

At the leading edge *A local company is helping to usher in the next generation of wind power*

STACIE SNOW
Rocky View Publishing

An Airdrie businessman is paving the way for more environmentally friendly energy with a state-of-the-art prototype wind turbine.

Jeff Rhodes, founder of Airdrie's RnR Energy, is building a cutting-edge vertical axis wind turbine on the Winterring Hill hutterite colony south of Drumheller. The 60-foot-tall \$300,000 turbine will help offset energy costs on the farm.

"As far as I know, this is the only 50-kilowatt vertical axis turbine in Canada and possibly the world," said Rhodes, who has run RnR Energy with his wife Tammie for seven years.

"It is quieter, faster and less harmful to birds and bats than traditional (horizontal axis) wind turbines. It dispels all the things people are concerned about in relation turbines. The potential is huge."

That is because the omni-directional, multi-air foil design works like the wings of an airplane, creating more wind, more lift and less noise. Six 33-foot-tall blades makes the turbine look like a solid object when they are spinning, keeping birds from flying into it. The turbine also has lightning protection and heated blades to avoid icing.

"Horizontal models can accumulate ice chunks the size of (a) house," said Rhodes.

Horizontal models can also cause "shadow flicker" when horizontal "wings" of a turbine block the sun in intervals, making it

appear light and then dark.

Although Rhodes doesn't see this kind of turbine becoming popular near Airdrie, he said the Drumheller area is a perfect place to generate wind energy.

"It would be too much of an eyesore in an area that is as populated as Airdrie but near Drumheller, the wind is always blowing. The turbine is never going to stop," said Rhodes.

He added the turbine is a combination of Darrieus and Savonius wind turbines, making it more efficient and suitable for sites ranging from tropical climates to the Arctic.

Rhodes expects the turbine to be operational in five or six months and said it could have a six to nine year payoff depending on wind speed and electricity prices.

"We are one of the windiest parts of the world and we have the infrastructure to capture it," said Rhodes.

"It doesn't make much sense to have this resource all around us and not tap into it. We have to have power. No one lives without electricity. Wind is really going to take off because of the power it produces and it is absolutely clean."

He said, although he has solar panels on his home, wind power can be as much as four times more efficient than solar power, and wind turbines are less affected by rain, snow and hail.

For more information on RnR Energy, visit www.mrenergy.ca

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WINDS OF CHANGE - Airdrie businessman Jeff Rhodes shows off a model of his vertical axis wind turbine. This model is more than eight times smaller than the model Rhodes is building on a hutterite colony near Drumheller.

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