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Business & Labour

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Wind power for Avalon?

Scientist visits mineral exploration site to study viability of wind farm

by **Guy Quenneville**
Northern News Services

Some people chase rob-

bers. Some chase skirts. Dr.

J.P. Pinard chases wind.

"I like to call myself a
wind prospector," said the
Whitehorse-based scientist,
whose job it is to study the
direction and speed of wind.

Dr. Pinard - who has
helped the GNWT and Aurora
Research Institute install wind

monitoring stations in com-
munities like Tuktoyaktuk,
Lutsel K'e and Norman Wells
- visited Yellowknife recently
to tour Thor Lake, the future
site of a rare earth mineral
mine by junior exploration
company Avalon Rare Met-
als.

The purpose? To study
whether the site is flanked by
wind of the correct speed and
direction to partially power

Avalon's mine.

Dr. Pinard said this was
the first time he's been asked
to determine the viability of
a wind farm at a mine, but
added it's a phenomenon that's
catching on - and not just to
ensure green practices.

"In the last couple of years,
there have been a number of
mines in Alaska ... that have
expressed interest in exploring
wind," said Dr. Pinard.

"A lot of these mines want
to be good corporate citizens,
but they also realize they could
save money if they knew they
had good wind potential."

Seated beside Dr. Pinard on
the cramped Air Tindi plane
full of food, mail and core
boxes destined for Thor Lake
was Wade Carpenter, chair of
the Department of Environ-
ment and Natural Resources'
Wind Energy Committee.

According to Carpenter, a
study conducted by BHP Bil-
liton has concluded that wind
energy would help reduce the
amount of fuel trucked up to
the Ekati Diamond Mine by
190 truckloads per season.

He said the idea of wind
power at Avalon was sug-
gested to ENR in a letter
written to the department by
the Yellowknives Dene First
Nation, prompting ENR and
the research institute to con-
tract Dr. Pinard to make a



BUSINESS Briefs

with **Lauren McKeon**
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More Northerners go on EI

The number of people in the NWT receiving Employment
Insurance (EI) benefits has risen 4.9 per cent from January
to February and 26.9 per cent year-over-year, according to
Statistics Canada.

This is compared to a national increase of 7.8 per cent
from January to February and a 33.7 year-over-year rise.

The increase is largely attributed to deteriorating labour
market conditions and a fall in employment rates since Octo-
ber 2008. Alberta has the largest increase in those on EI - a
whopping 27.3 per cent increase from January to February.

Robin's Nest Restaurant closed

Hungry Yellowknifers venturing to the Robin's Nest
this past week were met with a "closed for inventory" sign
scrawled in black marker posted on each of the restaurant's
doors.

One thwarted Yellowknifer made an addition of their
own: "Crystal goes to Subway."



Dr. J.P. Pinard tours the weather tower at the Avalon site.

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High wind speeds needed

Wind, from 20

preliminary visit to study the site's topography, to be followed up by a desktop study.

Avalon camp manager and chief geologist Chris Pedersen said the best potential site for a wind farm would be a 800-foot ridge south of the future mine.

The ridge is in the path of the Hearne Channel, which,

according to Canadian Wind Encyclopedia, is an area of high wind energy. Dr. Pinard said if the wind travelling through the channel were to hit the ridge at a certain angle, it would travel upward and create what he called "the Venturi effect," resulting in high wind speeds.

While rough land conditions prevented Dr. Pinard from actually visiting the

ridge, a fly-over later confirmed the ridge is host to only a small number of trees – the better to ensure the Venturi effect.

As of press time, Dr. Pinard was still waiting for wind data from a weather station close to the Avalon site. Once he can study that data, he can make a recommendation to the GNWT.

"It would be the first non-

community-based wind monitoring station," said Carpenter. But Dr. Pinard said an Avalon wind farm would have to perform under particularly tough economic expectations.

"These wind farms have to pay off within a certain period," he said. "If you get a payoff of four to six years and the mine life will be 10 to 15 years, then it makes sense to put (in) a wind farm."



Guy Sammler/VMC photo

Wade Carpenter, chair of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Wind Energy Committee, elder Alfred Baillargeon of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and Dr. J.P. Pinard pose in front of the Avalon camp.