

Guelph/Eramosa considering solar park

By Rebecca Ring

Guelph/Eramosa may become home to Canada's largest solar park. Mayor Chris White and Councillor John Scott met recently with Richard Mash and Bruce Fraser of Sunpark Energy to discuss building a solar park in the township.

The solar park would consist of solar panels mounted on poles called solar trackers. They follow the path of the sun during the day and harness its energy, which would be fed into the power grid. The first phase would provide 110 kilowatts of electricity—enough could power about 50 homes and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 120 tonnes per year, according to Fraser.

"This is just the first phase," he said. "We can replicate the model again and again."

Ideal sites include business parks, subdivisions, brown fields and agricultural land not being farmed.

White and Scott suggested two possible locations for a solar park - the municipal office property in Bruce Dale and the industrial park on Hwy. 24 in the eastern part of the township.



SOLAR SOLUTION: This solar park is very much like the one Sunpark Energy is proposing for Guelph/Eramosa. They provide electricity while emitting no greenhouse gasses, no odours, no noise and have no negative impact on their surroundings. *Submitted photo.*

"It's an across the board winner," White said. "We could use the power in the municipal buildings and feed the rest back to the grid."

"The township needs branding and can show other communities how seriously committed we are to the environment," Scott added.

Proponents say that solar trackers make no more impression on the earth than a fencepost, leaving no footprint if removed. And because they move, the trackers allow rainwater, sun and

air to reach the soil and have no impact on flora and fauna, they say.

The trackers can be set up on contaminated sites in such a way that soil is not disturbed and rainwater is captured to reduce leaching. The clean water could then be used locally. Proponents say the panels and trackers produce no noise, no emissions, no odours, have no long-term impact and provide shade for grazing livestock.

Solar parks produce the most energy in summer when demand is highest. Currently, Ontario uses nuclear and hydro as its main sources of energy, with coal-fired plants

providing back up.

Burning fossil fuels such as coal is believed to contribute to climate change and the melting of polar ice caps. Nuclear energy burns clean, but produces radioactive waste—and waste storage sites have been filling up, although the federal government announced last week it will allow spent fuel bundles to be buried underground.

Mash and Fraser maintain that solar energy is an important piece of the energy puzzle. Combined with conservation efforts and other safe, renewable energy sources such as wind power, geo-thermal, and hydro already in place, they

say Ontario could theoretically replace nuclear and coal. "At the very least, we could prevent new fossil fuel burning plants," Mash says.

He says that after coming to Canada from Britain six years ago, he was surprised to discover he had an inaccurate impression of Canadians as leaders in environmental conservation. Instead, Mash says he saw a lot of waste.

He joined an energy company in Guelph, AgEnergy, as an IT professional and learned more about available alternative energies.

Fraser has worked in the

industry for 25 years.

Sunpark Energy challenges businesses to sponsor solar parks at a cost of less than five dollars per day. In return for taking part in the "Sunpark Challenge," a company gets advertising and promotional links on the Sunpark web page.

White offered to help administer a solar park project for Rockwood and provide land. The next step is to meet with the County and Township planners regarding land use and zoning. An application would later have to come before council.

Memorial service back in Rockwood

The Rockwood Cemetery will hold its annual memorial service tonight, Thursday, June 14, at 7 p.m. at the Gladys Hannah Chapel. The service was cancelled last year, which upset some residents. One of the requests from the unofficial Rockwood cemetery committee was to reinstate the service.

Rev. Linda Paquette will conduct the service. It will especially honour those who have passed away in the last two years. Their families are invited but all are welcome to pay their respects.



U-8 SOCCER NEWS

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Varanelli Assists: Mikaila Raine, Vanessa Torres, Hunter Rushlow, Garret MacMillan, Devon d'Orazio, Lindsay Yake.

Rockwood