



Community CarShare

In just a few weeks, Guelph residents will have three new ways to get around. Community CarShare co-operative is unveiling two new cars downtown and one uptown at the university by early May. This new expansion comes right on the heels of the co-op's two new cars in Elmira, and is indicative of CarShare's successes.

Community CarShare began in 1998 in Kitchener with 10 members and one car, and it's been growing steadily since. In the 12 months between October 2011 and 2012, CarShare grew by 52 percent. In the past 4 years, the co-op has grown from 225 members to over 800 today. The co-op now boasts 28 cars on the road in Kitchener, Waterloo, Hamilton, Elmira, and soon, Guelph.

So why share a car? Many members sign up instead of buying a second vehicle. "Some of our members can't afford to own a car, others don't want to because of lifestyle reasons," says Janet MacLeod, Operations Coordinator at Community CarShare, "but the most basic reason is that if you drive less than 12,000 kilometers a year, you save money by sharing!"

The new expansions have been a long time in the making. Community CarShare has been working hard to get key partners on board before the new cars hit the road in Guelph, working to attract new members and negotiating agreements with the city, the university and corporate partners. "It's about getting CarShare into everyone's conversation," says MacLeod. "We see ourselves as just one part of a sustainable transportation system, along with mass transit and cycling, so we all can get away with fewer cars on the road." The co-op is excited about the opportunities for growth in Guelph, and hopes to expand the fleet as soon as is practical. Elmira provided its own unique challenges. Generally a network of public transit is necessary so members can get to the place the car is parked – otherwise carsharing just does not work. The Region of Waterloo's decision to make a bus connecting Elmira to nearby Waterloo permanent spurred CarShare to expand into that community. With the help of corporate member Enviro-Stewards Inc., Community CarShare was able to locate 2 cars in Elmira: the first rural carsharing in the province.

The co-op remains driven by the 7 co-operative principles. "Principle 6 is our favourite!" says MacLeod. Co-operation among co-ops has certainly benefited the organization. For years, Community CarShare has been sharing office space with the Central Ontario Co-operative Housing Federation (COCHF). They've moved with COCHF several times, and have even located some of their cars in housing co-op parking lots. In Hamilton, they're fostering a relationship with new food co-op The Mustard Seed. Community CarShare also hosts the new Federation of Canadian Carsharing Co-operatives (FC3), and is a supporter of On Co-op.



The future looks bright for Community CarShare. Already working to expand into St. Catharines, the co-op is hoping to continue to seek out new markets. Half of their fleet is model year 2012 or newer, and a new in-car technology system allows keyless entry via smart card, while making the cars even more secure. The best indicator of their success: new members, who these days are signing up every day.

<http://communitycarshare.ca/>

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