



The Rounds family near Elmvale is well known in the community for its entrepreneurial spirit. In the early 1990s, husband and wife Ken and Geri Rounds left their corporate careers, sold their home in Newmarket and bought a poultry farm just west of Elmvale on County Road 92. A few years after moving to the country, they started a market and bakery on their property, and later branched out by growing strawberries and asparagus. In 2001, they bought a 125-acre property across the road and launched Rounds Ranch, an agri-tourism operation where visitors can learn about farming and other aspects of life on the land, such as horseback riding.

Now, they've launched a company called EthoSolar, which sells and installs solar panels at farms and rural properties, allowing the owners to sell electricity to companies such as Hydro One. "The simplicity of solar is really attractive," said Ken Rounds, 48, noting selling solar-generated electricity to the grid is a viable way for farmers to generate passive income. The couple's daughter and son-in-law are partners in EthoSolar, which began operation about two months ago.

The company's business strategy is permitted thanks to Ontario's new Green Energy Act, which came into effect in May. It allows renewable-energy projects to connect to the grid and sell electricity at a guaranteed rate. The Rounds are in the process of connecting a large solar panel to their century-old farmhouse. A trench has been dug from the solar panel to the house. It will accommodate a cable that will be connected to a breaker panel, along with a production meter, which feeds the electricity to the grid.

The Rounds secured a 20-year contract with the Ontario Power Authority to provide electricity to Hydro One. They are hoping to generate 13,000 kilowatts a year. Hydro One is going to pay them 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour, which Ken Rounds said is pretty good considering they pay the provider 11.5 cents per kW/h for what they consume. The cost to install a solar unit varies. Jim Swales, who handles media relations for EthoSolar, said it can range from \$72,000 to \$95,000 for a 10-kilowatt unit, depending on the type of system.

Rounds said he's using his extensive contacts in the agricultural community to spread the word about EthoSolar. "My vision is to see these on as many farms as possible," he said. "I'd like to see farmers have this opportunity." Selling electricity to the grid will help deflect some of the variability that people in the agricultural business face, he added. For more information, call Ken or Geri Rounds at 322-6293.



Before Rounds Ranch grew into the adventure-packed farm experience it is today, owner's Geri and Ken Rounds had a desire to educate the community on where food comes from. Both were raised on Ontario farms and learned early on the benefits getting food locally that many of today's consumers are unaware of.

Years ago, children typically had a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle who knew about farming and taught them how their food was produced. As society has progressed, unfortunately a lot of that education has been lost. Our goal

is to encourage this type of learning again through our School Tours.

School Tours at Rounds Ranch are about fun, adventure, but above all else, learning! Geri and Ken both hold a degree in Agricultural Science and developed the school tours program around their extensive knowledge of farming, while following grade-level curriculum requirements.

Students are guided through an interactive exercise that teaches them about the different kinds of farms (dairy, beef, pigs, chicken, grain, and vegetables). They'll be instructed to match up a variety of grocery items with the correct farm that they come from. This allows them to make a real-life farm to fridge connection.

During our "What came first, the chicken or the egg" lesson, students learn all about where eggs come from and get an up close look at our incubator. We encourage students to explore their curiosity and ask questions throughout the lesson. We'll answer questions like "How long does it take for an egg to hatch?", "Why are some eggs white and some are brown?" and "How many eggs do chickens lay in a year?".

Supporting local farmers is not only good for the growth of our community, but also our health. Canada has stringent laws on organic farming, Ontario in particular. Purchasing produce from a local Ontario source ensures you are receiving a better quality product than most imported goods that are not farmed under the same standards. We believe giving children the knowledge to make informed food choices is the beginning of healthier generations to come!

<http://roundsranch.com/>