

Firm plans series of wind turbines by Minnedosa, Neepawa

BY MATT GOERZEN

The same company that completed the wind farm project in St. Leon plans to build a similar series of wind turbines between Minnedosa and Neepawa if granted an energy contract with Manitoba Hydro later this year.

GreenWing Energy Management Ltd., a Vancouver-based company, met with local landowners last week to outline plans for a \$210-million wind energy project — dubbed the Yellowhead Wind Farm.

The project would provide at least 12 full-time jobs, and economic spinoffs including construction contracts for 60 to 70 new wind turbines.

And those winds of change would be welcome in an area that's suffered some economic hardships lately.

Earlier this spring the Manitoba government announced plans to move 19 locally-based employees to Portage la Prairie as part of a new crown lands office.

And in September, RxNorth.com, an international drug company, closed its Minnedosa pharmacy and cut 15 jobs. Neepawa's Premium Brands Ice Cream plant also shut down earlier this year, putting 20 people out of work.

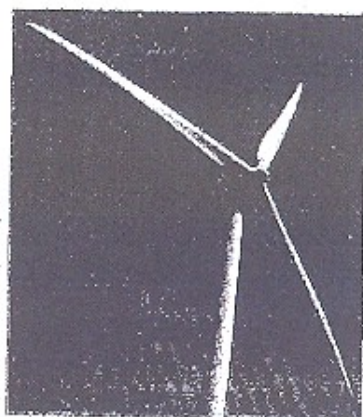
Neepawa Mayor Bob Durston said yesterday a new wind farm would be a much-needed salve to both communities, as well as the RMs of Langford, Minto, Rosedale and Odanah, which all stand to benefit from an increased tax base.

"It's not enough to fill the gap, but it does replace some job losses," Durston said. "You're trying to increase total employment in a community instead of replace. But it is good news there are opportunities for economic development in our region."

"We've taken a few hits recently," Minnedosa Mayor Duane LaCoste added. "If something was to come to pass, it would be a big boost to the economy in this area."

Last month, the Manitoba government and Manitoba Hydro announced plans to issue a request for proposals this winter for 300 megawatts in new wind projects to help meet its 1,000-megawatt target.

Three further allocations of 200 megawatts each are planned for 2013-14, 2015-16 and 2017-18.



GreenWing is planning to build wind turbines between Minnedosa and Neepawa — similar to this one in St. Leon — if granted a contract with Manitoba Hydro.

GreenWing Energy chairman and CEO Daniel Allard said he hopes the Manitoba government will grant a 100-megawatt contract, which would place the new project in a similar scale to the \$203-million St. Leon project.

"We think (St. Leon) can be duplicated," Allard said yesterday. "It turned out to be a winning situation for everybody. We're very excited about being involved in a second project in Manitoba."

Allard confirmed the company is already signing up landowners in the area to multi-year contracts, and said the energy project would operate for a minimum of 35 years, if not more.

An environmental assessment is currently underway.

The GreenWing chairman was a little disappointed in how slow the government was moving on wind energy in the province, but said he wasn't privy to all the factors in their decision making process.

"Selfishly, we'd like to see a much bigger program."

GreenWing is competing for contracts with several wind energy companies, including Manitoba-based Sequoia Energy Inc., which first initiated the St. Leon project in partnership with Bison Wind.

Sequoia plans to enter proposals for several locations in Westman, especially in the southwest corner of the province.

mgoerzen@herald-examiner.com