

Confederacy to get lease moneys for secret solar farm approval

By Donna Duric
Writer

Construction started three weeks ago on a 345-acre solar farm on unceded Six Nations lands west of Hagersville, after the Haudenosaunee Development Institute (HDI) gave the green light to go ahead.

The project went forward with the company, First Solar, following HDI policies and procedures, including payment of the HDI's \$7,000 application fee.

But the company has also consulted with band council, says Peter Carrie, vice-president of Sarnia-based First Solar Development Canada Inc.

Six Nations Band Council has not publically announced what agreement it has come to.

The 20-megawatt solar farm is located in the eastern portion of the former City of Nanticoke on Concession Road 12.

It is expected to go on line

in December and will power 2,800 homes.

First Solar Development Canada constructs solar panels, puts them in place, and then sells them. General Electric and Alterra Power Corporation will assume ownership of the solar farm once the project is complete.

Carrie says it followed the HDI's procedures since the beginning stages of the project four years ago and did an archeological assessment on the land, which was also overseen by the HDI.

"There's been quite a bit of ongoing dialogue," said Carrie. "We have good relationships with Aaron (Dettlor lawyer) and Hazel (Hill HDI executive director) and the crew at the HDI. The HDI supports the project."

The HDI reviewed the project, provided comments and participated in the archeological review, as well, he said.

First Solar has also made an effort to employ Six Nations people during the construction phase, he said.

"First Solar has a policy to try to maximize the employment opportunities for First Nations people with our contractors and subcontractors," said Carrie.

The company did not negotiate any profit-sharing avenues with the HDI, he said. The land where the solar panels will be located was a private farm land that they purchased, said Carrie. During the archeological studies on the site, scatterings of stone tools and arrowheads were found.

"There were some areas of the site where the scatters were quite extensive and we changed the layout of the solar (panels) on the site to avoid areas of significance," said Carrie. "There were some smaller sites where they decided to excavate the artifacts and protect them. That was all



First Solar already has frames in place. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

done with the First Nations archeological monitors on the site at all times."

Currently, workers are in the process of putting up perimeter fencing, construction access roads and posts where the solar frames will be mounted.

Carrie says the electricity would go into the provincial grid and because of the location of the project the power could end up in some Six Nations homes.

Hill confirmed First Solar paid the application fee and the two have been working

cooperatively for the past two years.

"They have provided funding to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council Chiefs (HCCC) through an agreement with HDI to support our archaeology study and training centre that we have been operating for over a year now," said Hill.

Hill provided an update on First Solar to Confederacy Chiefs Saturday.

She asked the chiefs for approval to use a portion of \$90,000 in lease money generated from the project

towards restoration of the lands at Kanonhstaton (the former Douglas Creek Estates housing development in Caledonia).

"The HDI has followed through with the original instructions of the people that was mandated through our council that there will be no surrender of lands and that there will be financial compensation through a lease," she said. "We (will) take a portion of those lease dollars and direct them at ecological restoration and protection of the lands at Kanonhstaton."

She said remediation measures include restoring the land to its "original state" before the subdivision was built and removing the burnt out trailer that sits at the front of the property on Highway Six. Chiefs accepted her report and will discuss the next steps at next month's Confederacy meeting.