

International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS)

PO Box 93, Stanmore, HA7 4GR England
tel: + 44 20 8958 3887 . fax: + 44 20 8958 9424
email: laurie@lkaz.demon.co.uk
website: www.ibas.btinternet.co.uk

The Right Hon. Paul Edgar Phillippe Martin
Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada
email: Martin.P@parl.gc.ca
fax:001 613 941 6900

September 3, 2004

Re: The Rotterdam Convention

Dear Prime Minister Martin:

The reputation enjoyed by Canada amongst the global community is for tolerance, respect for human rights and love of the great outdoors. Through my study of the asbestos industry, I have come to know another Canada. A country which puts profits before safety and politics before human life.

Successive Canadian Governments have been dancing to the tune of the national asbestos industry for so long, that they have, I believe, truly lost sight of the conflict between the financial health of the Canadian asbestos industry and the welfare of its citizens. A recent study by Quebec epidemiologists proves, conclusively, that exposure to Canadian asbestos has caused an epidemic of asbestos cancer amongst people who worked with the fiber or lived in contaminated areas. The level of asbestos pollution which exists in mining areas such as Thetford presents a clear and present danger to local residents.

Canada is amongst the world's leading exporters of chrysotile (white asbestos); the vast majority of Canadian exports are sent to developing countries with few, if any, safety regulations. While the Montreal-based Asbestos Institute, the mouthpiece for the Canadian asbestos industry, repeats the mantra of "controlled use," Indian workers remain uninformed and unaware of the hazards they are being exposed to. Surveys conducted in 1997 by government agencies recorded airborne levels of between 2-488 f/cc in occupational settings; the Indian standard for permissible airborne concentrations of chrysotile is 2 f/cc. According to reports from India, hazardous conditions persist.

Under the Rotterdam Convention, a list of hazardous chemicals has been compiled by the United Nations which ensures that importing countries receive full documentation on specific chemicals in order to make an informed

decision on whether or not these materials can be used safely. When the inclusion of chrysotile was proposed last year, Canada vetoed the proposal. In the run-up to the June 28 election, a spokesperson for the Canadian Government announced continued opposition to UN plans to restrict global sales of chrysotile (white asbestos). The fact that the press conference took place at Thetford (Asbestos) Mines, speaks volumes about the trade-off made between Ottawa's vote-hungry politicians and Quebec's profit-hungry asbestos producers.

The International Labor Organization believes that there are now *in excess* of 100,000 asbestos-related deaths globally; epidemiologists estimate that in the current 30 year period, 500,000 West Europeans will die of asbestos-related disease. After a century of asbestos use and misuse, it is time to call an end to the needless slaughter! Canada should support the inclusion of chrysotile on the UN list and should join like-minded groups and individuals in working towards an asbestos-free future. In the name of Fred Beal, Ray Sentes, Blayne Kinart, Edward Grant, Roy Goudie, Richard Helmeste, Tommy Dunn, Harry Buist, John Bechard, Donald La Court, Bob Auger, George A Hebbes, Albert Rostern and other Canadian asbestos victims, enough is enough!

Sincerely,

Laurie Kazan-Allen (Mrs.)
Coordinator: IBAS