

Rio Tinto progresses the development of a gallium extraction process in Quebec

13.12.2024 | [Business Wire](#)

As part of a research and development program, [Rio Tinto](#) is assessing the potential for extracting and valorising gallium, a critical and strategic mineral already present in the bauxite processed in its alumina refinery in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, the only one in Canada.

When the preliminary phase of technology development is conclusive, Rio Tinto plans to build a demonstration plant in Saguenay for extraction technology that can produce up to 3.5 tonnes of gallium per year. The Government of Quebec has committed up to C\$7 million for the demonstration phase. Eventually, the extraction potential of a commercial-scale plant could reach 40 tonnes annually, representing between 5 and 10% of current world gallium production.

Primary gallium is used in key sectors, including the manufacture of integrated circuits, which are of vital importance in many new technologies such as high-performance radar, smartphones, electric cars and laptops.

Jérôme Péresse, Chief Executive, Rio Tinto Aluminium, said: "This new research and development project is destined to help strengthen the North American supply chain for critical and strategic minerals. As many important steps are yet to be achieved, Rio Tinto is strongly involved in this important journey and thanks the Government of Quebec for its important contribution."

Maité Blanchette Vézina, Quebec's Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and Minister responsible for the Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine regions, commented: "I'm delighted to support this project, which promotes the acquisition of cutting-edge knowledge in the transformation of gallium, a critical and strategic metal in Quebec and around the world. Today's announcement is directly in line with our government's vision of a circular economy, wealth creation in a greener economy, and Quebec's influence as a world leader in critical and strategic minerals. I wish the Rio Tinto team every success in this innovative project for Quebec!"

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, said: "When it comes to critical minerals, Canada has all it takes to be the global supplier of choice and that's why our government is proud to work with key industry actors like Rio Tinto. Today's announcement is a key step in developing a strategic North American supply chain and I am pleased to see all levels of government collaborate with industry to put Canada first. When economic benefits are paired with a commitment to research and development, it's a win for Canadian industry and our workers."

In addition to aluminium, copper, iron ore and titanium dioxide, Rio Tinto already produces a wide range of critical minerals in its North American facilities, including scandium used in aluminium alloys, tellurium for solar panels and molybdenum for steel alloys. Other research and development initiatives are ongoing to evaluate the possibility of extracting new materials from the company's existing operations.

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Category: Saguenay

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Die URL für diesen Artikel lautet:

<https://www.rohstoff-welt.de/news/487526--Rio-Tinto-progresses-the-development-of-a-gallium-extraction-process-in-Quebec.html>

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