

Innisfil solar project on track

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INNISFIL — The sun is shining on a powerful new program by the town.

A 10-kilowatt, solar-power project will soon be constructed behind the town's old administration building on Innisfil Beach Road that is intended to set an example, while also putting a few bucks back into the town coffers as well.

The free-standing, dual-axis tracker system will have a surface area of about 10-by-10 metres square and will have the capability to track the sun as it moves throughout the day to maximize its exposure.

The unit's location was chosen because it will be able to receive unobstructed sunshine to maximize its effectiveness, according to Innisfil Hydro president George Shaparew.

The site was also chosen because of its proximity to a nearby transformer.

The dual-axis tracker systems are becoming a familiar sight in Innisfil, Shaparew said.

"The majority of the other 27 solar-power projects that



GRASSHOPPER SOLAR CORP. Photo

The new Town of Innisfil solar project is similar to this free-standing, dual-axis tracker system, made by the Grasshopper Solar Corp.

are connected to Innisfil Hydro's power grid are free-standing, ground-mounted structures, similar to the

current solar-power project and the ones commonly seen on farms," he said.

Shaparew said a minority

of the projects are mounted on the roofs of buildings.

"The trend seen among new applications are for

roof-mounted projects due to the higher price being offered at a rate of 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour, as compared to 64.2 cents/kWh for ground-mounted structures."

Innisfil hydro customers with solar-power projects sign power purchase agreements with the Ontario Power Authority. Innisfil Hydro administers the connection, metering and payments to the customers.

It's estimated the project — which cost about \$90,000 — will generate an estimated \$9,000 in profits for the town every year, which will be added to general revenue.

Funded by a dividend declared by Innisfil Hydro's affiliate company, Innisfil Energy Services Ltd., it is anticipated that the project will be generating electricity by mid-summer.

Grasshopper Solar Corp. was awarded the project after the town completed the tendering process.

Omer Mir, of Grasshopper, said the dual-axis tracker systems are very popular with Ontario farmers and they are financially

viable for the average home owner to buy.

"Most definitely, and a lot of major lenders such as TD and RBC have made financing options available for these systems. The investments returns from these systems are much better than other options in the market," he said.

Innisfil Mayor Barb Baguley says the project is part of the town's commitment to conserving energy.

"This forward-thinking solar-power project, in partnership with Innisfil Hydro, is a great step towards long-term energy sustainability for the town," Baguley said. "This project shows that the town is clearly actively going 'beyond the hour,' which was Earth Hour's challenge for all 2011 participants."

Innisfil Hydro is looking at other projects, but has not committed to another one at this time, Shaparew said, adding there are another 70 solar project applications to the utility in the works.

Construction of the solar project is scheduled to begin the week of July 18.