

Your Business ... Your Burlington

Siemens starts producing solar cells

The Hamilton Spectator Steve Arnold
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Burlington Siemens Canada has officially started production of its new line of solar power cells.

Announced last year, the project is Siemens' effort to break into the growing solar power business. Its current production employs 10 staff, with the number expected to grow to 50 within five years.

"This is another great example of how the clean energy economy is working to create jobs right here in Burlington," said Ontario Energy Minister Brad Duguid at a launch Tuesday. "Investments like this will help hundreds of solar projects come to life right across Ontario."

The Burlington Siemens plant produces solar inverters for the Canadian solar photovoltaic markets. PV inverters take DC power generated by solar units and convert it to AC power, which can then be supplied to the electrical grid. At peak capacity, the Burlington plant can produce enough inverters to create 250 megawatts of electricity. That's enough to power 32,000 homes for a year.

Duguid and company officials called Siemens' \$3 million investment another step in meeting a soaring demand for electricity with clean, renewable technology.

"Sustainability is making the news right now. For us, sustainability is not the flavour of the month, it's the flavour of the century," said Joris Myny, the company's vice president for industry automation and drive technologies.

Duguid also used the Siemens platform to drop an election-style critique of provincial Conservative party promises to dismantle many of the Liberal government's green energy initiatives in the name of cost cutting.

"We're seeing world class companies like Siemens investing in Ontario and having confidence in our clean energy economy. The result is billions of dollars of investment pouring into Ontario and thousands of jobs being created, sometimes 10 at a time, sometimes 50 at a time and sometimes 100 at a time," he said. "We're rebuilding our

economy here in Ontario and we're on track to create 50,000 jobs by the end of 2012. The Opposition is on track to kill those jobs. It's a pretty clear point of distinction between the two parties.”

Opposition parties say most of those jobs are only temporary construction work to build facilities for generating expensive power.

“Yes, a lot of the clean energy jobs are construction jobs, they're also manufacturing jobs like here at Siemens,” Duguid said. “It's almost an insult to those workers for the Opposition to suggest that they don't exist. They're there in the thousands.”

While it creates a small number of jobs in Burlington, Siemens is killing a large number of jobs in Hamilton.