

# Local firms at the forefront of solar power technology

By **EAMONN MAHER**  
Staff Writer

Things are literally looking up for solar energy production in Ontario and Georgetown is at the industry's forefront with a unique project.

Entrepreneur Bill Melnik, who owns the BRC Sustainable Elements ergonomic furniture manufacturing company on Armstrong Ave., jumped into the solar energy business 18 months ago and is enthusiastic about its potential both as a growth industry and an environmentally friendly source of electrical power.

Over the past couple of months, the BRC location and the ISPA Woodworking plant—also on Armstrong Ave. have had

commercial solar generators installed 10 feet above the roof on massive steel grids that are integrated into the buildings.

The 308-kilowatt, 35,000 square foot BRC facility produces enough power for 30 homes per year and has a lifespan of some 30 to 50 years.

"Some people, when they hit their midlife crisis, buy Harley-Davidsons, sports cars or fast boats. Me, I built a solar system," joked Melnik, who is also president of Solarform Canada, at a rooftop reception at BRC recently.

"If we could build a giant solar park from here to Ottawa 20 miles wide, that's all it would take to power every single home in North America forever. That's

it. Then you think about the pipeline they're going to build from (Alberta) to Texas, and we're going to do that for just 20 years of oil supply?"

The elevated solar panels allow air to flow underneath them, increasing efficiency while reducing operating temperatures, a design among the first of its kind in North America. Another manufacturing firm next door to BRC has signed on to use its rooftop as a source of renewable energy and Melnik said the industry's potential is "limitless."

Governments around the world implementing Feed-In-Tariff Policies and Ontario's FIT Program is among the lead innovators in the encouragement of the development of renew-



An overhead view shows the newly installed solar panels on the BRC Business Enterprises 35,000 square-foot manufacturing facility on Armstrong Ave. in Georgetown. The panels are expected to generate enough electricity to power 30 homes for a year.

able energy.

Melnik noted that in just a few months time, the efficiency of the solar panels has increased

by 20 per cent, while production costs have dropped by 40 per cent as more efficient methods are discovered.

## Community-wide Earth Week events continue on Saturday, April 28

With activities for everyone, Earth Day celebrations will continue Saturday, April 28.

"Halton Hills is committed to protecting the environment. We recognize that the positive actions we make for the environment today will create a better future for all to enjoy. This is why we celebrate Earth Day through a variety of events. I invite all

residents and their families to take part in this year's Earth Day celebrations," said Mayor Rick Bonnette.

Activities will include:

- Tree Sale at the Robert C. Austin Operations Centre (Saturday April 28)—from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Town's Robert C. Austin Operations Centre, 11620 Trafalgar Road, Georgetown. Stop by for \$5 trees, free mulch

and wood chips, free electronic recycling, barbecue and more. Donations to local food banks are gratefully accepted. More details are available at: [www.haltonhills.ca/earthday](http://www.haltonhills.ca/earthday)

- Earth Day Fair (Saturday April 28)—from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the third annual Earth Day Fair will take place at the Georgetown Market Place, 280 Guelph Street (Georgetown).

Bring your family and enjoy live animals, interactive children's activities and informative environmental group displays. Donations to local food banks are accepted.

- Green Leadership Tours (Saturday April 28)—Curious about practical ways of squeezing efficiency and savings out of your home? Interested in exploring the possibility of gen-

erating extra revenue for your business or home by installing solar panels on the rooftop? What about a tour of the Willow Park Ecology Centre, a nature preserve located in Norval?

As part of this year's Town of Halton Hills' Earth Week celebrations, the new Green Leadership Tours will showcase a number of local interesting and

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