

Solar power begins to shine on Northern Ontario

Posted By LINDSAY JOLIVET, QMI AGENCY; SUDBURY STAR

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-Solar power has arrived on Greater Sudbury's doorstep.

Toronto-based company Grasshopper Solar broke ground Thursday at a residential home in Copper Cliff. The house was Grasshopper's first ground-mounted solar system in the area.

"This system in particular is 3 1/2 kilowatts. It's going to generate approximately five kilowatt-hours per year, which is enough to cover about half of an average Canadian home's power," said Mike Gow, Vice-President of Business Development.

The project will not be its last in Northern Ontario. The company is looking to hire 10 people in Sudbury alone, said Gow. The city was a good choice for expansion because it has direct access to Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay, he said.

"After evaluating multiple cities, Sudbury became the logical choice based on its central location, highly skilled work force, and its legacy and commitment to be more environmentally conscious," Gow said in a release.

The company's two focus points are environmental solutions and investment.

"Help in promoting solar, green and renewable energy is the biggest thing," said Gow.

The company wants to reduce everyone's carbon footprint in accordance with the Green Energy Act, he said.

Grasshopper Solar is also offering residents an investment opportunity, said Gow.

"(We are) giving them an opportunity to also invest financially into a solar power system, not only create the energy that you will see ... but also make a fairly substantial return on investment," he said.

Grasshopper Solar installs systems that allow owners to enter the Ontario Power Authority's (OPA) Feed-in- Tariff (FIT) Program. To encourage renewable energy in Ontario, the government will pay system owners 80.2 cents for every kilowatt hour and 64.2 cents per kilowatt the system produces for 20 years guaranteed, said a release.

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Some small and big business owners have already inquired, said Gow.

"We were able to visit a few places by request and really expose any owners, or even the regular public or residential homes, to the opportunities that lie right on their roof," he said.

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