

Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce CEO is Wrong on Renewable Electricity

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In a recent [guest column](#), Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce President and CEO David May criticized the 100% renewable electricity resolution that Fort Collins Partners for Clean Energy (FCP4CE) submitted to City Council in early May. He made the bizarre claim that achieving 100% renewable electricity by 2030 wouldn't really be sustainable.

May referred to the [U.N. World Commission on Environment and Development definition of sustainable development](#) to make his case. That definition is based on three "pillars": economic development, social development and environmental protection. Without acknowledging how or why 100% renewable electricity would help protect the environment, May alleged that 100% renewables would undercut social development and economic development. Both of these allegations are specious.

According to May, 100% renewable electricity would harm social development because "unsubsidized renewables are expensive," and high electric rates would fall heavily "on the low income population." In the real world, [both renewables and fossil fuels are subsidized](#) - the latter more heavily than the former. And the costs of renewables continue to drop precipitously, unlike those of fossil fuels. The Platte River Power Authority (PRPA) has stated that its plan to increase renewable generating capacity significantly would actually result in a [rate decrease of 2.5 – 5%](#). So much for May's claim that renewable electricity is expensive compared to fossil fuel electricity— that's simply no longer true.

May's claim that renewable electricity would harm economic development is based on the false notion that renewables make the electric grid unreliable, on top of his false claim that renewables are expensive. The Platte River Power Authority released [a study](#) last fall showing how it could provide "Zero Net Carbon" (ZNC) electricity to its owner communities by 2030. Nothing in that analysis suggested that ZNC electricity would be any less reliable than electricity generated under a business-as-usual scenario. In the PRPA study, intermittent wind and solar power would be backed up by hydroelectricity, the regional grid, and a new gas-fired power plant. Batteries, thermal storage, and pumped hydroelectricity are other ways to compensate for the intermittency of wind and solar generation. So much for May's claim that renewable electricity is unreliable.

Missing from May's critique is any mention of either climate change or the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals contained in the City's Climate Action Plan. Unlike either the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce or the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, FCP4CE recognizes that climate change poses an existential threat to human civilization. We further recognize that that threat must be met with decisive efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to those climate impacts that can no longer be avoided.

We believe that many Fort Collins businesses purportedly represented by David May share our concerns. Those concerns are manifested by high participation in the City's ClimateWise program, and

the interest expressed by many employers – including Anheuser-Busch, Hewlett Packard, Walmart, and Schneider Electric - in obtaining 100% of their electricity from renewables by 2030 or sooner. We call on those businesses that do not subscribe to May's benighted views concerning renewable electricity and the climate crisis to express their concerns directly both to him and Fort Collins City Councilmembers at CityLeaders@fcgov.com. If not you, who, and if not now, when?

Kevin Cross is the convener of the Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG), which is a member of FCP4CE. For a more in-depth critique of May's position on our 100% renewable electricity resolution, visit FCSG's website: <http://fcsg.fccan.org>.