



Media Release

CANADA COMPLETES LONG ROAD TO ASBESTOS BAN REGULATION: Pivotal to halt use in products, stop exposure

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Immediate Release

Toronto – The use of asbestos and asbestos containing products will no longer be permitted in Canada as of December 30, 2018 under regulations passed today by the Canadian government. Canada now joins over 55 countries that have banned the use of asbestos. This regulation, supported very widely in Canada, is an essential step to stop asbestos exposure and protect health of workers and the public.

“We commend the government of Canada for taking this critically important step to radically reduce future exposure of Canadians, especially workers, to the harms of asbestos,” states Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director and Counsel, Canadian Environmental Law. “This ban marks a necessary shift in Canada’s history with asbestos use, manufacture, import and export.”

The regulation prohibits the import, use, sale, manufacture and export of asbestos and products with asbestos, and outlines permitting and reporting regimes for a narrow range of allowable uses.

“Eliminating the use of asbestos provides an opportunity for innovation to find safe alternatives to the use of asbestos, for example brake pads and asbestos cement pipes. This will create jobs in Canada.” states Alec Farquhar, Coordinator, Asbestos Free Canada “The regulation requires accountability and reporting to the public. That’s a good thing! Stockpiles of asbestos and products containing asbestos, for example, are not allowed once the regulation is in place.”

There were approximately 530 new cases of mesothelioma in 2011 and 1900 lung cancer due to asbestos. "The number of new cancer due to asbestos continues to rise and we have to do everything possible to stop this." said Paul Demers, Director, Occupational Cancer Research Centre.

"The Victims of Chemical Valley for Asbestos & Occupational Diseases congratulate the Canadian Government for their first step in the banning of Asbestos. First steps are always important and look forward to seeing actions around the legacy issues and the creation of building a registry and medical registry. Moving towards keeping all Canadians safe from future exposure to asbestos." States Sandra Kinart, Chair, Victims of Chemical Valley for Asbestos & Occupational Diseases.

The regulations will result in substantial changes in asbestos use in key industry sectors such as construction and automotive, however, narrow exclusions remain for asbestos use including for a chlor-alkali plant until 2029, military equipment and nuclear facilities and reuse of mining residues and road materials.

"The Canadian Mesothelioma Foundation commends the government for taking this important action in banning asbestos in Canada. This is a wonderful first step. Those of us who have been personally touched by mesothelioma, a deadly cancer caused by exposure to asbestos, are extremely appreciative of this important development. We recognize the need to also deal with the legacy asbestos in our country, and look forward to working with the government and other stakeholders to move this forward." said Eudice Goldberg, MD, FRCPC, Chair, Board of Directors, Canadian Mesothelioma Foundation.

"The legacy of asbestos contaminated workplaces is one we will need to address with strong enforcement measures and coordination with all Federal-Provincial-Territorial Occupational Safety and Health authorities. Best practice health and safety management systems and ongoing joint prevention efforts by workers and employers are essential if we are to protect Canadian workers from further exposures." said Larry Stoffman, Legislative and regulatory Affairs (OSH), United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1518. "Eliminating high exposure limits (Quebec is 10 times higher than elsewhere) and phasing out continued use of asbestos mining residues will be essential steps we need to take."

"Our members have been determined to see a ban on asbestos use in Canada for a long time – that day is finally coming" said Unifor National President Jerry Dias. "We will celebrate this announcement today, but we must never forget the people that have suffered in the past or continue to suffer today from the asbestos related disease. Our governments could have done so much more, so much earlier on." Dias stated.

"Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU) are very proud of the role that they have played in convincing the Trudeau government to agree to ban asbestos. For the sake of our members, their families, loved-ones, and all workers in general, we've tried to move the yardstick on this file for years. We are sincerely appreciative that the Liberals took the bold and necessary steps to make this happen!" said Arlene Dunn, Deputy Director, Canada's Building Trades Unions. "That's a significantly historic achievement and they are to be commended for it! We still have lots of work to do around dealing with the legacy of asbestos, which includes things like registries and regulation of all asbestos exposure locations, funding and proper training for effective remediation and, compensation for the many victims. This time around, we feel confident that we have the right partner to get it done!"

“The BC Federation of Labour applauds new federal government regulations to ban asbestos in Canada as of December 30, 2018. The legacy of asbestos-contaminated workplaces will need to be addressed with strong enforcement measures and joint worker-employer prevention strategies that are coordinated with all federal, provincial and territorial occupational health and safety authorities.” said Nina Hansen, Acting Operations Manager, BC Federation of Labour.

“Canada is turning off the tap on asbestos use in our country.” states Laura Lozanski, Canadian Association for University Teachers. “There are remaining complex challenges with the legacy asbestos across Canada. It will require continued commitment and resources by our federal government, if we are to see a dramatic decline in asbestos related diseases in decades to come. We encourage the government to continue its work by developing a national strategy focused on the remaining asbestos problems.”

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