



St John's solar energy

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Natural disasters like hurricanes Maria and Michael have notably increased in recent years and left behind great devastation. A group of science and math professors and students have teamed up to play their part in helping towns and cities recover using improved solar power technology. This group has helped rebuild schools, provide natural regenerative power sources and more in hard hit places.

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After a successful partnership on its first wind farm, Saint John Energy is now looking to partner with more green power developers - this time, to build a solar farm within city limits.

The municipally owned utility issued a request for proposals Thursday for parties interested in building, owning and operating a solar farm producing up to five megawatts of electricity. That's enough to power 375 homes.

In exchange, Saint John Energy will purchase all the electricity produced by the owners of the solar farm for 25 years under contract. It has a similar arrangement with the owners and operators of the Burchill wind farm in Lorneville.

"We've had our eye on solar for quite some time and the costs have been high, but we believe there have been advancements in technology and we see the costs are coming down, so it's just the right time to explore whether the project would make sense for Saint John Energy and for our customers as well," said Glen Fillmore, the utility's executive director of strategic growth and transformation.

Fillmore couldn't say how much the project might cost or provide possible locations for the wind farm, but construction work could start as early as next year, with the hope of the farm being online in 2026.

Saint John Energy is staring down its own ambitious target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 - five years earlier than the federally mandated target for electrical utilities in the country.

In order to meet its 2030 target, Fillmore said Saint John Energy is focused on three key areas - predicting future energy demand, developing the "optimal mix" of renewable energy sources, and working with customers on innovative solutions.

Last week, the Burchill Wind Project celebrated its first year of operation. The \$97-million, 10-turbine wind



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farm is operated by Natural Forces and Neqotkuk (Tobique First Nation). It produces 42 megawatts of electricity - enough to meet up to 15 per cent of the current energy demand in Saint John.

"It's certainly a partnership that we've really proud of," Fillmore said of the Burchill wind farm. "It's one that is working well, and for Saint John Energy to be able to secure a long-term fixed rate, that helps ensure that we're able to provide rate stability for our customers while providing green energy to our customers as well."

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