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# Rockfon’s ceiling systems installed in CNESST Head Office, Quebec

# – Government facility designed to cohesively meet

# high sustainability and performance standards –

Chicago (Nov. 2022) – The Government of Quebec opened the new headquarters for the Commission for Standards, Equity in Health and Safety at Work (Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, CNESST) in the heart of the eco-district of D’Estimauville in Quebec City.

Demonstrating its respect for the environment, energy-efficiency and wellness, the project is designed and built with the intention of achieving certification through the Canada Green Building Council’s LEED® v4 rating system. In addition, it is the first government facility in Quebec to pursue the International WELL Building Institute’s WELL™ Building Standard.

Société québécoise des infrastructures (SQI) supervised all stages of the CNESST’s office design and construction working closely with Coarchitecture and LEMAYMICHAUD. The design team specified four types of Rockfon acoustic stone wool ceiling panels plus Chicago Metallic suspension systems to meet the project’s aesthetics, sustainability and occupant well-being. Rockfon’s ceiling panels comply with acoustic ceiling requirements in building standards, and meet or exceed relevant criteria for LEED and WELL.

**Cohesive Space, Local Team**

In January 2016, the CNESST became the organization responsible for all services related to labor standards, labor wages, and occupational health and safety. This resulted from the consolidation of the Labor Standards Commission, the Pay Equity Commission, and the Occupational Health and Safety Commission. A single website was introduced, but a unified physical space also was needed. After evaluating costs to expand one of three existing facilities, it was decided to build a new head office that was designed to cohesively meet high sustainability and performance standards.

Committed to ecological urban revitalization in its community, the CNESST selected D'Estimauville eco-district as its new home. EBC Inc. began construction in May 2018. The majority of the CNESST project’s building team and construction workers were based in Quebec. These include Rockfon’s distributor, Manugypse, and ceiling installing contractor, Daharpro Construction Inc.

The new 8-story CNESST building spans approximately 34,500 m2 (370,000 ft2) serving nearly 1,850 workers. Presented in a refined, modern architectural style, the project palette combines biophilic design, natural materials and, as LEMAYMICHAUD described, “a lot of white.”

The majority, 21,858 m2 (235,280 ft2) of Rockfon’s stone wool ceiling panels for the CNESST offices were selected with a white reflective surface. Helping create the bright, contemporary interior spaces, the stone wool ceiling panels varied in size from 2-by-2 to 4-by-4-foot squares and 2-by-4 to 2-by-8-foot rectangles.

**Collaborative and Comfortable**

Individual and collaborative spaces are available on each floor. LEMAYMICHAUD’s team said, “This design responds to the new need for companies to offer employees a variety of work environments, but also to provide rooms for virtual meetings to meet the needs of the new hybrid work mode. …The integration of this many workstations represents a major challenge for any project, since it entails, among other things, acoustics and safety issues.”

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The acoustics inside office buildings impact employees’ performance and comfort. With the use of sound-absorbing ceiling panels, noise and reverberation within a space are reduced. The effectiveness of ceiling’s sound absorption is measured with a Noise Reduction Coefficient (NRC).

All of the Rockfon ceiling panels installed in the CNESST office meet best-level absorption. Rockfon Alaska® and Hygienic Plus™ acoustic stone wool ceiling panels achieve an NRC of up to 0.90. For areas where even greater acoustic optimization was needed, Rockfon Sonar® and Rockfon® Color-all™ black acoustic stone wool ceiling panels provide an NRC as high as 0.95.

“The finishes used in this project offer a warm and bright minimalist corporate atmosphere,” described LEMAYMICHAUD’s team. “The skillful use of black and white, wood-effect and stainless steel contrasts harmoniously with the integration of the client’s corporate colors throughout the spaces, on the walls or glass partitions.”

**Open, Modern and Bright**

The CNESST’s U-shaped floorplan arches around a central atrium allowing views of the surrounding outdoors and community and inviting natural light deep into the interior. “The architecture of the Headquarters contributes to the animation of the place by presenting all its active functions group around its atrium,” stated Coarchitecture. “On the interior, the atrium provides contact with the exterior, creating an energizing luminous space for all employees.”

“The benefits of the new head office for the staff are numerous,” according to the CNESST leadership. “The workspaces are open and modern, which allows access to outdoor light and to evolve in living areas that encourage collaboration and teamwork.”

LEMAYMICHAUD’s team elaborated, “In these institutional offices, the workspaces are arranged in such a way as to limit closed offices and democratize natural light. The open areas are found in the periphery and the closed offices are concentrated in the center of each floor, the goal being to maximize light offered by the abundant fenestration. …The immense windows offer a panoramic view of Île d’Orléans and Quebec City.”

