

Promising Practices



Non-Profits

Bethany Community Church works to protect “God’s creation”

The congregation of the historical Bethany Community Church in the Niagara Peninsula has taken a sustainable step forward by purchasing 55 solar panels and selling the electricity generated into the Ontario grid.

The 10 kilowatt solar photovoltaic (PV) system initially cost about \$70,000. It is expected to generate \$9,200 in revenue annually. Over the 20-year contract timeframe that was signed with the Ontario Power Authority, the church will receive about \$180,000.

It is estimated that the church will be able to pay for the system within seven years. The important initiative delivers an adequate return on investment, but is also helping to influence more long-term sustainability within the local community.

"I wanted to make a statement, to encourage people to think about what they can do in their own homes," said Lead Pastor Larry Shantz. "It's a good fit with Christian values to be stewards of God's creation. Churches should care about the communities that they're in and healthy churches get involved."¹

By generating electricity from renewable sources, such as solar PV, the church is helping reduce our dependence on coal-fired generation, which is responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and many other pollutants. The Ontario Power Authority (OPA) pays 80 cents per kWh for renewable

energy generated by solar photovoltaic panels. The panels were installed August 30, 2010, and by early May 2011 the panels had produced 6.2 megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity.

This community has greatly benefited from the OPA's microFIT Program, which offers a number of different renewable energy opportunities. Through this program the church is guaranteed to be paid over a 20 year contract for all electricity it produces and delivers to the province's electricity grid. Payment prices are designed to include regular project costs such as purchase, installation, connection, operation and maintenance, thus guaranteeing the church a reasonable return on its investment.

The church's installation is the perfect example of initiatives being taken across Ontario, which are helping create green jobs and environmentally responsible business practices. As renewable power technologies continue to rise in demand, more people across Ontario will be needed to design, build, install, operate, and maintain these technologies.

Since installing the panels last year, Bethany has been visited by a number of individuals and groups from other churches who are interested in following their lead. Clark Hannah, the church's executive director of administration, said he is aware of a number of churches that have since applied for similar contracts with the OPA.

"The solar panels that we put up are in full visible view of anybody coming into the church. We wanted people to see that, and we wanted people

to know that we as a church community really care about our environment,” Shantz said.²

Investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar PV systems, generates revenue, provides jobs, lowers greenhouse gas emissions, and creates more self-sustaining communities. The congregation of the Bethany Community Church encourages more focus on renewable energy, proving that renewable energy is a valuable commodity that should be utilized.



The 55 solar panels mounted on the roof of the Bethany Community Church generate revenue and support for renewable energy in the Niagara Peninsula.

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References:

¹ Greco J. “Local church makes a bold energy statement with solar panels.” St. Catharines Standard. 30 September 2010. www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?archive=true&e=2780042. Accessed May 2011.

² Glover, D. “Bethany Church Solar.” TV Cogeco, Niagara Cable 10. www.tvcogeco.com/niagara/gallery/the-source/3104-october-source-stories/27145-bethany-church-solar. Accessed May 2011.

