



Ministerial Statement

By

The Hon. Walter Roban, JP, MP

Minister of Home Affairs

Friday, May 8th, 2020

6 Megawatt Solar Farm Progress

Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to report to this Honourable House on the progress of the 6 megawatt solar farm at the LF Wade International Airport. Just last week, the Regulatory Authority awarded an operating license to the developers of the project, Saturn Solar Bermuda 1, the Bermudian subsidiary of Saturn Power Incorporated. This is a significant milestone for the project.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members may recall that work on the site began in August of 2018 with the commencement of the clearing of the site. The work in preparation for the actual development of the project began in 2016 with Castalia Advisors providing the consultation required for the project's procurement.

Mr. Speaker, you can be assured that every part of the Solar Farm was competitively procured, for maximum transparency. We are pleased that this project has been regarded as a regional example of excellent practice in the tender process, which commenced with a pre-qualification of prospective bidders to ensure that all who bid for the project had adequate financial capacity and appropriate experience to successfully complete the work if they were successful in the final stage.

Mr. Speaker,

The project team, led by the Department of Energy in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, ensured that the project was 'de-risked' as much as possible before and during the tender process, so that the

critical bid factor, once all the other compliances were met, was solely based on the price. A crucial issue for this project team was to establish how much the rent would be for the land, referred to as the “Finger”, which Government is leasing at a fair market value. Another element of reducing project risk was to ensure that the project, which is located on Airport land, could be built and then operated in a manner compatible with airport operations. The site conditions were assessed by the engineering firm of Onsite Engineering, to ensure that the ground was uncontaminated and had sufficient bearing capacity for the development. When the bids were submitted, Saturn’s bid was the lowest compliant bid, at 10.3 cents per kilowatt-hour.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members will recall that, because this project spanned two administrations, it was carefully scrutinized by this Ministry and the Ministry of Finance to ensure that there was value for money and it best addressed Bermuda’s needs. After that process, work to clear the site began. As Honourable Members may be aware, the “Finger” had

previously been used over the years for many purposes; such as: a training site for active burn exercises by the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service; an ammunition store for the Bermuda Police Service; and a disposal area for debris ranging from asphalt screenings to disused fuel tanks. All of the aforementioned had to be cleared before work could begin, and the overgrown vegetation removed from the remaining perimeter. Once the site was cleaned and cleared, access still had to be reserved for other functions that could not be relocated, such as the United Nations' Nuclear Monitoring Site which is used to provide information on global atmospheric health. It is important to also note that the end of the peninsula will still be used for the disposal of explosives from time to time, but the Developers are satisfied that these functions would not negatively impact the operation or safety of the solar panels.

Mr. Speaker,

Construction began to install the solar panels on May 24th, 2019. Over twenty-four thousand individual panels were installed occupying close

to 19-acres of the site. These panels are polycrystalline type with an additional layer of coating designed to shed water, which results in a self-cleaning effect when it rains. The panels were installed on a mounting system to raise them up off the surface of the tarmac and is intended to protect the panels from storm surge. The transmission cable on land is about 1 kilometer long, and the submarine cable is nearly 2 kilometers long and connects the solar farm to the grid at the Civil Aviation Substation on Kindley Field Road.

Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to report that, while the project was developed by Saturn, a Canadian company, the project was made possible by our local companies consisting of more than 50% Bermudian workers. Bermudian companies working on the site included Noesis Consulting, Ltd, Crisson Engineering, Island Construction Services, Butterfield Excavation, Onsite Engineering, Security Associates, Fast Forward Freight, Bermuda Forwarders and D&J Construction.

We are proud to reach this milestone, and we look forward to the project's official commencement of operations, but there is still some work to be done. Moving ahead, the project will be operated by Saturn with the support of a Bermudian Operations and Maintenance contractor. While this will not involve a great deal of manpower, the commitment is to ensure that Bermudians will continue to be included.

Finally, **Mr. Speaker**, to be clear- the project will deliver power to the grid, not to the Airport, and will not be customer-specific. What this means is that all ratepayers will benefit from this power. We cannot know at this stage precisely how many kilowatt-hours will be produced, as it will be dependent on sun-hours throughout the coming years. However it is estimated that it will power the equivalent of about eleven thousand (1,100) homes per annum, stabilizing some of our volatile fuel costs and ultimately save about 150,000 tons of CO₂. The Solar Farm will lower our island energy cost and also improve our environment.

Most notably, **Mr. Speaker**, we are proud to have this project, the first of its kind in Bermuda, as an example of best practice for procurement

and execution. This is the first step in introducing commercial developments to reach the goal of the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) produced by the Regulatory Authority to eventually replace fossil fuels with renewable energy.

Thank you Mr. Speaker