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Re[NEW]able energy

The first law of thermodynamics tells us: “Energy cannot be created nor destroyed, it can only change form.” We are a city rich in energy – from our traditional oil and gas resources to abundant sunshine and strong winds. Calgary is currently undergoing an **energy shift**, and this shift is creating some exciting opportunities and pathways for the renewables industry.

Donald Jantz and his family live in northwest Calgary. Last year, Donald installed solar panels on the roof of his home. “We moved back to Calgary from a big, smoggy city where my son developed asthma. The importance of clean air became really obvious to me. I wanted to be able to tell my kids that I did everything I could to reduce our **carbon footprint**,” says Donald.

The panels provide most of the electricity that the Jantz family uses and the online reporting platform allows them to see how much each panel produces every 15 minutes. “My neighbours and friends have been curious and I’ve noticed that people get really excited about the idea of having energy independence and ownership. You can’t get more local than your own roof.”

Change is not just happening on individual rooftops, it is happening at all levels. The City of Calgary was the first Canadian Municipality to purchase almost 100 per cent of its electricity for corporate operations from renewable energy, which comes from Alberta-based wind power. Developers and home builders are incorporating renewable energy

into design and construction, big oil companies are investing heavily in renewables, and post-secondary institutions are scaling up training and research in **renewable energy**.

David Silburn is the General Manager of Green Building Technologies at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT). David and his research team work with industry partners to develop and implement new technologies, provide training and education, and advance innovation through applied research. "A lot has changed in the last few years," says David. "We have seen an increased demand for both our research and training offerings. Oil and gas workers and petroleum engineers are upgrading to diversify their skill-sets and improve their **career options**. We're also seeing individuals who want to do small, home-based projects; interest is coming from all levels," reflects David.

The energy in Calgary is shifting – both figuratively and literally. "We are moving towards a different energy future. It is not going to look the way it always has," says Megan Zimmerman, Manager of Renewable Energy for Calgary Economic Development. "We are starting to look at energy as a system rather than a sector. This system has many pieces and players and within it there is a role for everyone. Calgary will continue to be a **global energy leader**. We have the talent, skill, resources and workforce to make this transition," says Megan.

Megan points to the Energy Futures Lab (EFL) as a shining example of this **system's thinking** and multi-stakeholder engagement. The Energy Futures Lab brings together 40 Fellows representing a wide range of voices (from government to oil and gas and clean technology, to Indigenous communities, education and policy) to guide a process for transforming Alberta's energy system.

Energy is a global challenge and cities around the world are grappling with planning for a low carbon future. A decade ago, Calgarians imagined a city fueled by diverse and renewable energy sources with low environmental impact and decreased greenhouse gas emissions. We are becoming the city we imagined and there is opportunity for us all to be part of this new and exciting energy.

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