



GREENING our communities

through Live Green Toronto Grants

OurPower

PROJECT:

Our Power Community Solar Support Program

Six tonnes of carbon emissions were avoided per year as a result of the Our Power solar installations in the first half of 2010 (23.1 kW).

Toronto Renewable Energy Cooperative

Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative (TREC) is a non-profit environmental co-operative that develops community-owned renewable energy projects and educates Ontarians about renewable energy and conservation.

TREC had five goals designed to improve and expand their program:

- to develop new on-line tools, including a cost-benefit analysis tool, that would help homeowners in the decision-making process;
- to reach more communities and more effectively engage and support them;
- to facilitate the installation of at least 200 solar energy systems on individual homes around Toronto over 12 months;
- to communicate what they learned through this project and to help inform future solar energy policies; and
- to become a self-sustaining enterprise.



For more information about TREC's Our Power Community Solar Support Program, visit trec.on.ca or email info@trec.on.ca.

"Our Power conducted a solar power feasibility assessment on my home for only \$25. They also provided a 20-year cash flow statement showing how much income I could realistically expect to generate."

Mike, *Our Power* participant

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

TREC began to offer online site assessments, and more than 300 assessments were conducted by residents in six months. Fifty-five per cent were in Toronto, identifying more than 2,300 kW of potential solar energy installations. During this period, TREC referred approximately \$770,000 worth of business to its vendor partners. This success opened the door for TREC to establish new partnerships.

Membership in Our Power grew 28 per cent in six months to more than 4,100. TREC upgraded and redesigned the Our Power website and re-launched it at the Canadian Solar Industries Association Conference. The website averages 2,000 visitors per month of which 60 per cent are new.

TREC leveraged its networks to inform tens of thousands of residents about Our Power at events such as the Green Living Show, Our Greener Side Fair, the Live Green Toronto Festival, Toronto Hydro Days and others.

TREC also received media coverage in the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail, Now Magazine, Canadian Business Journal and the Hamilton Spectator.

2009 Community Investment Program Grant (\$25,000)

Ontario residents are motivated to install renewable energy for a number of reasons. They want to green their own homes by generating renewable energy. And provincial incentives give residents the ability to generate income by feeding their energy into the electrical grid through the microFIT (feed-in-tariff) program.

Many barriers exist, such as a lack of information, guidance and support. In addition, a large number of approvals are required. TREC developed the Our Power program to reduce the barriers associated with residential solar panel installations and help residents with their solar purchases.



Photo by joncallas (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/joncallas/>)

Did you know?

Solar energy investments can yield better returns than other low-risk investments. In Ontario, eligible microFIT projects receive guaranteed payment for the power they generate over a specified contract period. According to the Investor Education Fund, a Canadian non-profit organization, a \$20,000 investment in solar panels can yield a 6.4 per cent annual return, higher than other low-risk investments such as savings bonds and GICs.

What's next

TREC hired a consultant and developed a business plan to expand their programming, commissions and sponsorships with the goal of becoming self-sustaining.