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CSA Testing Laboratories, Rexdale, Toronto
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Publisher's version / Version de l'éditeur:

<https://doi.org/10.4224/20359111>

Technical Note (National Research Council of Canada. Division of Building Research), 1968-01-01

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NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA

DIVISION OF BUILDING RESEARCH

No.

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TECHNICAL NOTE

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CHECKED BY

APPROVED BY

DATE January 1968

PREPARED FOR General Information for DBR Staff

SUBJECT CSA TESTING LABORATORIES, REXDALE, TORONTO

(1) The official opening of a major extension to the CSA Testing Laboratories at Rexdale in Northwestern Toronto took place on Monday, 25 September 1967. The writer represented the Division at the very pleasant and efficient ceremony. This note provides a good opportunity for recording something about these Laboratories, since they should be well known to all Research Officers in DBR/NRC and to others with whom the Division works closely.

(2) Well over 100 people were present for the opening, which was officially performed by the Honourable R. H. Winters, P. C., in his capacity as Minister of Trade and Commerce in the Government of Canada. He made an admirable speech on the importance of international standards. He was introduced by Dr. J. H. Jenkins who spoke briefly, as did also Mr. M. C. Thurling, now Chairman of the CSA Laboratories Administrative Board, the Mayor of Etobicoke, and Mr. Gordon Tebo, the General Manager of the Laboratories. Tours through the new extension had naturally been arranged.

(3) The original building was erected in 1954 with an area of 50,000 sq ft. Additions of 10,000 and 1,500 sq ft, respectively, were made in 1959 and 1964. The new major addition has a total floor area of 40,000 sq ft. The total area of the Laboratories is therefore now 101,500 sq ft located on a building site of approximately 10 acres. The new extension has been arranged to the west of the main office area and now accommodates all the non-electrical testing work of the Laboratories. The significance of this development is explained later.

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(4) The Laboratories started in a small way as a part of the Approvals Laboratories of the Ontario Hydro in 1941. After the war there was a general reorganization, and the Laboratories were transferred to CSA which rented special space for them. It was when this space came to be inadequate that the 1954 building was erected. Throughout those early years the work of the Laboratories was restricted solely to electrical products. Soon after the move to the new building the old name of "Approvals Laboratories" was changed to "Testing Laboratories," since the CSA Board of Directors had come to appreciate that approvals can only be given legally by Provincial or Municipal Officials. All that the Laboratories can do is to certify, after testing, that products do conform with the appropriate CSA or other specification.

(5) The financing of the 1954 building was done with the aid of guarantees on loans provided by some of the major electrical manufacturing companies. Their representatives on the CSA Board of Directors made quite clear, at the time, that the electrical industry regarded the Laboratories as "their building" in view of this guarantee. This feeling has persisted until quite recent years. The excellence and significance of the testing work that has been done is shown by the fact that: the staff now numbers over 300, the Laboratories have contacts in 17 overseas countries, there are branch laboratories at three locations in Canada, and financially the Laboratories are today in a very sound position.

(6) It will be of special interest to the staff of DBR/NRC to know that the original building and all the extensions have been erected on a "package-deal basis." The firm involved is Finlay W. McLachlan and Company Limited of Toronto. The original building was erected while the writer was serving his long period of 16 years on the CSA Board of Directors. He naturally raised the strongest possible objections to a body such as the CSA having a building erected in this unorthodox manner. He was one of a very small minority, since the majority of the members of the Board, being from

the electrical industry, saw no reason why a building should not be "purchased" in just the same way as one purchases a large electrical generator, design and construction being the responsibility of the same organization. No comment will be made on the building itself but members of the DBR staff are urged to examine it closely when they visit the Laboratories.

(7) The significance of the new extension will now be clear, since it has been provided for non-electrical testing. Activity in this field began when the Laboratories took over from NRC the testing of oil-burning equipment; however, this was a very limited operation. The Laboratories are now engaged in testing plastic pipe and other plastic products, and have recently embarked on testing of plumbing fixtures. To aid with the latter work a Canadian Advisory Plumbing Council has been established and is in operation. Quite naturally this new venture is leading the Laboratories into contact with the many complex aspects of the whole subject of the approval of building materials, a vital matter which DBR/NRC and CMHC have had under careful consideration for some time. This non-electrical work even includes the testing of duct work and heating equipment for mobile homes. This one fact will show that the Laboratories are starting on the way to the much wider laboratory testing service that is needed, and that must one day be developed, in this country.

(8) It is a pleasure to make this record of a most satisfactory function, marking a big step forward in the operation of an organization with which DBR/NRC has always enjoyed the closest and happiest liaison. When members of DBR staff are able to visit the Laboratories, or are in the building for meetings, they should try to arrange to have a look at the non-electrical testing work in progress either through Mr. Dymond who is now in charge of this work or the General Manager himself, Mr. Gordon B. Tebo.