

Six Nations Band Council negotiating second Solar deal

By Donna Duric
Writer

Band Council is tackling another renewable energy project on 1701 Nanfan Treaty lands, this time with the hope of garnering the community \$400,000 over the next 20 years.

But construction on the project is already 70 per cent complete, according to First Solar Vice-President Peter Carrie, and it's the same project that the Haudenosaunee Development Institute (HDI) negotiated and received \$90,000 from the company this past August.

Band Council sent out a press release Monday afternoon announcing a renewable energy project with First Solar Inc., saying it will start a community engagement process on the project starting Jan. 3.

The proposed 20 megawatt solar farm is located on a tract of land off Army Camp Road, southwest of Hagersville on 1701-Nanfan Treaty lands,

just outside the Haldimand Tract.

According to band council's Community Planner, Amy Lickers, council only became involved with the project after learning the HDI had already entered into an agreement with First Solar.

"According to the provincial government, projects are required to consult with aboriginal communities in order to receive their Renewable Energy Approval (REA)," said Lickers. "First Solar is required to consult with both the HCCC (Confederacy Council) and the Six Nations Elected Council (SNEC)," she said.

"When SNEC learned that the project was moving ahead without approval from SNEC, they filed a letter to First Solar and province questioning why the REA was granted when SNEC, who they have designated as a community to consult with, had not approved of the project," said Lickers.

"(Band Council) had stated that legal action would be undertaken if First Solar did not amend this."

Elected Chief Bill Montour was not available for comment but said in the press release, "It is our hope that all community members are able to attend one of the information sessions to learn more about this renewable energy opportunity. Hearing feedback to this potential partnership with First Solar is incredibly important to knowing what next steps we should take and what is best for the whole community."

Construction started in August on the 345-acre solar farm after the H.D.I. gave the company the green light to go ahead.

The project went forward with First Solar following all H.D.I. policies and procedures, including payment of the HDI's \$7,000 development application fee, according to Carrie. Lickers said band council's

agreement with First Solar will be \$1000/Megawatt for 20 Years.

It's the second renewable energy project band council has brought to the community this year. Council conducted a series of community engagement meetings on the \$1 billion Samsung renewable energy project located on the South Cayuga lands this past spring. Council subsequently signed a contract with Samsung in May that could see the community gain \$55 million over the next 20 years.

Carrie says it followed the H.D.I.'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 H.D.I.

"There's been quite a bit of ongoing dialogue," said Carrie. "We have good relationships with Aaron and Hazel and the crew at the H.D.I. The H.D.I. supports the project." The H.D.I. reviewed the

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

H.D.I. over saw the archeological assessment.

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

About 90 Six Nations people are employed working on construction of the panels.

There will be construction job opportunities for 200 to 300 people once the panels are ready to go up, and an opportunity for two full-time workers to maintain the site once the project is complete, ac-

cording to Lickers.

The company did not negotiate any profit-sharing avenues with the H.D.I., said Carrie.

But the H.D.I. did negotiate a \$90,000 lease agreement with First Solar.

Confederacy Chiefs had directed the H.D.I. to use a portion of the \$90,000 towards ecological restoration of the lands at Kanonhstaton on Hwy. 6. The land where the solar panels will be located was private farm land that the company purchased, said Carrie.

The project is expected to be completed before April 2013.

The press release says the community engagement process is intended to guide council on whether or not to participate in the project. It is going to hold three information sessions on Jan. 3, Jan. 12, and Jan. 15.

Neither HDI Director Hazel Hill or HDI lawyer Aaron Detlor was available for comment.