

Community demands council focus on jobs during green energy negotiations

By Chase Jarrett
Writer

A wind farm developer has told Six Nations he cannot guarantee jobs for Six Nations people at his green energy project because the construction industry "is reluctant to hire First Nations workers."

Borex Inc., Port Ryerse Wind project manager Adam Rosso's comment sent a ripple through the group of about 20 people, including a group of union skilled tradesmen, at last Wednesday's community meeting seeking input and support of two green energy projects, negotiated by the band, but that are not guaranteeing jobs.

Six Nations Elected Council's consultation and accommodation process team (CAP) was wrapping up what it calls a series of engagement sessions only to find themselves on the hot seat for failing to negotiate jobs or bursaries.

"It was kind of discouraging for me that jobs aren't looked at as a first when considering these projects," said Brandi Jonathan, GREAT's apprenticeship coordinator.

A Six Nations construction worker told the meeting, the green energy projects don't hire skilled Six Nations people.

"You have union skilled trades men sitting here but we aren't getting the jobs," he told the owners.

"You only have labourers jobs for a day digging ditches. We're being left out in the cold so why should this be any different."

Borex Inc. and Prowind Canada are the two latest green energy companies knocking on Six Nations' doors wanting to build wind turbines on traditional territory in the Nanfan Treaty area.

Between the two projects, the owners are offer-

ing half a million dollars, a \$4000 education bursary, and mentorship opportunities for Six Nations workers.

Still, band council's CAP (consultation and accommodation process) team had their feet held to the fire as Jonathan, along with other community members, asked why jobs weren't part of the deal with Borex Inc.

Six Nations Band council has seven different green energy projects at different stages of negotiations.

But according to Jonathan, even when green energy companies hire Six

from what I can see, is on some projects that have taken place (Six Nations people) are hired. But once the project is gone from the community that person is now unemployed because the project has moved on.

"It could be the individuals not wanting to travel, but I would hazard to guess it is just like 'okay you're laid off now we'll see you later' sort of thing," she said.

She told band planner Amy Lickers, who organized the meeting, "We have a 16 to 20 per cent unemployment rate. It's not like



Prowind representative Juan Anderson (left) said they intend to work with GREAT to ensure Six Nations people are hired on the Gunn Hill Wind Farm Project in Norwich, but Borex rep Adam Rosso (far right) said he will not guarantee jobs on the Port Ryerse Wind Project in Norfolk County saying construction companies are "reluctant to hire First Nations" workers. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

Nations people as part of a deal, resulting jobs tend to be temporary.

"They don't set workers up for long careers in the trades," she said. "What's been happening now, and

we don't have a group of people who are looking for opportunities."

Lickers said GREAT does not have a representative on the CAP team to provide expertise on jobs. "GREAT



Union skilled tradesmen told a band council community meeting on two green energy projects held last week skilled Six Nations workers aren't getting hired at the slew of green energy projects band council is negotiating settlements on. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

would have to have a full time person assigned to that," she told Turtle Island News. "With all our projects."

But when asked why the CAP team is not using local experts including GREAT, to help in negotiations Lickers said she would raise the matter.

Six Nations Band council's negotiating team is made up of chairman Lonnie Bomberry, consultant Phil Monture and economic development manager Matt Jamieson.

Borex Inc. has leased land from private owners east of Port Ryerse in Norfolk County. The company wants to negotiate a deal with Six Nations for use of treaty lands to construct a 10 megawatt, four wind turbine project.

Prowind Canada is planning for a 25 megawatt, 10 wind turbine in the town-

ship of Norwich in Oxford County.

Jonathan asked CAP team reps, and representatives of the two green energy companies: "I'd like to know what's being done in negotiations with the owners of these projects to ensure that things are taken into consideration like the hiring of Aboriginal people on these projects."

"These are supposed to benefit the community. You say there are employment opportunities available, but once you talk to the owners they're not necessarily the ones who are going to be hiring for the project."

Adam Rosso, business manager of Borex Inc., said what Borex can do to hire Six Nations people is limited. "Most hiring is from contractors— what we do is make sure our construction management team knows there's opportunities available at any First Nation we're working with."

He said jobs were not hammered out with the CAP team because "when it was brought up in discussion it was outside my jurisdiction to grant specific jobs to the projects. It just wasn't something that was necessarily on the table at this stage— we're not responsible for hiring."

When pressed about why the Borex deal lacked an education bursary, Rosso said, "There isn't room in

the project for a bursary. There are better benefits I thought would bring better value," he said, referring to small, 500 kilowatt Six Nations solar farm training of Six Nations people to build it.

Prowind has said they will work with GREAT.

Prowind's Vice President Juan Anderson told the crowd: "From what I've heard there's a fair amount of experience in the community with projects like these. We will be happy to pass on any resumes we get and we'll also be going through GREAT. We're fairly confident the people in the community can compete for those jobs— just like anyone else."

Community planner Amy Lickers, said jobs and bursaries were not secured with Borex because band council is trying to diversify what the community is getting. "We are looking for different opportunities. There are a lot of bursaries that go unclaimed," she said.

Lickers said council is looking to establish a trust to hold and recirculate money coming in from green energy projects back into the community.

A report on the community feedback will be presented to council. But after last Wednesday's meeting, community planners will be pushing the final report back to Feb. 25.

At a glance:

Port Ryerse Wind Power Project by Borex Inc.

-5 megawatts with four turbines

Benefits include:

-Royalty Payment of \$750/MW/year for 20 years (estimated \$150,000)

-Mentorship during Small FIT on-reserve solar development

-chance to jointly develop green energy projects along the Haldimand Tract in future; potentially own up to

15% in each contemplated project

-no job guarantees

Gunn's Hill Wind Farm proposed by Prowind Canada

-25 megawatts with 10 turbines

Benefits Include:

-10 per cent equity partnership after a \$1.8 million investment with revenue estimated at \$3 million over 20 years

-(or without investment) Royalty default of \$1000/MW/year for 20

years (estimated \$360,000)

-\$4,000 per year for 20 years from the Gunn's Hill Wind Farm Aboriginal Student Bursary for post secondary education will be exclusively available to Six Nations of the Grand River members.

-mentorship during Small FIT on-reserve solar development

-Six Nations members resumes passed to the hiring offices and considered for employment.