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Quebec Asbestos Mining Association
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Thetford Mines, Que., Oct. 23 - Formation of a fast-acting medical research organization to investigate the effects of asbestos on human health was announced here today by M.J. Massol, president of the Quebec Asbestos Mining Association.

Already active is a medical research team studying the health of past and present employees of mines and mills in the Thetford Mines and Asbestos Districts, supported by the Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health which has its headquarters in Montreal.

Studies to be undertaken are similar in design and purpose to others now being conducted in Great Britain, the United States, Finland, the U.S.A., South Africa, Italy and other countries. All studies are being undertaken as part of a planned international effort.

The Institute's activities are directed by a seven-member scientific committee headed by Dr. George V. Wright, Cleveland, Ohio, chairman, assisted by Dr. Fernand Grégoire of Montreal, with Dr. P. Falar of Montreal as secretary.

Conducting the medical and statistical studies in Quebec's asbestos country is a research team headed by Dr. J.C. MacDonald of McGill University, Montreal, assisted by Dr. Gisèle Fournier from the University of Sherbrooke and Mr. Charles Hammett of the British Medical Research Council; all of whom are now in Thetford Mines.

International importance of these studies was stressed by Mr. Massol

who pointed out that the effects of asbestos on health are receiving increased attention by medical scientists in many countries and in the world press. It has been known for some time that asbestos dust can be harmful to the lungs, he said. But precautions taken now to protect workers in mines, mills and factories have reduced risks in those areas to a very low level.

The suggestion of a threat to health demands thorough examination, Mr. Russell added, because of the universal use of asbestos and asbestos products. There are few aspects of modern life which do not depend on asbestos to some degree. National and international authorities are consequently pressing for careful investigations so that if there are dangers they can be identified and controlled.

In response to this international need, the Quebec Asbestos Mining Association, representing the most important asbestos producing area in the Free World, decided to establish and support the Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health which will encourage medical research into all aspects of the problem.

To begin with, records in the Thetford Mines and Asbestos areas will be subjected to detailed statistical analysis, and tests using the most modern methods will be offered to workers of different ages and in various occupations. The program is being conducted with the full support of the asbestos mining industry and with the full knowledge and approval of union representatives.

It is considered by those taking part in the scientific investigations that the Quebec studies offer an unique opportunity to find out whether the Canadian type of asbestos, mixed with other materials, carries any unsuspected risks to health. The unusual stability of the populations of Quebec asbestos mining towns, where generations have lived and worked in the same area, makes possible an investigation that could not be undertaken successfully elsewhere. There is good reason to believe

that Quebec asbestos is safe, Mr. Mesel concluded. If this can be established scientifically and undisputedly, the facts will be welcomed by health authorities around the world.

Present in Thetford Mines today when the QAMA announcement was made were Messrs M.J. Mesel, J.O. Roy, W.V. Oughtred, F.P. Smith, I.C. Campbell and Paul Filteau, representing the Association, senior officials of the mining companies and asbestos workers unions, Dr. MacDonald and Dr. Fournier of the medical investigating group and Dr. Paul Cartier, director of the Industrial Health Clinic at Thetford Mines.