

Solar Cluster Blooming in Southeast Alberta

The region of Southeast Alberta has all the beginning essentials to create a provincial Solar Center of Excellence. Not only is the City of Medicine Hat the sunniest City in Canada, it is also the 6th sunniest City in the world. Add to that the only residential and commercial solar incentives in Alberta, and the region is already ahead of the rest of the province.

However, the City of Medicine Hat is not the only leader in Southeast Alberta. Industry has stepped forward proposing numerous projects, such as a 12 acre solar farm that will not only provide energy for the company itself and the electrical grid, but allow for a technology incubation area for private and academic sectors to test different solar technologies. The Medicine Hat College also has been proactive to local industry needs and currently has staff getting solar installation training.

The Economic Development Alliance (EDA) recognizing the solar savvy of Southeast Alberta hired a consultant to identify an opportunity that would combine the areas strengths and position the region as a leader in solar energy in Canada. The study showed opportunities for growth, such as a Canadian wide shortage of solar installers but also barriers for growth, such as the provinces 1MW cap on micro-generation. The end result was that with collaboration of local industry stakeholders in the region, a Provincial Solar Center of Excellence specializing in research and training could be created in Southeast Alberta.

Going forward the EDA has set up a meeting with the key stakeholders mentioned in the report in the hopes of partnering to make the centre a reality. “A project like this takes a lot of time,” says Tracy Heebner, Business Development Officer for the EDA, “but if we start now we will continue to have a solar advantage for years to come. The City of Medicine Hat’s incentives are beginning to entice solar businesses to come here. If we are able to create a Center of Excellence, with training for employees and facilities to test new products, we will have opened up the flood gates to solar businesses wanting to come to our area.”

For more information on this study or solar opportunities in the region, please contact the EDA at 403-488-7015 or info@edalliance.ca .