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## County and Six Nations councils sign historic green accord

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Green energy opportunities and a healthier local economy was the impetus for two neighbouring communities to sign a historic accord in Paris last Thursday afternoon.

The accord between the County of Brant and Six Nations of the Grand River Territory is focused on the joint development of serviced lands near Highway 403 interchanges with the aim of creating green energy hubs to benefit both communities.

The pact makes a point of saying that it does not absolve either Canada or Ontario from solving land claim issues on lands considered for the green hubs or others.



Councils of both communities met to sign the accord at the Paris Fire Administration Building.

“This not a definitive document. It’s kind of like sitting in a canoe going into a foggy bunch of water,” said Chief Bill Montour of Six Nations. “It’s a way forward so that we can work together.” Montour said that the industrial age has left the local area behind and that there is a new age coming. He called it, “the green age” and by embracing its opportunities, the two communities can bring prosperity back to Brant, he said.

“Land rights are the big issue that separates us right now,” the Chief said. Although it will take a long time to solve it, Montour said that the two local governments working together could bring other governments (Ontario and Canada) together to deal with the land claims issue. “This land should be shared and everybody should have the ability to feed their families and have jobs,” he said.

“This is one document I’m not nervous about signing. In fact it’s a privilege,” said Mayor Ron Eddy as he signed the document on behalf of the county. Eddy said that he was “thankful to the Lord, our creator” for the chance to sit down with a view to arriving at a solution. The mayor said the two councils have had a series of meetings that culminated in Thursday’s accord.

The accord says that to maximize the objectives of Ontario’s Green Energy Initiative, the province must designate a Green Energy Hub for research and job training.

To get a piece of the green energy action, the two local governments will acquire lands at various fully serviced 403 interchanges in order to create one or more Green Energy Parks. They want the province and Canada to fund the cost of the land acquisition; development and marketing of the Green Parks in the form of interest free loans repayable as the parks develop. The two communities will create an economic development strategy.

They agree to form a commission that will be made up of three members from both groups. It leaves the door open for another municipality to join. If that happens, voting rules of the commission will be configured so that Six Nations shall always have at least 50 per cent of the value of votes cast when the issue involves general policy affecting lands in more than one jurisdiction. For matters that involve lands in their own municipality, only Six Nations and members from the directly affected municipality would vote. The county agrees, in the accord, to “encourage and support” Six Nations’ attempts to have the federal and provincial governments establish a way for Six Nations to get an annual cash flow as part of their demand for perpetual care and maintenance for their peoples.

The carefully worded accord also states that the county is committed to looking at the idea of Six Nations owning all or a portion of lands acquired through the accord.

Both groups will explore the possibilities of using tax incentives and other legislation to encourage the development of the Green Parks with any economic advantages or disadvantages to be equally shared.

Both councils heard a presentation at Thursday’s meeting aimed at explaining the land claims issue from Six Nations’ perspective. “Understand our frustration and anger that Canada is not resolving these issues,” said presenter Phil Montour.

Representatives of a company called Renewable Energy Management Ltd. who plan to build a renewable energy plant at Oak Park Road also attended Thursday’s meeting. Managing Director Stan Kinsman said that his company were “watching and supportive” of what was happening between Six Nations and the county. “It’s fantastic that the two groups have a strong interest in working together in support of economic development and the future,” Kinsman told The Paris Star.



The county continues to consider the purchase of land at Bethel and Rest Acres Road. They have made a conditional offer to purchase 171 acres of land of industrial designation at that location and are talking to Ontario seeking financial support for the purchase. They have about 100 days left to reach a deal before the 120- day offer expires. The province will want to review the Accord as they consider whether or not to support the county's purchase of the lands, said the county's Director of Development Services David Johnston.

The possibly precedent setting accord got Brant MPP Dave Levac's seal of approval.

"I believe it will set a template in Southern Ontario...This could be the basis to turn the region into a green hub," he said Sunday of the ground- breaking agreement. He called the accord inclusive, responsive and progressive. " It responds to the needs of today and of tomorrow."

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