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Firms roll out invention; Sensor that monitors pressure in huge mining truck tires demonstrated for visiting B.C. premier

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A joint venture between two Vernon-based companies that allows for the monitoring of tire pressures and temperatures in huge truck tires working as far away as Mozambique, Mexico and Chile was demonstrated to B.C. Premier Christy Clark in Vernon on Friday.

"It wasn't easy," said Robert Foord, president of Kal Tire. "It took 10 years to figure out how to install the sensors in a way that they weren't damaged by the way the trucks are used. It's not as easy as sticking a sensor in the tire."

The huge tires, which weigh almost a ton when the wheel assembly is attached, can cost up to \$80,000 each.

"By monitoring the pressure in each tire, we can quickly make corrections by our people on the ground at the mine sites," said Chris Green, manager of global technical support and services for Kal Tire's mining tire group. "This can result in a five to 30 per cent savings in tire wear and also savings in fuel consumption."

The technology was developed by SST Wireless Inc., a Vernon-based company with offices in Delta.

"Our technology can increase safety, decrease downtime, reduce fuel consumption as well as make tires last long," said president Christopher Chong. "We can export not only the product, but the service and technology to support the product as well."

Chong expressed appreciation for the support the project received from the Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust.

"They have allowed SST Wireless to reach commercialization of its technology and are an example of how private-public partnerships can help B.C. companies compete globally."

Speaking before company employees in the atrium of the Kal Tire offices, Foord said he was proud of the rich heritage of his 60-year-old company.

"We not only try to provide the best service possible, but we strive to be innovative in our approach. We are always looking for ways to add value, and we recognized the need for tire monitoring."

Premier Clark praised Kal Tire, saying, "You make B.C. incredibly proud. You've reached out worldwide, but you've stayed in Vernon. You've recognized a problem and figured out how to solve it.

"We all depend on mining and technology, and this is what a strong economy looks like," she added. Clark noted eight new mines will open in B.C. by 2015.