

June 14, 2011

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, PC, MP  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Langevin Building  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

We are concerned with your support of the asbestos industry in Canada. As you are aware, there is significant scientific evidence that exposure to asbestos through mining, processing and use is harmful to human health. Asbestos, including the chrysotile variety, causes cancer including lung cancer and mesothelioma.

The World Health Organization estimates that globally, at least 90,000 people die each year of asbestos-related lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis resulting from occupational exposure. We urge you to end your support for an industry that exports asbestos to nations that do not have the health and safety infrastructure or regulations to ensure conditions of controlled use.

Given the harmful nature of asbestos we also urge, at a minimum, that the Canadian government support the inclusion of chrysotile asbestos on the list of hazardous substances under the UN Rotterdam Convention at the June 2011 Conference of the Parties in Geneva. The addition of chrysotile asbestos to the list of Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides of the prior informed consent procedure does not ban sales or exports of these products. However, it does ensure that importing nations are knowledgeable about the health hazards related to the product they are importing and would require their prior informed consent to receive them.

While the international sale of asbestos is permitted, this is not sufficient justification to support the asbestos industry. We firmly believe that health consequences and scientific evidence must be key determinants of public policy implementation.

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In the past, we have recommended that, in lieu of supporting and investing in asbestos extraction and export, all levels of government should direct new investments to transitioning asbestos mining regions toward environmentally healthy and sustainable industries.

Canada must eliminate asbestos production and exportation and encourage economic activity that does not endanger the public's health.

We thank you for your attention and for your consideration of our concerns. If your office wishes to explore this further with us, please do not hesitate to contact any of the signatories below.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Turnbull, MD, FRCPC  
President, Canadian Medical Association



Robert Boulay, MD, CCFP  
President, The College of Family Physicians of Canada



Matthew Hodge, MDCM, PhD, FRCPC  
President, National Specialty Society for Community Medicine

cc:	The Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, PC, MP	Minister of Health
	The Hon. Christian Paradis, PC, MP	Minister of Industry
	Ms. Libby Davies, MP	NDP Health Critic
	The Hon. Hedy Fry, PC, MP	Liberal Health Critic
	Mr. André Bellavance, MP	Bloc Québécois Health & Industry Critic
	Mr. Peter Julian, MP	NDP Industry Critic
	The Hon. Geoff Regan, PC, MP	Liberal Industry Critic