

WHAT IS AN REA?

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REA is an abbreviation for rural electrification association. It is an example of grass roots activism by rural Albertans that has had lasting benefits across several generations. You enjoy electricity today because other rural Albertans cooperated to make something possible that seemed impossible.

AN REA IS A COOPERATIVE EXAMPLE OF GRASS ROOTS ACTIVISM

REA is an abbreviation used in Alberta to refer to a rural electrification association. Alberta REAs came into being on the heels of the success of the Rural Electrification Administration established by President Roosevelt in 1935 in the United States. At that time, 90% of the rural homes in the USA did not have electricity. By the '50's that statistic shifted and over 90% of farms in the USA had electricity (NRECA, 2015). Although rural electrification was successful in the US, rural Alberta remained in the dark.

When World War II finally ended more than 90% of Alberta farmers were still without power and they were actively looking for possible solutions (Dolphin, 1993, p.62). Although the USA seemed like a world away, news of the success of their rural electrification effort was reaching the ears of farmers and politicians in Alberta. The news was creating hope of finally enjoying the benefits of electricity in rural Alberta.

The hope lay in establishing cooperatives under the Cooperatives

Associations Act called REAs that would build and own the electric distribution system in a specified rural area. Springbank REA Ltd was the first REA to be incorporated in 1947 (Dolphin, 1993, p. 68). Over the next 30 years another 415 REAs were incorporated and power in rural homes and farms was no longer an anomaly (Dolphin, 1993, p. 69). Many REAs have sold out or amalgamated over the years, but yours remains an example of grass roots activism, cooperation, and determination. Own it and protect it!

Sources:

Dolphin, Frank & John. 1993. *Country Power*. Reprinted in 2013 in Sherwood Park: Dream Write Publishing Ltd.

NRECA. 2015. *History of Electric Co-ops*. Retrieved from <http://www.nreca.coop/about-electric-cooperatives/history-of-electric-co-ops/>

YOU ARE AN OWNER

As a member of a cooperative REA you are an owner. That's why you will see and hear the term member-owner. Your REA membership is not like a Costco membership. You don't just buy a membership and then shop. When you buy your REA membership you become an owner of the REA. Ownership comes with responsibilities and advantages.

MEMBER-OWNER CONTROL

Being a member-owner means you can exercise control through the process of democratic voting and election of a representative Board. Every owner has an equal voice, with one vote per member-owner.

MEMBER-OWNER BENEFIT

Member-owners share the benefits of owning and operating an REA when they maintain cost-effective rates and reinvest profits back into their own distribution system.



COOPERATIVE FACTS

1. 40% of Canadians hold membership in at least one co-op (ICA, 2015).
2. 100,000 Canadians serve on their cooperative's Board or committees (Co-op Zone, 2015).
3. As of 2012, there were 8,500 cooperatives in Canada (Richards, 2012, p. 5).

Sources:

Co-op Zone. 2015. *Cooperatives in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://coopzone.coop/en/coopsincda>

ICA. 2015. International Cooperative Association, *Facts and Figures*. Retrieved from <http://monitor.coop/en/facts-and-figures>

Richards, Blake. 2012. House of Commons, *Status of Co-operatives in Canada, Report of the Special Committee on Co-operatives*. September 2012, 41st Parliament, First Session. Retrieved from <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

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REA Name

REA Address

REA Phone

REA email