

## Utility testing solar panels

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Bluewater Power is establishing a solar photovoltaic (PV) test facility at its corporate headquarters in Sarnia.

Five different 10 kilowatt solar power systems will be installed on the rooftop at 255 Confederation Street in January and February, said Tim Vanderheide, Bluewater Power Generation COO.

"Ultimately we want to learn as much as we can about the installation of them," he said. "Our intention is to be able to install rooftop solar on commercial buildings for different developers in our service area."

Vanderheide said he expects a roughly two-year test period, but the panels will remain on Bluewater Power's roof for more than 20 years.

The \$350,000 installation will recoup cost through sales from a 20-year contract with the Ontario Power Authority (OPA).

"We're anticipating, if all goes well, the project should pay for itself in 10 years," Vanderheide said.

The tests are also to determine what panels work best in northern climates and in different seasons.

The five systems will each have unique mounting structures, some closer to the roof than others, and at least one will have a tracker to follow the sun as it moves across the sky. Each system will be connected to its own DC-AC power inverter and each will be monitored separately in real time.

Bluewater Power is partnering with CarbonFree Technology to select equipment suppliers and the project qualifies for the OPA Feed-In Tariff program for renewable energy, which offers stable, long-term pricing on renewable energy projects.

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