

Winnipeg tourist site partners with province to test urban wind turbine

MANITOBA IS ALREADY home to one of the largest wind farms in Canada – a 63-turbine, 99-megawatt wind farm in St. Leon. The farm generates enough wind energy to power nearly 35,000 homes. The province recently announced that a test station will be positioned at The Forks – a Winnipeg travel destination – to study the viability of an urban wind turbine. The Forks (<http://theforks.com>) is located at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and offers year round activities, shopping and entertainment.



A wind turbine located at The Forks site could possibly produce enough power to meet a significant portion of the site's energy needs. The temporary meteorological test tower, which will cost \$50,000, will determine whether an economic case exists. The province and The Forks will share the cost of the temporary wind-monitoring tower, which stands approximately 50 metres high and is supported by guy wires. An anemometer at the top of the tower measures wind strength and consistency.

In addition to the test tower, stakeholder consultations will be held over a six- to 12-month period to ensure any proposed development respects the heritage of The Forks site and reflects input from the community. As well, an environmental licence would be required prior to the project moving forward. ~~~

Hamilton purchases environmentally friendly buses

IN EARLY FEBRUARY 2007, the City of Hamilton announced that it is purchasing a new fleet of 22 conventional low-emission diesel buses using \$6 million of the \$8.9 million that the city had dedicated to transit. The funds targeted to transit were part of Hamilton's \$79.6 million share of the federal Gas Tax Fund allocation.

The city is not only purchasing conventional-low emission buses. According to Doug Murray, manager, Transit Fleet Maintenance, the city is actually ordering a total of 34 new buses – the 22 mentioned above and a further 12 diesel-hybrid buses. Of these 12, seven are 60-foot articulated buses and five are 40-foot buses. These 12 buses will provide an 80 percent reduction in emissions



over the buses they replace. The other 22 buses will reduce the bus fleet emissions overall but not to the extent of the diesel-hybrid buses.

It would seem that the diesel-hybrid bus is the best way to go to reduce emissions, but unfortunately, if the city wishes to maintain the level of transit service it provides Hamiltonians, the cost of diesel-hybrids is too high. While making efforts to reduce the environmental impact of the transit service, managers must continue work within the ever-present reality of balancing budgets (with variable sources of funding) against service demands. Murray notes that “we have also applied to FCM [Federation of Canadian Municipality] funding to fund the difference between standard diesel cost and diesel hybrid cost; we will not be notified re acceptance for this extra funding until March or April.”

Hamilton Public Works has one of the largest hybrid fleets in Canada – 56 vehicles not including the 12 hybrids on order. The new buses will go into service immediately upon delivery. ❧

Saskatchewan contracts local firm to update provincial website

The Government of Saskatchewan has updated and redesigned its central website (www.gov.sk.ca). Its fresh appearance makes it easier for people to find the information and services they are looking. New features include enhanced multimedia, audience-specific links to help users find information, enhanced search capabilities and an educational-based “fun zone.”

According to Richard Murray, executive director of policy and planning in the province’s Information Technology Office, it has been five years since the provincial government last updated its website. “The government is planning to put more services for citizens online and is streamlining its Web services – amalgamating all IT services across government. Seventeen departments are on board so far.”

To do this, a competitive process was run during the summer of 2006, with local firm, ADX Studio (www.adxstudio.com) of Regina winning the contract. According to Murray, ADX was the most user-friendly of all the softwares evaluated and the most cost competitive.

The company and an in-house team from the IT Office worked together to implement the new content management system software on the central government website, and an in-house team will offer training to the other departments. The complete rollout of the new tool will take another 12-18 months.

More information more easily available usually means that clients/citizens will contact their government more often and expect a more timely response. When asked if the training currently being offered would also include customer response training, Murray said that would be a separate initiative... the training offered by his IT team will help departments become familiar with the new tool, enabling them to post information in a more timely fashion. ❧