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QAMA—A BRIEF HISTORY

We are grateful to Paul A. Filteau, Executive Vice President of the Quebec Asbestos Mining Association, for permission to print this brief story on the "reason for being" of QAMA. The information was excerpted from the introductory chapter of "Environmental Hygiene in Asbestos Mines" — the Memorandum presented by the Association to the Quebec Committee For The Study of The Health Conditions Of The Asbestos Industry. The Memorandum supports QAMA's conclusion, based on sound medical and scientific findings, that a "five fibers per cubic centimeter of air" standard is an acceptable and safe level of exposure to asbestos. A copy of the entire Memorandum is available from the Quebec Asbestos Mining Association.

QUEBEC ASBESTOS MINING ASSOCIATION

The Quebec Asbestos Mining Association was incorporated in 1931. Its member companies include five Quebec asbestos producers—Asbestos Corporation Ltd., Bell Asbestos Mines Ltd., Canadian Johns-Manville Co. Ltd., Carey-Canadian Mines Ltd. and Lake Asbestos of Quebec Ltd.

One of the main objectives of QAMA is to encourage a collaborating attitude between the members of the Association and between the Association itself and other organizations, public bodies, etc., in an effort to find a solution to the problems of the asbestos industry such as working conditions, dust in the atmosphere and growth.

Another of its objectives is to develop and improve the mining and processing of asbestos, in general, by contributing to the establishing of uniform standards concerned with the quality of asbestos fibers and by promoting technical research and economic and scientific studies.

The QAMA Standards for the production and classification of asbestos fibers, adopted by the Association, are recognized universally for the qualification of asbestos fiber. In addition, the technology used by asbestos mines in countries other than Canada (such as the Republic of South Africa, Rhodesia, Australia and Russia, in its most recent plants) is based on that created and established by the member companies of QAMA.

Quebec asbestos mines produce about 35% of all Chrysotile produced in the world, including the USSR. As a group, these Quebec mines directly create some 6,400 jobs in the mining, concentrating and processing of ore—and, indirectly, some 65,000 people, who form the combined total population of the communities in Quebec where asbestos mining operations constitute the economic mainstay, depend financially for their future on the asbestos industry in that Province.

INSTITUTE OF OCCUPATIONAL
AND
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
MONTREAL CANADA

THE INSTITUTE OF OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

In 1966 QAMA created The Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health. It is directed by a Scientific Committee which groups selected scientists from Canada, the United States and Europe, each of whom must have a recognized competence in the field of health and asbestos and who may not be related in any way to any industry.

Since its creation the IOEH has endeavored to promote scientific research into the influence of asbestos on health Each member of the Scientific Committee individually studies each request submitted to the group and then the entire Committee meets to discuss the matter, after which the Committee presents its recommendations to QAMA.

QAMA has always acted according to the recommendations of the Scientific Committee. Furthermore, the subsidies granted are not given directly to the researcher involved but to the Institute or University to which he is attached Whatever the results obtained from any of the research projects, they are published. The Association advises it has never attempted to prevent the publication of a result which was not to its advantage or to that of any or all of its member companies.

The works so created and encouraged by QAMA and IOEH constitute a most important worldwide contribution to the progress of science in the field of the biological action of asbestos.

IOEH has received over $4-million from QAMA since 1966, covering 25 research projects. Separated into five groups the first of the projects compares epidemiological studies at Chrysotile mines in Canada with those of Chrysotile mines in Italy and Anthophyllite mines in Finland. The second group of subsidies includes epidemiological studies in the asbestos-cement industries and at shipyards. A third group includes epidemiological studies on mesothelioma occurring in the general populace. A fourth group includes studies on the physico-chemical state and transformation of asbestos fibers during the various technological stages from mining through to end uses—and relates them to studies of the health of workers exposed to asbestos fibers during the various stages. A fifth group includes studies of the "dynamic in vivo" of asbestos and on the mechanism of the biological action of asbestos, i.e., studies on the penetration, deposition and retention of fibers in the lungs and the biological response or reactions of cells to asbestos fiber.

IOEH has also received the necessary funds and authority to take measures to find and coordinate, on a worldwide basis, all available data concerned with the subject of asbestos and health. For that purpose the Institute established new contacts and maintained existing contacts with various organizations and agencies which already had begun this type of research or who were agreeable to actively contributing to such research.

The Institute owns one of the most complete libraries in the world dealing with asbestosis and other diseases related to asbestos exposure. This library is available to anyone who wishes information or consultation in connection with asbestos-related health problems.

COMMITTEE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

In addition to medical research, QAMA contributes to the fight against dust. For many years a Committee for the Protection of the Environment and an engineering specialist in the field, employed by the Association, have been working toward improving environmental conditions.

Even though all QAMA member companies are competitors in the marketplace, they have agreed to share any information related to environmental control via a QAMA Technical Subcommittee whose members include a representative of each member company. Consequently each mine experimenting with a new system or method of dust collection communicates the results of the testing to all other member companies through the Subcommittee. To open a wider spectrum of research, and to eliminate duplication of effort and save resources, the Subcommittee supplies pertinent sketches and specifications to companies outside the membership of QAMA.

The Committee for Environmental Control financially encourages practical research in the fight against dust, including the initiation of university research on such studies as the effectiveness of respiratory masks and on the vegetation of tailings piles.

Finally, the Quebec Asbestos Mining Association actively exchanges information with other technical committees, national and international, who share its same objectives.

QAMA and its member companies are to be commended for their untiring and continuing efforts toward better working conditions, a safer work environment and growth and progress for the Asbestos Industry.