

Trustee is hoping to harness wind's positive energy

Pilot project touted as wave of future for all board schools

By RICHARD LEITNER
NEWS STAFF

A tornado may have wrecked the old Lawfield School, but Ray Mulholland isn't giving up on the power of nature.

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board trustee wants the new Lawfield to include a roof-mounted wind turbine as a pilot project on alternative energy generation that, if successful, can be expanded to other schools — and help cut Canada's global-warming emissions.

Scheduled to open this September, the Mountain Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 school offers an ideal opportunity to test the technology, he says.

There's even a local supplier — Cleanfield Energy Corp. of Ancaster, which has already installed a similar turbine at McMaster University's Innovation Park.

About 3.5-metres tall, the turbine's three vertical blades rotate around a central axis, and can generate between 7,000 and 9,000 kilowatts of power per year, or up to 80 per cent of the energy usage of the average household.

"We can dump it back into the Ontario Hydro grid and get paid for it," Mr. Mulholland says. "Or we can use it to pay for some of the energy that's used in the building. On a secondary school or large roof, you can put two or three of them on."

The Ward 4 trustee says he hopes the school board will be able to tap a new federal fund to help pay for the \$15,000 turbine.

As part of its efforts to cut greenhouse gases, the Conservative government in January announced the creation of a \$230-million program to fund the research, development and demonstration of clean-energy technologies.

Mr. Mulholland says he hopes the

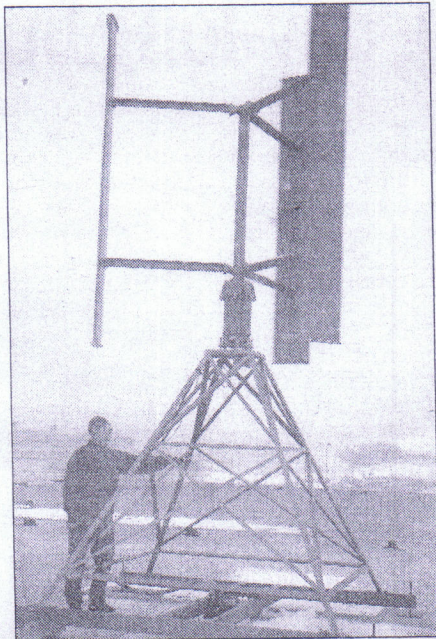


PHOTO BY RICHARD LEITNER

Operations manager Rene Dam checks the turbine on the roof of the company's Ancaster building.

project will proceed regardless, given the comparatively small cost.

His motion on the matter is scheduled to be debated at the March 26 board meeting, and he expects fellow trustees to be "very receptive."

"It's not so much making a pile of money," he says. "It's an \$11-million building. If it's going to start a pilot project that's going to save the Earth, let's face it, the government's priority right now, the initiative, is the environment."

Tony Verrelli, Cleanfield Energy's president and CEO, says his company has sold about 100 turbines since mid-November, mostly in the United States, where government subsidies help defray the costs.

The advantage of the turbine's vertical design is that it is less dependent on wind direction than the more traditional windmill, he says.

Mr. Verrelli added most school roofs can accommodate several turbines, but a pilot project is wise to determine how effective they are. With subsidies as high as 70 per cent stateside, the units can pay for themselves in seven years and generate a four hundred per cent return on cost over 25 years, he said.

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