



## Efficient homes are affordable homes

Misty Jarvi and her family had been living in a deteriorating mobile home in Cohasset for years. Single-paned windows and gaps in the floor let in the cold during frigid winters, while black mold crept across the ceiling. Misty's youngest daughter, Claritie, had breathing problems, using an inhaler and medications for her cough.

The family needed help.

Meanwhile, Sam Friesen, our Managing Director, Buildings, who designed and built sustainable homes prior to working at Fresh Energy, had spent 13 years refining a holistic systems approach to building that achieves near-Passive House performance without added cost. When Sam presented the concept at a northern Minnesota housing conference, Jamie Mjolsness from Itasca County Habitat for Humanity tracked him down. "If I could build better, cleaner homes for less money," she said, "Why would I not build them for the families we serve?"

**Sam and Jamie partnered on a new model home — one that uses thick, well-insulated walls that Sam calls "Minnesota walls," all-electric appliances, and solar panels.** The wider framing lumber for thicker walls comes from a local Deer River lumberyard that uses an air-drying technique resulting in carbon-negative materials. They partnered with Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency's Youthbuild Program, which trains at-risk youth in the trades, to construct the home.

**"Efficient homes are healthy homes," said Sam. "Now that we know this is a cost-effective way to build, it's just a matter of scaling these methods across the state, a process Fresh Energy is excited to support."**

This last December, the Jarvi family moved into their new, efficient clean home built on the same land they love. The home weathered the minus 50-degree wind chill this January with no problems, and their energy bills are much lower. And best of all: since moving in, Claritie has hardly touched her inhaler. Her parents and teacher have noticed how much her chronic cough and breathing problems have improved since moving in.

"We'd never really go back to the old way of building," said Jamie. "This is the future for us, because everybody's on board and everybody wins." Itasca County Habitat plans to build several more homes this way in the coming years, with ambitions to scale the model statewide.

We're facing three crises at once — climate change, a housing shortage, and an affordability squeeze. This one home in Cohasset is small yet tangible proof that the solutions can be realized in tandem. **Building efficient homes with sustainable materials that run on clean electricity isn't just good for the planet — it's good for Minnesotans' health and pocketbooks.** And that's something all Minnesotans support.

## Letter from leadership



It has been an exceedingly busy and difficult winter for the Fresh Energy team. I'm so very proud of how our staff have showed up both professionally and personally in their communities — continuing to drive clean energy progress while supporting Minnesotans at risk amid the ICE surge. **Throughout it all, our commitment to community and each other has remained stronger than ever.**

We kicked off the Minnesota legislative session with our fourth Lagers and Legislation gathering. More than 90 members of our Action Network and friends of Fresh Energy came out for a conversation about our policy agenda for the legislative session. If you missed it, be sure to check out the blog post mentioned in the first story on this page!

In February, I also attended Energy Foundation's GRIT convening in Chicago (pictured above) and moderated a panel discussion with state regulators about decarbonizing our electricity and gas systems. It's exciting to be driving conversations with other thought leaders and changemakers about this, as well as data centers, regional transmission, and beyond.

I hope you can join us for our Benefit Breakfast on October 8! We'll be joined by keynote speaker Jesse Jenkins (see the back page for more). You won't want to miss this one!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Cherne-Hendrick".

Margaret Cherne-Hendrick  
Chief Executive Officer

## Clean energy at the Capitol



Minnesota's 2026 legislative session has started, and Fresh Energy is at the Capitol advocating for bold climate policy. It's a complex year: The House is divided at a 67-67 split, and it's a non-budget year with a condensed timeline. A priority for Fresh Energy is defending Minnesota's 100% clean electricity law. We are also advocating for capping ratepayers' energy burden, exploring a potential future for sustainable aviation fuel to reduce airplane emissions, building geothermal energy for cleaner heating systems, cleaning up the heavy industry sector, continuing to build Minnesota's market for electric vehicles, and helping more Minnesotans use low-cost solar power. You can count on Fresh Energy to testify at hearings, meet with legislators, and bring our technical expertise to every step of the process. Get the latest updates on our blog and podcast at [bit.ly/2026-session](https://bit.ly/2026-session).

## Time to tackle industrial emissions



Minnesota's industrial sector is now the fourth-largest source of emissions in the state. Most of these emissions can be reduced by making customized decarbonization plans for 59 high-emitting facilities in the state. While we can electrify low- and medium-heat facilities, high-heat facilities will need fuel switching programs to replace dirty fuels with clean alternatives. Fresh Energy, Great Plains Institute, 5 Lakes Energy, and the U of M's Natural Resources Research Institute recently released a white paper about how we can build a net-zero industry in Minnesota with new strategies, clean technologies, and stakeholder input. Check out the white paper at [bit.ly/net-zero-mn](https://bit.ly/net-zero-mn).

## Electric vehicles charging ahead



The electric vehicle (EV) market has changed a lot over the past year: federal and state tax credits have ended, Canada signed a trade deal with China to allow affordable EVs into their market, more used EVs are available, and more charging networks are being built across the Midwest even as federal funding remains in limbo. No matter the news, EVs remain the smart choice for your next vehicle.

