

Good Morning Senator Snowe and Senator Shaheen. My name is Ronald Price, and I have been a small business owner for most all of my adult life, and I am currently employed by a small family-owned business. I want to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to testify and share my experience on the importance of diversity and out-of-the-box thinking as it relates to small business survival.

I operated a medium-sized dairy farm for 40 years in Waldo County, Maine. Through most of those 40 years and particularly in the last 20, I became interested in other sources of income to supplement the farm income and ways to cut expenses as the business was squeezed by the constantly challenging dairy economy.

Craneland Farm was located on Knox Ridge in Knox, Maine. One particular feature of Knox Ridge in addition to the spectacular views was the ever-present wind. We rarely had to deal with mosquitoes or the famous Maine black fly!

Dairy farms are large consumers of electricity. This business expense includes:

- The milking system,
- The cooling of the milk,
- Removal of feed from storage,
- The mixing and distribution of the feed to the animals,
- The removal of the manure from the dairy buildings,
- The hay drier for drying hay as it was being stored in the barn,
- The power needed for the farm repair shop (drill presses, air compressors, welder, etc.), and
- The farmhouse that also served as a summer residence for part-time hired help.

In the mid to late 1990's, the Maine Department of Agriculture had a Technology Transfer Grant for innovative marketing ideas and innovative production technology. I asked my nephew Andy Price to help provide technical assistance for writing a grant application for a windmill to be located on my farm. Andy had been working in the power industry and had experience in dealing with related environmental issues for some time. I did not receive the grant, but the process did plant the seed (pun intended) with Andy concerning my interest in wind power.

In late 2004, Andy Price's employer, Competitive Energy Services of Portland, Maine, decided they needed a source of green power in their mix of power options for their customers. Part of the farmland I still own in Freedom known as Beaver Ridge (with an elevation of 900 feet) had the potential for commercial windpower generation. A plan was formulated to test this site for the viability and sustainability for electrical power production with large wind turbines. Anemometers were erected and wind speed and direction data was collected for eighteen months. The data supported the plan, and the permitting process for construction was started. A lease agreement was transacted between CES and myself. The permitting process started and lasted about 2 ½ years. Construction began in the spring of 2008. Three 1.5 megawatt General Electric wind turbines supplying enough electrical power to supply 2,000 homes were commissioned into service on November 1, 2008.

The wind turbines were erected on 76 acres of farmland. The total loss of farmland for this effort was less than 5 acres including the access roads and the actual building sites. There are many benefits of this project:

1. It provides additional income potential for the farm operation and my retirement,
2. It provides a clean electrical energy supply for approximately 2,000 homes, helping to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and also helping to reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution,

3. It provides increased tax revenue for the Town of Freedom, and
4. 76 acres of farmland were preserved for future generations.

My farmland on Beaver Ridge has been farmed since the first settlers came to Freedom. It has also been available and used by local residents for hunting, jogging, horseback riding, dog walking, four-wheeling and snowmobiling. This area continues to be rich in game including deer, turkeys, moose, geese and partridge. The land remains available to the public for all these uses!

Why is what I have stated here relevant for any small business whether it be a farm or other small businesses that may own land suitable to wind power generation? It is vital for small businesses to be able to navigate the rules, laws and financing that are friendly to other avenues for small businesses to generate income. This income potential should be able to occur without significant investment by the business itself, such as was the case for my business, but rather use assets the business owns, such as land, to help generate income and remain viable. This will help support the entrepreneurship that is the heart of a healthy U.S. economy.