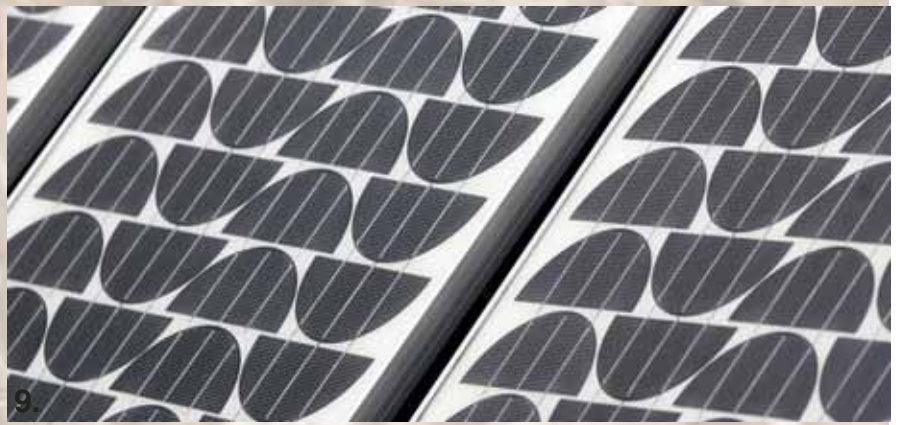


Taylor home: 6. Portable gas generator. 7. Battery packs located in the house, are charged by solar and wind power.

8. This small windmill helps power the home, alongside the solar panels. 9. Solar panels sit on the front lawn. 10. A conventional knob controls the heater in the house. 11. The gas stove, lit and ready .



further lighting, and prevent usage of battery power.

"I could have more solar power, and a few more batteries," he says, "but for my wife and I, it's fine."

The toughest challenge was the television. A DVD player and a VCR, along with a stereo, provide entertainment in the evenings after work. To watch television, the couple plug it into a power bar. An inverter is used to convert the power.

"All of them have to be inverted," says Mr. Taylor. "The water was the biggest problem – the shower and all that."

At first there was no shower.

"Now I've got a shower and a composting toilet," he says.

A Bosch water heater Instant-On provides hot water in 30 seconds. Mr. Taylor's home and energy and heating system are mainly the product of his own work, a process of trial and error, over the past 12 years.

He estimates he spent \$7,000 on setting up his solar and windmill systems. If he had remained in town, he estimates he would have been paying \$100 to \$150 a month over the past 12 years.

"That's what I'm saving a month," says Mr. Taylor, who figures he's saved \$15,000 over the years he has been living off the grid.

"My system is nowhere near that" in terms of its cost, he says.

Mr. Weir and Ms. Allan had the help of 30 volunteers plus Camel's Back Construction of Madoc which is experienced in constructing straw bale houses.

"It was just like an old barn raising," says Mr. Weir.

Family, cousins, friends and neighbours participated in helping. Camel's Back Construction had people on hand to help them "stay in line."

At the time, there were approximately 40 straw-bale homes in Ontario, says Mr. Weir. Now he believes there are about one hundred.

In both the case of the straw-bale house, and in the case of the house by the pond in the woods, the owners are closely involved with the day-to-day activity of caring for them. They have put their hearts into their homes, and finding a way to live off the grid. In return, they have homes they love, and which provide them with some extra comfort in return. ❁

Home hardware

Mark Cullen
Home Hardware
Gardening Expert

Help is close to home.

www.homehardware.com

31 Joseph St., Parry Sound (705) 746-9621