Check out Fresh Energy's recent Q&A about the EV landscape with Jukka Kukkonen of Shift2Electric, and Anjali Bains and Nick Haeg of Fresh Energy, to learn more about the market, technology developments, charging infrastructure, and more. Learn more at [bit.ly/2026-ev-market](https://bit.ly/2026-ev-market).

**Learn more about these stories at [fresh-energy.org](https://fresh-energy.org)**

# What's up with data centers?



Data centers are making front page news, and for good reason: new “hyperscale” data centers use a lot of electricity. They would likely require new investments to our electricity system — new electricity generation and energy infrastructure — which means they could massively help or hinder our transition to clean, affordable, reliable electricity.

**Thanks to Minnesota’s existing regulatory system, along with the state’s new data center law that Fresh Energy supported at Minnesota’s 2025 legislative session, we have good guardrails in place.** Data centers built in Minnesota must comply with our 100% clean electricity by 2040 law — no exceptions. Additionally, they have to pay their fair share: data centers are regulated by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and will be placed into their own “large load” customer class — meaning they must pay for any infrastructure improvements they necessitate — not Minnesota’s residents and businesses.

Fresh Energy is continuing to advocate for better policies and regulations. We are suggesting that regulators require electric utilities to use better, clearer forecasts of how much electricity they may need to meet demand. We are also recommending commonsense regulations to protect ratepayers from paying for stranded assets if a data center leaves town. Finally, we are working to address behind-the-meter generation, when data centers build their own electricity infrastructure for their needs, to ensure regulators have proper measures in place to protect Minnesota’s climate and communities.

We also think data centers should pilot innovative solutions. By utilizing flexibility practices and ramping down their electricity use when the grid is strained, data centers would require substantially less electricity. And if they need clean resources, we believe they should pilot clean technologies right here in Minnesota to show the world how we can build a carbon-free economy.

**It’s essential that Minnesota is forward-looking to ensure data centers are regulated in the public interest. The data center law passed last year must be viewed as a floor, not a ceiling, to ensure data centers are supporting our transition to a clean energy economy that is affordable and equitable.**

For more than three decades, Fresh Energy has provided energy policy leadership rooted in data, believing strongly that we can’t afford to let fear guide our hand as we take on the climate crisis and Minnesota’s transition to clean energy. Scan the QR or visit [bit.ly/FE-data-center](https://bit.ly/FE-data-center) to learn more.



## Donor profile



RJ and Teresa Devick have been philanthropic givers for a long time. And when they were introduced to Fresh Energy’s J. Drake Hamilton, they loved learning how Fresh Energy is creating a cleaner future for all Minnesotans through big, systems-level change.

“We have electric vehicles and solar power for our house, but we’re just two people. **By making a financial gift to Fresh Energy, we’re able to make a much bigger impact,**” said RJ.

Seeing Fresh Energy advocate for bringing the benefits of clean energy to every corner of Minnesota is important to RJ and Teresa, from cleaner electricity to electric vehicles to efficient homes. Plus, they’re supportive of the clean jobs and businesses that will thrive, too.

“We really care about the environment. **It’s so important to us to build a cleaner future for our three daughters and the next generations,**” said Teresa.

“Fresh Energy is very effective at advocating for big, necessary, state-level changes. The more support they have, the more effective they will be,” said RJ.

As Power Circle donors, RJ and Teresa are supporting Fresh Energy with consistent charitable giving.

You can join RJ and Teresa by making a Power Circle contribution of \$1,000 or more today. **Please contact Meggie LaValley at [lavalley@fresh-energy.org](mailto:lavalley@fresh-energy.org).**

## Ready to turn climate ambition into action?

Rally your network as a **table captain** at Fresh Energy's Benefit Breakfast or become a **sponsor** — and we'll fuel progress together. Contact Meggie LaValley at [lavalley@fresh-energy.org](mailto:lavalley@fresh-energy.org) or 651 726 7561.



# Leading the Charge

*The path to net-zero in uncertain times.*

We are experiencing a time of unprecedented threats to clean energy and climate progress in Minnesota and across the country. However, amid this historic uncertainty, the path to net-zero and maintaining our state's energy autonomy is clearer than ever.

**Together, in the face of deregulation and rollback of federal investments, we must create a new blueprint for an equitable clean energy transition. But what does that plan look like and how do we achieve it?**

Join Fresh Energy and **keynote speaker Jesse Jenkins** at our 11th annual **Benefit Breakfast on October 8, 2026**. Together, we will dive into the abundance of clean energy opportunities available to states, including current technologies and how to deploy them at scale, the role of private sector investment, scaling markets, and building political will — and the policy solutions that can underpin it all.



Jesse Jenkins is a nationally recognized researcher and energy systems modeler, analyst, writer, and outspoken thought leader on the clean energy transition and has played a crucial role helping inform U.S. climate and energy policy.

**Register today and save your seat for this dynamic conversation that is sure to leave participants informed, energized, and inspired about the pathway forward.**

All proceeds from this event support Fresh Energy's work to design, influence, and implement equitable policy to continue ambitiously advancing a carbon-neutral economy in Minnesota and the Midwest.

**Scan or visit**  
[fresh-energy.org/benefitbreakfast26](https://fresh-energy.org/benefitbreakfast26)  
to learn more and register

