# ASTRA completes first phase *of* $300 million research complex in Montreal

**Per From**, Executive Vice-President of ARCM, is enthusiastic about Montreal's "warm summers, winter sports and cultural facilities. You have the best features of the U.S." he says, "and none of the disadvantages."

Astra AB has moved into its new $35-million research unit in Montreal, the first that the huge Swedish pharmaceuticals company has established on foreign soil.

The new facility represents the first phase in a scheduled ten-year development of the $300-million Astra Research Centre Montreal (ARCM) research complex.

ARCM, which has been operating in rented quarters since 1994, is spearheading Astra's quest for a new, post-morphine generation of non-addictive pain-killers with fewer side effects than earlier medications.

Located on a 47,000 square metre site, the research unit houses chemistry, pharmacology and molecular biology laboratories along with a library and other support services.

The centre currently employs 50 researchers and Astra expects the total to grow to 150 in the next few years.

Equipped with advanced research tools in all three areas of its interest, the Centre also has the technology it needs to integrate ARCM programmes into Astra's multi-nation research effort. For example, each scientist at the Centre will have individual access to the company-wide "Intranet" which allows scientific teams to cooperate on projects across continents and different time zones.

Before selecting Montreal, Astra considered several other locations for its first extra-territorial research centre, including Boston and sites on the U.S. west coast. Per From, Executive Vice-President of ARCM, says the company's choice was influenced in part by generous R&D tax incentives offered by the Governments of Canada and Quebec.

Another positive factor was access to a skilled workforce and the opportunity to collaborate with four local

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universities, including institutions with special strength in neuroscience and the study of pain mechanisms. Astra is already benefiting from this advantage: several senior researchers at ARCM are also professors at McGill University and Université de Montréal. ◆