

Input from the Environmental Advisory Committee

(Working Group on Climate Change & Energy)

The EAC was not advised in advance of this proposal, so the following comments were developed over the long weekend by email. They have NOT gone through EAC's formal process, but energy is part of EAC's mandate and we appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on this important initiative.

The EAC strongly supports the proposal to participate in the OPA Feed-In Tariff through the installation of 12 MWp of solar PV. Currently, only 1.5% of the electricity consumed in Ottawa is generated within our region, and 1 million ft² of solar panels will produce 16 million kWh a year (400 times more than we conserved during Earth Hour) and avoid 15,000 T of CO₂ each year (compared with coal-fired generation).

We would like to comment on eight distinct aspects of this proposal:

1) A number of European countries have recently reduced their FIT rates. Ontario's FIT is the highest in the world for a number of reasons, but we must assume that applications are finite and that the payment rate will decline, sooner or later.

- EAC suggests that this proposal be considered a very high priority and that it be finalized at the earliest opportunity to ensure that Ottawa does not lose a place in FIT. We suggest that Council direct HydroOttawa to facilitate interconnection of these PV arrays in the most timely manner possible.

2) These solar panels will generate revenue of \$150 million over 20 years ... 40% more if we use single-axis trackers or concentrating solar PV. A lease of \$125,000 represents less than 2% of the \$7.5 million annual income from FIT, lower than what owners of private property are leasing for ground-mounted solar. This land is brownfield, but there may be funding from brownfields rehabilitation schemes. More importantly, there is good grid interconnection at Trail Road (thanks to the Plasco and Power Trail facilities) whereas constrained interconnection is a major barrier for renewable energy projects elsewhere across the province. Council will want to derive fair value for rooftop solar installations on its municipal buildings under FIT (where revenue is double that of ground mounts) and this lease could set a precedent. Council should not give away this asset at sub-market rate.

- EAC suggests that Council negotiate a higher lease payment to better reflect prevailing market rates and to valorize the prime interconnection available at this site. The report erroneously says FIT pays an inflationary increase; the leasing rate should be fixed to match the fixed income under FIT.

3) The report calls this 'campus' a first-of-its-kind, and we trust that this indicates a growing intent to attract and install more renewables in Ottawa.

- EAC suggests that Council direct EnergyOttawa to aggressively consider other renewable energy technologies that could be installed on this campus in a timely manner, such as solar thermal, geothermal or wind (especially since last week's report from the Chief Medical Officer concludes that wind turbines have no negative impacts on health).

4) EAC is debating how the lease money received by the City should be allocated, and how Energy Ottawa should be directed to allocate its \$150 million. We will come back shortly with more comments on this important philosophical question.

5) Solar PV currently has the longest operating life and lowest maintenance cost of any generation option. After the sale of TelecomOttawa, there is no indication that Council will sell off other municipal utilities, but the City should retain legal control of assets that are funded by taxpayers.

- EAC suggests that Council negotiate a nominal buyback rate of \$1 at the end of the contract, so it is assured of control over this valuable asset.

6) EAC did not reach consensus on whether it is prudent to suggest that system components be produced locally, but we urge that appropriate preference be given to local suppliers ... when possible and if feasible.

7) Electricity from solar panels or other distributed generation cannot be fed into the grid during a power failure. Ottawa has experienced an ice storm and the crash of the eastern grid, and experts concede that the provincial grid will fail again in future.

- EAC suggests that Council direct EnergyOttawa and HydroOttawa to ensure that output from these solar arrays can be diverted to consumption in a nearby off-grid demand, in the eventuality of any grid failure or power outage.

8) EnergyOttawa has a PV array that is almost hidden outside its Slack Road office. If you're going to do the right thing, take credit for it and brag about it.

- EAC suggests that Council direct EnergyOttawa to position these solar arrays for maximum public visibility and to take every opportunity to increase public awareness of solar technology, both onsite and online, to demonstrate the 320 million kWh of solar electricity it will produce, the 300,000 tonne of GHG it will avoid, and the \$150 million it will make.

We trust that Planning & Environment will consider this input from your Environmental Advisory Committee, and we welcome your questions.