

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New solar partnership at Grand Erie District School Board generates revenue, educational value

Brantford, ON, June 8th 2010 –Today students in the **Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB)** began to see green energy and conservation as the way of the future today, thanks to a large-scale solar-energy initiative that will install solar panels on the rooftops of 23 selected schools. The renewable-energy program, which also features a strong educational component, officially launched this afternoon at a special ceremony at **Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School** in Brantford.

The school board's longtime energy partner, Ameresco Canada Inc, was granted the ability to work with school boards to help them reduce their carbon footprint through the **Ontario Power Authority's Feed-in Tariff (OPA FIT)** program. It is anticipated that the selected schools within the district will receive 3.3MW (megawatts) in solar-power generating capacity, enough energy to power approximately 385 homes annually. This endeavour will also generate revenue and create local jobs, resulting in a win-win situation for all.

The Grand Erie District School Board has been a longtime leader in environmental education and conservation practices. The board already plays an active role in reducing energy and water waste, as well as promoting recycling and composting in the classroom and in the community through its Green Policy. The GEDSB is one of the first school boards, and the largest board to date in Canada, to retrofit its rooftops with **solar photovoltaic (PV)** installations.

Pauline Johnson Vocational School is a strong environmental leader in the district with students at the school actively participating in Earth Hour activities, resulting in a drop in power consumption of between 40 and 50%.

Ameresco will design, build, own, maintain and monitor the PV installations in the selected schools, while the school district will generate ongoing revenue based on installed MW.

The benefits of solar power are both tangible and far-ranging in their impact on members of the community. Solar energy guarantees a set tariff price to participating school boards for a period of 20 years; the installations put school districts at the forefront of environmental stewardship, providing leadership in the community and helping to decrease harmful greenhouse gas emissions; and students will benefit tremendously from seeing a 'live solar laboratory' on the roof of their schools. Students will be able to track their schools' solar-generating power and energy savings thanks to a special carbon calculator.

Jim Wibberley, Director of Education for the GEDSB, stated: "This new solar-energy initiative allows us to take our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint to the next level, since solar power is a clean, renewable resource. It also supports our efforts to teach students about green energy and 'walk the talk' when it comes to the board's Green Policy."

Anthony Da Silva, Chief Operating Officer, Ameresco said: "We're helping to get the community off the grid and generate revenue and educational value for the board. In this way, everybody wins."

"Today's announcement really demonstrates the great diversity of projects that exist under the Feed-in Tariff program," says Colin Andersen, Ontario Power Authority CEO. "From arenas of learning to places of worship, on farms and in cities across the province, the Feed-in Tariff program is transforming the electricity system in Ontario to include more clean and sustainable power sources."

MORE

“By investing in new green energy technologies, the Grand Erie district school board is taking the lead in making sure we leave a clean environment for our future leaders,” said Brant MPP Dave Levac, who was in attendance on behalf of the Ministry of Energy. “Solar power for our community is one of the best ways to preserve our environment; congratulations for taking a leading role in protecting our environment, no doubt other school boards will be watching.”

With more than 37 years experience in school facility renewal, Ameresco’s dedicated team of solar designers and project-management staff has already implemented similar programs throughout North America, bringing experience and a track record of success to the table. This includes the recent launch of a similar solar program with **Le Conseil des écoles publiques de l’Est de l’Ontario (CEPEO)**, Ottawa’s French-language school board. It is anticipated that the participating 16 CEPEO schools will receive 1.5MW in solar-power generating capacity, enough energy to power approximately 175 homes annually.

Today’s solar launch event included a student dramatic presentation; speeches by Anthony Da Silva, COO of Ameresco Canada, and OPA officials; speeches Jim Wibberley, Director of Education and other board officials; and comments by other dignitaries. The event concluded with a media Q&A to announce the details of the solar partnership with GEDSB.

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For more information on this event, please contact Tony Iavarone, APR Manager, Communications & Community Relations, Grand Erie District School Board, at 519-756-6306, ext. 281147 or toll-free at 1-888-548-8878. He can also be reached at tony.iavarone@granderie.ca

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About Ameresco Canada

Dedicated to a greener, more sustainable future, Ameresco assists clients in the education, healthcare, government, social housing, commercial and industrial sectors with the design, construction and financing of their own renewable energy sources that are both clean and affordable. With more than 37 years of experience, Ameresco has experience in the K-12 education market, focusing on meeting the needs of education leaders through the creation of quality teaching and learning environments. To date, Ameresco has been granted 39 of 510 contracts awarded by the OPA, or 8% of the total.

About Grand Erie District School Board

The Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) covers an area of 4,067 sq. km in south-central Ontario, encompassing close to 18,000 students attending 64 elementary schools and another 10,000 in 16 secondary schools.

The GEDSB has an ongoing commitment to maintaining a Green Policy, which includes the following measures: a grey water system at Cobblestone school; a proposed geothermal system at the BCI location and the future joint school; a student-run recycling partnership with the City of Brantford and Haldimand County; vermicomposting; environmental grants from sponsors to support environmental awareness and greening programs; and waste audits and reduction plans.

About Ontario Power Authority

The Ontario Power Authority is responsible for ensuring a reliable, sustainable supply of electricity for Ontario. Its four key areas of focus are: planning the power system for the long term, leading and co-ordinating conservation initiatives across the province, ensuring development of needed generation resources, and supporting the continued evolution of the electricity sector.

Ontario's Feed-In Tariff (FIT) program for renewable energy generation is a cornerstone of the province's Green Energy Act, and is North America's first comprehensive feed-in tariff program for renewable energy. Renewable technologies under the FIT program include solar, landfill gas, biogas, waterpower, biomass, and wind power.