



Solar—Wind—Geothermal—Bio Energy—Hydropower—Hydrogen and fuel cells
RENEWABLE ENERGY WORKSHOP SERIES



The first renewable energy workshop series on solar energy was organized by EnvironFocus Incorporated at Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 40 Admiral Blvd, Mississauga, Ontario on May 3, 2012. The objective was to increase awareness of renewable energy sources in a way that is understood by the public. It is also about linking existing small -medium size businesses to an interested audience (residents or businesses). The main points discussed: how Solar energy plays a part in meeting the climate change challenge which is, our ability to mitigate and adapt to changes; how individuals and communities can gain access to them and Government's part in ensuring that individuals, community and industry have access to opportunities that have been made available.



Figure 1: Participants at the workshop

Speakers and Solar Companies' representatives at the event include:

- Bernard Fleet Ph.D., D Sc., FRSC Adjunct Professor, School of Environmental Applied Science & Management, Ryerson University.
- Khosrow Shahali, CEO -Synapse Energy Inc
- Lisa Oelke, Senior Account Executive, hb Solar Canada Inc.
- Lia Van Baalen, Marketing Assistant, Fronius Canada
- Michael Reive – Regional Sales Manager, Fronius Canada

The event was sponsored in part by Loblaw's and Longo's. Other participating business includes Oluchi Group International. The following information was discussed:

I. Challenges associated with Solar Energy and the FIT/ Micro-FIT program:

- a. The Grid: The grid was not originally created to accept additional/renewable energy from individuals/companies.
- b. Poor management of the FIT/Micro-FIT program: Some applications have been approved that are not feasible and their installations cannot deliver projected energy. The integrity of the industry has been affected as a result of early issues of poorly managed companies.
- c. Financing: This is not always feasible as banks are reluctant to provide the required financing due to poor credit history.
- d. There is poor dissemination of information: The true costs of using non-renewable energy are not published and the public is not motivated to make any change.
- e. Ontario Power Authority is encouraging community projects but the requirements and conditions laid out in the current policy are unclear
- f. Current structures are built to meet 'pre-determined aesthetics' and less emphasis is placed on their long term functionality
- g. Land to install solar panels are not readily available
- h. Public opinions and their perception of renewable electricity as a more expensive option and the fear that people will lose jobs as a result of the shift.

II. How the challenges can be met:

- a. Increase public participation by creating awareness through community events. The connection between climate change and the recent stream of environmental disasters in North America needs to be publicly cited as impacts of climate change.
- b. The various stages of the Micro-FIT process have to be simplified in a way that is understood by the general public.
- c. The option to skip the grid and use micro-grids should be explored. The idea of one small grid in small communities as opposed to one large grid for numerous large communities should be considered. This will reduce the number of the power lines and their associated safety issues.
- d. To repair the integrity of the industry, a transparent process is required to ensure qualified applicants are selected
- e. It is recommended that government mandates the use of renewable energy as opposed to being a voluntary option.

- f. For new developments, a portion of energy source designed to be used in new buildings/installations should be from a renewable source.
- g. Environmental programs developed should put the true/end cost of environmental damage on the polluting organizations and their associated costs not transferred the consumers.

III. If all the challenges were met:

- a. We would pay less tax because we would use less energy as people will be aware of the true cost of excessive energy consumption and become more efficient. Currently renewable energy is used as a supplement to the electricity generated from non renewable sources.
- b. We would have enough renewable energy to serve the energy needs of the growing population
- c. Our carbon emissions would be reduced, which will reduce our negative environmental impact.
- d. Individuals and communities would be empowered to take a greater role in participating in and managing the energy industry in partnership with government.
- e. As a result of smaller energy generating systems in communities, energy generation will be localized and safety would be improved; systems would be easy to shut off when a problem arose
- f. Reduced environmental-related illnesses such as asthma and cancers would reduce health care costs
- g. Solar companies in Ontario will be not have to turn to other countries, were their products and services are valued, the impacts of climate change more intense and the ability to localize energy generation using multiple grids a reality.

The solar energy workshop met its objective and sustainable partnerships were developed. There was transfer of knowledge and technology of workable environmental initiatives. An awareness of the necessity of organizations to assist in sustainable development of communities and to promote clean technology was planted and the understanding that actions that are taken need not be done singly but as a group was introduced. It was an excellent arena that enabled the exchange information on solar energy as a renewable energy source. We thank all EnvironBuzzers, individuals and businesses that participated to make the event a success. As a result of the positive response provided by the participants via the post event survey, a repeat of the solar energy workshop will be done August 28, 2012. For more information and updates on the coming Workshop visit our community page at <http://www.meetup.com/EnvironBuzz> or our company website at www.envirnofocus.com.