

NEWS

Town turns switch on solar power

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Drayton Valley has taken another step toward the greening of the community with the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Town-owned daycare, the Early Child Development Centre.

Mayor Moe Hamdon, along with the Town's manager of sustainability, Ryan Edwards, turned the panels on and they began to generate electricity last Thursday morning.

The daycare was selected for the project as it was a new building and the roof was suitable for capturing as much sunshine as possible. Hamdon said the fact that the building housed an educational institution also made it seem like an appropriate choice.

Drayton Valley is one of about 20 municipalities across the province to showcase grid-connected solar electric systems. It's seen as a way to educate the public, along

with landlords, inspectors and trades people, about alternative technology and help support the long-term viability of renewable energy in Alberta.

"This was a great opportunity for the Town to become involved in this project," said Hamdon. "Increasing awareness of alternative forms of energy like solar power is only the first step in our overall vision of becoming a more sustainable community."

Climate Change Central, supported by the City of Medicine Hat, is leading the showcase. All the municipalities involved have contributed equal amounts of funding to the project. That funding is matched by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities through its Green Municipal Fund.

"As the co-chair of Climate Change Central... I am proud to see the Town of Drayton Valley take the initiative to promote alternative forms of energy," said Drayton Valley/Calmar MLA Diana McQueen.

This is not Drayton Valley's first experi-

ence using solar power. In 2004, the Town installed a solar-powered wastewater aeration system in its sewage lagoons, the first of its kind in western Canada.

Currently council and administration are working on a number of initiatives that will ultimately feed into Drayton Valley's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.

Earlier this year council passed a resolution supporting the use of compact fluorescent light bulbs using Philips Alto Technology. Through a partnership between two local businesses it's possible for residents to recycle their fluorescent tubes and compact fluorescent bulbs.

"The environment is everyone's concern and it is up to each and every one of us to ensure that we are doing our part," said Hamdon. "From considerations in the way

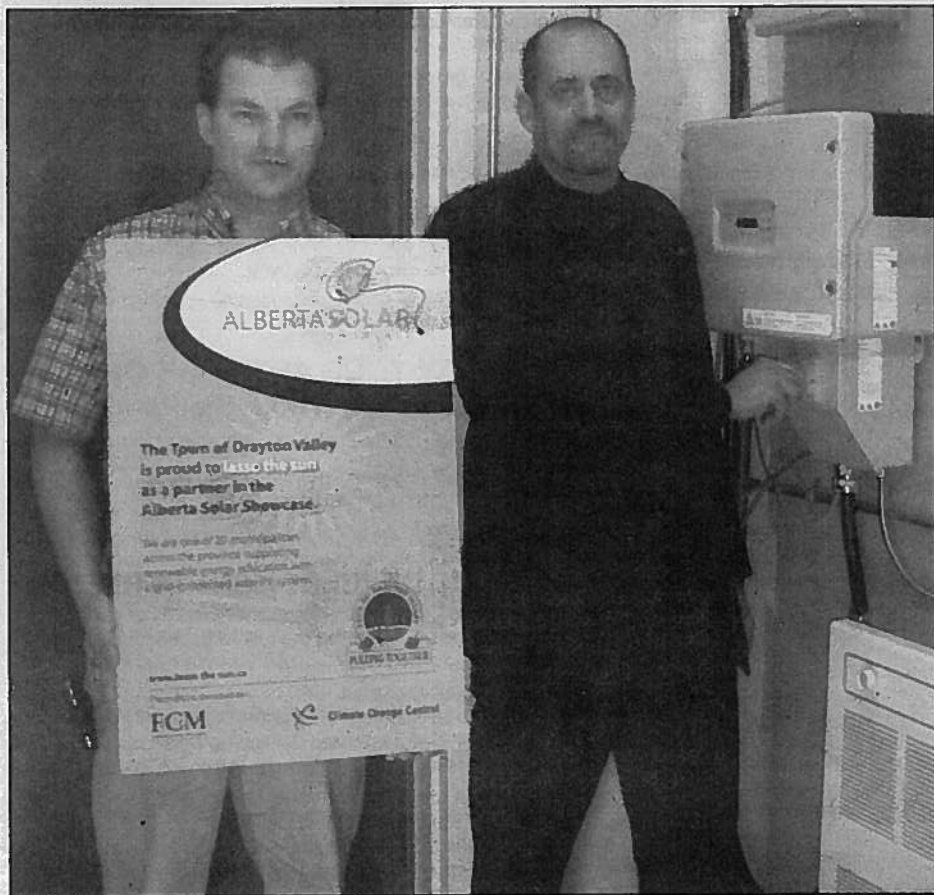
we have traditionally operated our facilities to encouraging water conservation, the Town is focused on doing our part to help combat climate change."

However, Edwards says, the Town can only take things so far. The success of many of these projects depends on community involvement.

"There is only so much that the Town is able to accomplish, but individually we can all do our part," he said.

"Existing programs such as the bi-weekly blue bag recycling program have already contributed to a reduction in the amount of waste entering our landfill each year."

A link in the sustainability section of the Town's web site draytonvalley.ca, allows viewers to monitor the amount of power generated by the solar panels, as well as the amount of greenhouse gases avoided.



Graham Long/Western Review

Ryan Edwards and Moe Hamdon turn on the solar panels at the daycare centre.