



Is Green in Crossroads' Future?

In the New Creed of the United Church, we read that “we live in God’s world” and that we are to “live in respect with

creation”. Most of us will recognize that our society hasn’t exactly been “respectful” in how we care for the earth. We have often neglected to moderate our depletion of non-renewable resources, ignored the health effects of burning fossil fuels, and failed to be mindful of their effects on our climate. Now we have the opportunity at Crossroads to become part of a “**sustainable future**” by taking part in the Ontario government MicroFIT program that promotes environmentally clean energy sources - in our case, solar (photovoltaic) rooftop panels that produce electricity.

Crossroads has recently **received approval** from the Ontario Power Authority to proceed with the next step in its application to install solar panels on the sanctuary roof, and soon Council will be approaching the congregation for its approval. Under the OPA MicroFIT program, we would be paid \$0.802 for every kWhr of electricity that the panels produce every year for 20 years. (We were lucky to be **one of the last groups given pre-approval** before the program changes – future applications will likely have lower payment rates). We are proposing a 10 kW system (the largest that MicroFIT approves) for our roof. Here are some features:

- about \$7000 worth of electricity generated /year
- **carbon dioxide emissions reduced** by 7 tonnes /yr if fossil fuels had generated that power
- **1.7 acres of forest** would be needed to soak up that much CO₂
- OPA’s MicroFIT offers a 20 year contract; the panels are generally guaranteed for 25 years (power could still be sold after the contract expires, but at a lower rate)

- the church’s use of power is paid for separately (and we pay for the power we use at a much lower rate)
- materials and installation cost about \$75000
- over 20 years, Crossroads would sell about \$130,000 worth of power, so this is practicing both ecological and financial stewardship over the long term
- St. Andrew’s-by-the-Lake United has just installed a similar system and Cookes-Portsmouth United has contracted to have one installed soon.

How would we pay for this?

Crossroads still needs to decide how to do this, but a significant part of the cost would likely be covered by **debentures (loans)** from the congregation. The interest on the loans would be covered by the revenue from selling the power to Kingston Hydro. Some of the debt would be retired every year. Even after taking interest costs into account, the church would still be earning income. And the interest rate that could be offered would be better than having the money sit in your bank making money for the bank but not much for you.

Your council and trustees will be working out more of the details on this project over the next two months. Look for congregational information sessions in January and make sure to contact the church if you are interested in investing in this project. Members and adherents of Crossroads will be surveyed after Christmas to see if they would consider making a loan to the church (and for how much and how long) – although early offers are welcomed!

Good for creation, good for the financial health of the church. And it’s something that you can point to with pride when talking about Crossroads to your friends or grandchildren. Seems like a win-win situation for everyone!

Submitted by Allan Baer