

Trial against Big Tobacco starts in Montreal Monday

March 11 2012

A groundbreaking trial gets underway in Montreal Monday against three leading tobacco companies which face a \$25 billion lawsuit for allegedly failing to adequately warn smokers of the dangers of cigarettes.

Plaintiffs have filed two separate class actions in what is Canada's biggest-ever civilian lawsuit, against Imperial Tobacco, JTI-Macdonald and Rothmans Benson & Hedges in the Superior Court of Quebec.

The first class includes 90,000 current and former smokers in Quebec who say they have fallen ill with a range of smoking-related ailments including emphysema and cancer of the throat and larynx, and are seeking \$105,000 Canadian per person.

The second suit was filed by 1.8 million current smokers who say they are unable to quit the tobacco habit, and are seeking \$10,000 per person.

According to court documents, the plaintiffs accuse the Canadian tobacco companies of hiding research which has established a link between smoking and serious health problems like cancer.

The suit also alleges that tobacco firms in Canada have tried to manipulate the levels of nicotine in their cigarettes, increasing the levels of dangerous tar and have also added certain products such as ammonia.

Mario Bujold, director general of the Quebec Council on Tobacco and Health told AFP that one of the witnesses will be Robert Proctor, author

of "Golden Holocaust," a book alleging nefarious practices by the US tobacco industry.

Quebec is only one of several Canadian provinces seeking monetary damages from the tobacco manufacturers.

Several provinces, led by British Columbia, are also suing Canada's tobacco companies in hopes of recovering billions of dollars spent by their health insurers to treat the victims of tobacco use.

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