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Prime Minister Stephen Harper
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Datum

24 september 2010

Ons kenmerk

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Dear Prime Minister,

For years the Netherlands Trade Unions Confederation FNV, with 1.4 million members the largest trade union confederation in the Netherlands, has been deeply concerned about the fact that Canada is still an asbestos producing and exporting country. This makes a civilised and democratic country like Canada responsible for the horrible death of thousands of workers each year worldwide. We find this very difficult to understand.

As you know, the Netherlands has banned asbestos for many years, like most other decent and modern countries. For the FNV it is shocking to see that Canada puts itself in an equal position with asbestos producing and exporting countries such as Kazakhstan en Zimbabwe.

To emphasize the risks that are involved in removing asbestos in the Netherlands, the Dutch Health Council of the Netherlands proposed new Occupational Limit Values for asbestos, 0,002 fibers/ml (2000 fibers/m³) in case of Chrysotile and 0,00042 fibers/ml (420 fibers/m³) for amphiboles. These values are very low, because, as the Council pointed out, new knowledge was available proving that asbestos is even more dangerous then ever thought before. This new knowledge justifies revision of the standards governing exposure to airborne asbestos.

We would like to point out that a loss of employment that may result from banning the production and export of asbestos will be amply compensated by employment created in removing asbestos safely from contaminated sites.

We sincerely hope that Canada will choose a different position in the asbestos world and will also ban this merciless and cruel substance. A ban on asbestos in Canada, will also give serious pressure on other asbestos producing and exporting countries to stop this irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour.

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Finally, I would like to mention that in 2008 the FNV also sent a letter to the Canadian Ambassador, Mr. J. Wall in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, we never received an answer to this letter. A copy of this letter is included.

Looking forward to your reply,
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Agnes Jongéius', is written over the typed name. The signature is highly stylized and somewhat illegible due to the cursive and overlapping lines.

Agnes Jongéius,
President FNV