

City Hall signs deal to go green

By Dave Stewart

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Guardian photo by Brian McInnis
Charlottetown city council held its regular monthly meeting Monday night.

The City of Charlottetown has signed a one-year trial deal with a national green power provider to make City Hall more environmentally responsible.

City taxpayers will pay a premium of two cents more per kilowatt hour to use 100 per cent green power to run City Hall.

The deal is with Bullfrog Power Inc. That premium will cost the city \$5,800 but, with Maritime Electric's promise of reducing everyone's power bills by 14 per cent, it isn't expected to cost Charlottetown taxpayers an extra dime.

The new power deal for City Hall is expected to reduce the building's carbon footprint by 127 tonnes.

Holly Bond, director of Bullfrog Power, said the company was founded five years ago to provide residential and business customers the choice of what kind of electricity they want to use.

"Essentially, we deal with local sources. Our supply comes from the west side of the Island, outside O'Leary," Bond said, following a presentation at city council's monthly public meeting Monday night.

Over the last five years, Bullfrog has commissioned five renewable wind projects across Canada. That includes wind turbines in North Cape.

"We will match the electricity usage, kilowatt by kilowatt so if City Hall uses 300 megawatts of electricity a year to power City Hall, we will ensure an equivalent amount of 100 per cent ecologo certified green electricity is injected onto the local grid to match what they are using, which reduces their carbon footprint."

It costs city taxpayers about \$45,000 per year to keep the lights on at City Hall.

Coun. Rob Lantz, chair of the integrated community sustainability plan, said it wasn't hard to convince council to vote in favour of the plan, which they did 8-0.

"We're all realizing some energy savings this year with the reduction in energy rates so, overall, City Hall, will probably come out of this even for its energy expenses this year," Lantz said. "Overall, I expect the city will save a lot of money over last year."

Bullfrog is endorsed by the David Suzuki Foundation and is audited by Deloitte LLP in the U.S.

Charlottetown's City Hall is believed to be the first city hall in Canada to go completely green. Bullfrog also supplies power to, for example, two office buildings in Mississauga, Ont., the World Wildlife Federation, P.E.I. Eco-Net and the Ecology Action Centre.

The electricity to run City Hall will still come from Maritime Electric.

Two factors are at plan when creating green electricity. One is obviously the electron that makes lights come on. The other factor is a corresponding green energy certificate.

"No matter where you are in the world, to use green electricity you need both of those (factors) to be green. (City Hall) will continue to get a bill from Maritime Electric and they will get a separate bill from Bullfrog Power for that green part of their electricity, which will make them green," Bond said.

Close to a third of the new renewable energy in the United States over the past decade has come from the voluntary market, people and businesses going to companies like Bullfrog and asking to purchase green power.

In addition to providing the green power, Bond says Bullfrog will work with City Hall to

reduce its electricity usage by providing free energy audits for employees.

Across Canada, Bullfrog has 50 employees; 8,500 residential customers and 1,300 commercial customers, including Walmart.

Bond said she empathizes with city taxpayers when it comes to trying to convince people it's worth spending more money on power by going green.

"I think sometimes the money that you pay . . . if it's to promote something so visionary I think it's very important. Sure (the city) is going to be paying a little more for their electricity but once we start engaging the employees at City Hall let's see how much we can reduce the power they use."