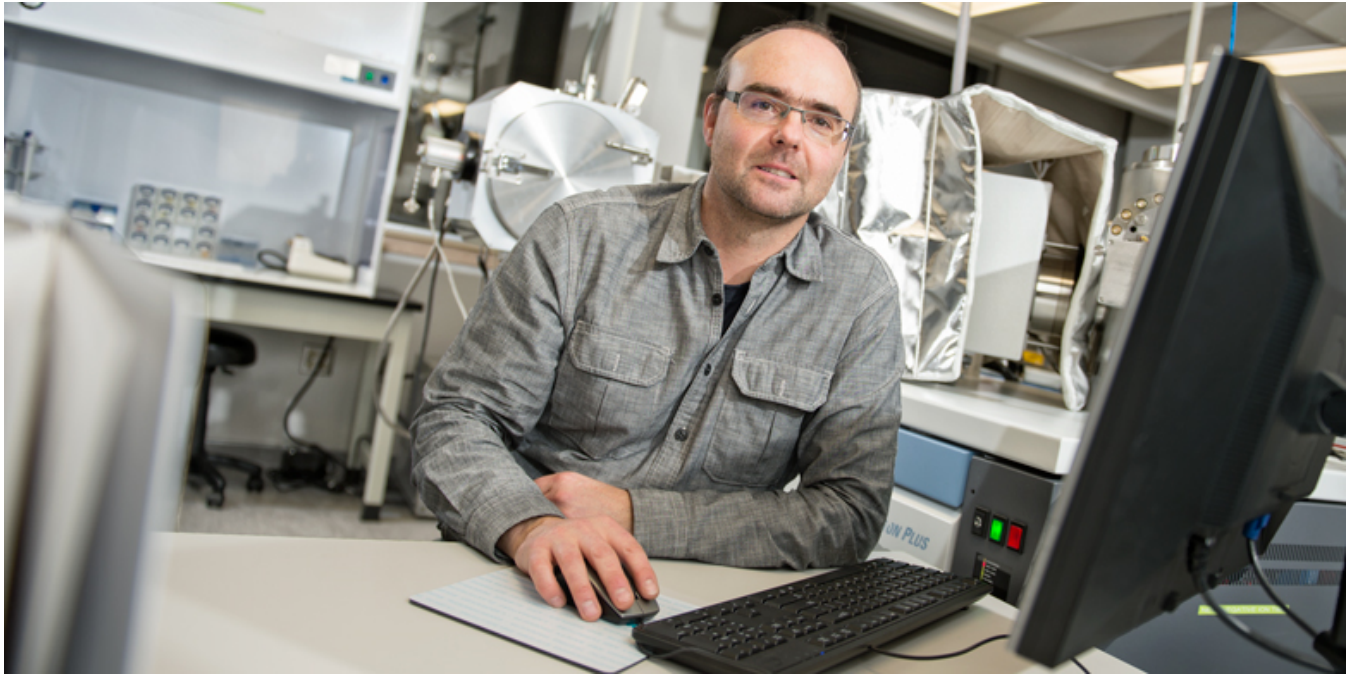


University of Alberta opens new diamond lab

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Graham Pearson, Canada Excellence Research Chair in Arctic Resources, will develop new technologies for diamond exploration in the new Arctic Resources Geochemistry Laboratory. (Photo: Richard Siemens)

If diamonds truly are a girl's best friend than a new lab at the University of Alberta could be set to make a lot of new friendships.

The new Arctic Resources Geo-chemistry Laboratory opened Wednesday.

Graham Pearson, Canada Excellence Research Chair in Arctic Resources, who will oversee the lab, said it represents a huge leap forward in the study of diamonds.

"This lab and the rest of the equipment is the biggest focus of equipment oriented towards diamond research anywhere in the world," he said.

The mass spectrometers and laser sampling systems in the lab can be used to help determine the strength of diamond deposits, which Pearson said is important for Canada.

"Because Canada is a resource based economy, I would argue it is very important to be able to identify new methods, new frontiers of reaching those goals, of finding new resources," he said.

He said tracing diamonds poses requires the very specific equipment the lab has.

"Diamonds are a particular challenge, because they are so pure you have to develop very, very good techniques to work on them," he said.

Beyond the economic benefits, Pearson said there are also pure science implications that come from studying diamonds.

"They are unique capsules of the deep earth," he said. "They provide you with unique snapshots of parts of the earth you could never get at."