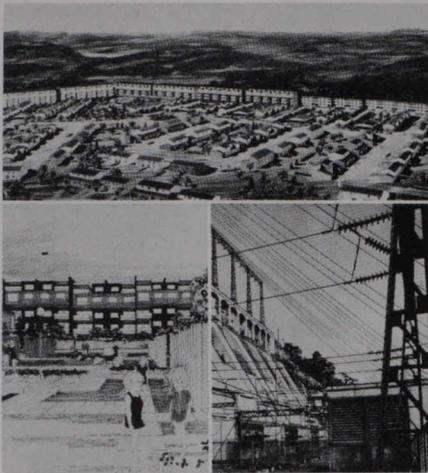


Cover picture shows aspects of a new venture in town planning, the all-electric town of Fermont, being built to withstand winter hardship in northeast Quebec.

# Canada Today



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# Electric town has a climate all its own

By Alan Harvey

Canada is taking the shivery br-r-r out of winter living in a new town in northern Quebec that is probably the world's first all-electric community.

Windbreaks, climate-controlled "walkways" and compact siting of facilities are among the distinguishing features of a bold new venture in town planning designed to tame sub-Arctic temperatures and permit a relaxed North American lifestyle. So meticulous is the planning that even the fire hydrants are heated.

This June-in-January urban experiment is improbably shaping up in Quebec province 500 miles northeast of Montreal and 15 miles west of Labrador City, Newfoundland. It isn't exactly Camelot, and the weather can be bleak, but every skill of man is being used to make it cosy.

The new town is called Fermont, from the French for mountain of iron, and it is rising on a site where only trees grew before. It will provide homes for some 1,500 employees of the Quebec Cartier Mining Company, which hopes to produce 16 million tons of iron ore annually at its Mount Wright mine.

Two large transformers, each powerful enough to supply a city of more than 100,000 population, will provide the electricity for Fermont, named for a village near *Trois-Rivieres* where Canada's first iron works was established in 1736.

The iron ore deposits now under development lie in the so-called Quebec-Labrador trough extending from Lac Jeannine to the far northern area of the Ungava Peninsula. The Labrador coast is believed to have been the first part of the North American continent visited by white men. Norsemen visited the coast as early as the 10th century, and probably much earlier.

A striking feature of the present bid to beat the elements in an intimidating area is a windscreen building more than 2,000 feet long across the north and northwest sides of the townsite. This "coupe vent" or windbreak will provide shelter from howling below-zero winds through its curving structure, dipping to three half storeys high at each end from a peak centre point of five half storeys. It will also contain, or be joined to, a hotel, flats, shops, recreation centre and offices.

At ground level, an enclosed pedestrian passageway protected from the weather will run the full length of the building, which is designed to enable any house-

holder to reach some point on the walkway in really rugged weather.

The site holds 297 bungalows, 194 semi-detached houses and 144 town-houses. They are planned so that 35 per cent of the residents do not have to set foot outdoors.

Considerable savings were achieved in Fermont's construction through compactness of design of roads, sidewalks, power distribution and so on, resulting in shorter walking distances within the built-up area. Conventional sub-Arctic towns have a population density of only about 11 persons per acre. Fermont, with 190 acres for 5,000 inhabitants, has a density of 26.3 persons per acre.

## Compactness is cheaper

Professor Norbert Schoenhauer, Hungarian-born Dean of the School of Architecture at Montreal's McGill University and partner in the firm of Desnoyer and Schoenhauer which designed the new community, says that the compactness of concept makes possible a saving of some C\$8 million in capital investment on paved roadways, curbs, sidewalks, storm sewers, water mains, street lighting and hydrants.

Road maintenance, snow clearance and policing will be less costly because of the reduced distances, he says, and shorter driving and walking distances will also be useful.

Ten women forming a special citizens' committee advised on house and apartment plans, including heated basements or cellars and special "mud rooms" for shedding outdoor clothing. All living areas face south, overlooking the town and benefiting from the "windscreen" structure of the main apartment complex. Belts of trees, also to the north and northwest, will provide additional shelter from the winds.

Fermont and its 979 dwellings will be supplied solely by electricity, providing a pollution-free environment. This will power all heating, cooking, lighting and other services.

To heat the fire hydrants — necessary to keep them from freezing up in temperatures well below zero — a heating cable will be strung around the hydrant pipes.

The electric power for Fermont comes from Churchill Falls through two trans-