Maximizing the use of natural light with reflective ceiling panels not only offers an opportunity to save energy, but also can have a profound impact on occupants’ well-being, mood and productivity. Too much light can cause eyestrain and make it hard to focus. Too little can lead to headaches, lack of focus and drowsiness. For the CNESST offices, Rockfon’s white ceiling panels reflect 83 to 86 percent of light regardless of its source. In the enclosed areas where natural light is unavailable, high reflectance also leverages the high-efficiency light fixtures.

**Health and Wellness**

Along with flexible workspaces and multiple meeting rooms, the CNESST building includes a cafeteria, an early childhood center and a fitness center with lockers. In active spaces, such as gyms with weights and stationary bikes, the acoustic experience balances high energy and high performance.

LEMAYMICHAUD’s team noted that the materials for the fitness center were selected to “facilitate maintenance, but also ensure the long-term durability of the facilities.” Contributing to this effort, Rockfon’s stone wool ceiling panels also are easy to clean and hydrophobic, meaning they resist water, moisture and humidity.

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Stone wool also is naturally resistant to mold and mildew, and does not support the growth of microorganisms, without added biocides. All of Rockfon’s stone wool ceiling products selected for the CNESST head office have earned UL® GREENGUARD® Gold certified for low-VOC emissions. Both Rockfon’s stone wool panels and metal ceiling suspension systems also are manufactured with recycled content. At the end of its long, useful life in CNESST, the metal grid can be locally recycled.

Helping architects, building owners and tenants make informed decisions about their material ingredients, Rockfon offers health product declarations (HPDs) and UL-certified environmental product declarations (EPDs). Ceiling materials with low emission levels, natural resistance to mold and microorganisms, and high acoustic comfort contribute to improved indoor environmental quality (IEQ). The health and wellness benefits of IEQ, including mitigating poor indoor air quality (IAQ), are recognized by LEED, WELL and other green building standards.

**Achievements and Appreciation**

Supporting the health and well-being of the building’s occupants, the CNESST leadership said objectives including maximum reductions of internal sources of air pollution, quality water supply and promotion of healthy eating have been achieved or are in the process of being achieved.

Adriana Multescu, engineer and project director with the SQI shared her appreciation and offered, “A big ‘thank you’ to the whole team for your excellent work. I greatly appreciate your professionalism, your collaboration, your efficiency and your respect of deadlines.”

Celebrating the CNESST building opening in June 2022, representatives from the government and community included Jean Boulet, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity; Minister of Immigration, Francisation and Integration; and the minister responsible for the Mauricie region. He praised the project saying, “The new CNESST head office represents an important step since its creation in 2016. The building is modern, ecological and made of local materials made by local people. These new workspaces will allow CNESST staff to perform their duties in a stimulating environment. It is a successful integration into the D'Estimauville eco-district.”

“From the outset, the CNESST was mindful of offering its personnel a mobilizing work environment, focused on the well-being of its employees and respecting sustainable development objectives. This is exactly what we did, and this, while respecting the initial budget and the schedule,” concluded Manuelle Oudar, president and CEO of the CNESST.

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**CNESST Head Office, 1600 Avenue D'Estimauville, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, G1J 0H7**

* Owner: Gouvernement du Québec, Société québécoise des infrastructures (SQI); Quebec
* Tenant: Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST); Quebec
* Architecture – building: Coarchitecture; Quebec
* Architecture, interior design and graphic design: LEMAYMICHAUD; Quebec
* Construction manager: EBC Inc.; L'Ancienne-Lorette; Quebec
* Ceiling systems – installing contractor: Daharpro Construction Inc.; Saint-Nicolas, Quebec
* Ceiling systems – distributor: Manugypse; Quebec
* Ceiling systems – manufacturer: Rockfon; Chicago; https://www.rockfon.com
* Photographer: Stéphane Groleau

***About Rockfon***

*Rockfon is part of the ROCKWOOL Group and is offering advanced acoustic ceilings and wall solutions to create beautiful, comfortable spaces.*

*At the ROCKWOOL Group, we are committed to enriching the lives of everyone who experiences our product solutions. Our expertise is perfectly suited to tackle many of today’s biggest sustainability and development challenges, from energy consumption and noise pollution to fire resilience, water scarcity and flooding. Our range of products reflects the diversity of the world’s needs, while supporting our stakeholders in reducing their own carbon footprint.*

*Stone wool is a versatile material and forms the basis of all our businesses. With approximately 11,500 passionate colleagues in 39 countries, we are the world leader in stone wool solutions, from building insulation to acoustic ceilings, external cladding systems to horticultural solutions, engineered fibers for industrial use to insulation for the process industry, and marine and offshore.*

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