

An International First: Canadian Researchers Develop A New Standard For Responsible Mining Exploration



As one of the most important industrial sectors in Canada, mineral exploration can have significant, impacts on the environment- disrupting natural ecosystems and local economies and triggering negative effects in communities, such as disruption of Indigenous peoples traditional practices, land use conflicts, public health and human wellbeing.

Recognizing this, the Quebec Mineral Exploration Association (QMEA) mandated the UQAT-UQAM Chair in Mining Entrepreneurship (Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue/Université du Québec à Montréal) in Lebel-sur-Quévillon to develop a standard related to the activities of mineral exploration companies and their service providers,

called the UQAT Document. The UQAT Document includes a range of provisions, environmental practices, safety of people involved in the mineral exploration process, well-being of affected communities, responsible business practices, compliance with applicable legal requirements, and efficient use of financial resources. It is available on the market as a PDF or hard copy.

Researchers from UQAT, led by Suzanne Durand, a professor at the Teaching and Research Unit in Management Sciences and co-holder of the UQAT-UQAM Chair in Mining Entrepreneurship, developed the UQAT Document to address the key issues identified in relation to mineral exploration activities. In collaboration with QMEA and other partners, Axelys, Quebec's new organization for accelerating the development and transfer of high-potential innovations stemming from public research who took over Aligo Innovation activities and the universities' outside technology-transfer firm, actively supported the deployment of this work to industry, and concluded an exclusive license agreement with Underwriters Laboratories of Canada Inc. (UL). UL is a science-based testing, inspection and certification company with expertise in developing standards and certifying against those standards.

Currently offered in Quebec, the UL-2723 and UL-2724 standards, which are ECOLOGO's certification program for the mineral exploration industry, are a prime example of the transfer of intellectual property developed by a Quebec university to industry, which in this case takes the form of copyright license granting UL the right to use, distribute or publish the UQAT Document, which established norms pertaining to environmental quality (efficient use of natural resources, air, water, and soil quality, respect of wildlife habitat and forestry work), quality of life (recognition of concerns of affected communities and aboriginal communities), work environment, local investment and business ethics. This first comprehensive certification program is now available to mining exploration companies and their service providers in Quebec for the application of environmental, social and economic best practices.

"The UL ECOLOGO® Certification programs for mineral exploration, UL 2734 and UL 2724, offers mineral exploration companies and their service providers an opportunity to verify their responsible practices and their ability to reduce their impact on the environment and local communities," said Joseph Hosey, Vice President and General Manager for UL in Canada.

These standards will be adapted and expanded throughout Canada and abroad in the coming years.

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