

State Officials Welcome Clean Energy Advocates to State House for NECEC Clean Energy Day, Weigh in on Hot-Topics Facing the State

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On Tuesday May 5th, members of state government, clean energy advocates, and business representatives assembled at the Massachusetts State House for the [New England Clean Energy Council's \(NECEC's\)](#) fourth annual Clean Energy Day. According to Peter Rothstein, President of the NECEC, the day was "an opportunity to get the word out about the importance of clean energy in Massachusetts," a valuable chance for stakeholders to engage with their elected officials about ensuring continued growth in the clean energy sector.

The day began with a lunchtime speaking program with clean energy award honorees and remarks from legislative and executive officials. Visitors listened with rapt attention as [Senator Ben Downing](#), [Senator Mark Pacheco](#), Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Matthew Beaton, and others offered their thoughts on the state of the clean energy sector as Massachusetts finds itself at a crossroads on a number of important issues.

First to address the crowded hall was Senator Downing, who spoke with measured optimism and about the state's track-record and future prospects in clean energy. Citing the tens of thousands of clean energy jobs created, the vast increases in installed solar capacity, and the state's first-in-the-nation Energy Efficiency ranking, he acknowledged that "we have a lot to be proud of here in Massachusetts." But Downing gave a forceful reminder, as he has done before, that "being better than bad isn't good enough." He elaborated: "Yes, we've been a leader in clean energy. That doesn't mean things are perfect everywhere in the state. Our responsibility is to continue to go higher than the folks around the country who are still debating the existence of climate change."

Assuming the podium as the healthy applause for Downing dissipated was [Governor Charlie Baker's](#) point person on energy, Secretary Matthew Beaton. A former legislator, Beaton reflected on his new perspective on Clean Energy Day and echoed Downing's praise of the great clean energy successes that have been made in Massachusetts, asserting that they were possible thanks "largely to the advocacy efforts of the 'boots on the ground' in the Clean Energy industry." Beaton reaffirmed the Baker administration's commitment to clean energy, not only for the environmental and energy benefits it brings, but also for its economic importance in the state's GDP and job growth. "If you think I'm going to be the secretary who drops the ball and lets that all go away, you've got another thing coming," Beaton proclaimed to raucous applause.

Addressing the recently released [report](#) to the legislature by the Solar and Net Metering Task Force, Beaton confirmed that Baker's administration was still committed to reaching the goal of 1600 MW of solar installation by 2020. With the report in hand, he told the crowd, "now it's time for us [the executive and legislative branches] to get to work to find a long-term solution with reasonable rate-payer costs." Turning to a carefully worded statement, Beaton declared emphatically that "any increase in Net Metering caps must be accompanied by substantive changes in the solar incentive program," effectively drawing a line in the sand for the administration as debate picks up in the legislature.

Throughout his remarks, Beaton made repeated reference to maximizing the effectiveness of every dollar spent on clean energy programs and ensuring that costs were not overly burdensome for Massachusetts ratepayers. Despite re-commitments to the Global Warming Solutions Act's greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets and the state's energy efficiency programs, Beaton left the podium to noticeably moderate applause from the crowd of clean energy advocates and stakeholders. Perhaps more than anything else, this was emblematic of the tensions and uneasiness that surround the forthcoming legislative battles as groups jockey for position.

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