power was added to the power grid. The AESO and the Canadian Wind Energy Association (CanWEA) launched the nation's first sophisticated wind forecasting study in February 2007 to provide the information needed to address reliability issues.

"Through this work and other initiatives, we are now confident we have the information required to remove the threshold on wind power in Alberta," said Dale McMaster, Chief Executive Officer of the AESO. "We will be implementing measures that will enable us to add more wind to Alberta's power supply while maintaining reliable grid operation and ensuring the fair, efficient and openly competitive operation of the Alberta electricity market."

With more than 500 MW of wind forecast to be connected to the grid by the end of this year, Alberta will lead the country with over four per cent of its total installed generation capacity coming from wind power. This is four times the national average of only one per cent.

"CanWEA and its members look forward to the expanded opportunities made available in the Alberta market by this announcement," stated Robert Hornung, CanWEA president. "We also remain committed to collaborating with the AESO to quickly elaborate and implement the details of the Market and Operational Framework for wind integration."

The development of renewable energy, such as wind power, supports Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to build a stronger Alberta. Other government priorities are to govern with integrity and transparency, manage growth pressures, improve Albertans' quality of life and promote safe and secure communities.

- 30 -

Backgrounder: Additional information on Alberta's wind industry

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Alberta's wind industry

Why the 900 MW wind threshold was originally put in place?

The 900 MW threshold was introduced by the AESO in April 2006 as a temporary measure to ensure system reliability until work could be done with industry on ways to accommodate more wind.

What makes the large scale integration of wind to the electricity grid so challenging?

The basic nature of an electricity system is that supply and demand must be in perfect balance at all times.

Wind power can increase and decrease rapidly. Wind patterns can also frequently run counter to the demand for electricity. When wind suddenly ramps up or down, conventional generation such as coal, gas or hydro-electricity must be immediately dispatched or power exchanged with other provinces to offset the imbalance.

How much wind is connected to the grid in Alberta?

According to the AESO, Alberta currently has 497 MW connected to the grid. There is also about 5,500 MW of wind generation in the queue.

Now that the threshold is removed, what are the net steps to getting more wind power on the grid?

The AESO conducted extensive consultation with CanWEA, wind developers and market participants to identify the requirements of adding more wind power to the grid.

With general acceptance of the Market and Operational Framework for Wind Integration in Alberta (published March 2007) that outlined the rules, obligations and costs of wind integration, work will begin immediately to implement this strategy.

How will all this wind generated power get to customers?

Now that the threshold has been removed, the AESO will proceed with obtaining regulatory approval for further transmission development to accommodate wind power development in Southern Alberta.

Transmission planning will be based on an appropriate forecast of potential wind development to ensure projects have adequate transmission capacity to deliver wind generated power to consumers.

The approved transmission development for the 240 kV line from Pincher Creek to Lethbridge is forecast to be in service in early 2009 and the Need Application for Part A of the Southeast transmission project will soon be filed with the Energy and Utilities Board. These two initiatives will enable a total of about 1,200 MW of wind to be interconnected to the grid. This important first step is the beginning of needed transmission development to support robust wind growth in southern Alberta. To this his end, the AESO has started consultation to ensure future transmission development can accommodate further wind power development in the south of the province.

For more information on wind power go to: www.energy.gov.ab.ca; www.aeso.ca; www.canwea.ca

Established in 1984, the Canadian Wind Energy Association (CanWEA) is a not-for-profit, national association representing Canada's wind energy industry. Our 300+ corporate members represent large and small wind turbine manufacturers, component suppliers, wind energy project developers, wind farm owners and operators, utilities, and a broad range of service providers. Our membership also includes a number of non-corporate organizations and individuals with an interest in Canada's wind energy industry.

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