



ASBESTOS DISEASES SOCIETY
of AUSTRALIA INC.

29 November 2010

Michael R. Leir, High Commissioner of Canada
High Commission of Canada in Canberra
Commonwealth Avenue, Canberra ACT 2600
Australia
Fax: (02) 6270 4081
Email: cnbra@international.gc.ca

Re: New Asbestos Mine in Québec

Dear Mr. Leir,

We were totally dumb-founded when we heard that the Government of Québec was considering the provision of a \$58 million loan guarantee to an anonymous consortium of investors so that they could open a new asbestos mine in the town of Asbestos. If this financial arrangement is put in place, we understand that 5 million tonnes of asbestos will be exported from the Jeffrey mine to countries in the Global South, particularly in Asia, over the next quarter century.

Québec's medical and health authorities oppose this mine project and have called on the Québec government to stop the mining and export of asbestos, saying that these activities are medically unacceptable.

The World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and the International Trade Union Confederation, formerly known as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) which represents 176 million workers in 151 countries, have all called for an end to the use of all forms of asbestos, including chrysotile asbestos. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has repeatedly stated that exposure to all forms of asbestos, including chrysotile, can cause debilitating and fatal diseases.¹

At the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia Incorporated (ADSA), we have witnessed many asbestos deaths and much asbestos-related disability over the 30+ years of our existence. Australia has one of the highest incidences of asbestos-related disease in the world. Although we mined crocidolite and chrysotile in Australia, we also imported a great deal of asbestos from overseas and including Canada.

¹ ILO policy. Statement September 6, 2010

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/genericdocument/wcms_144446.pdf

WHO policy. New Asbestos Fact Sheet. August 1, 2010

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs343/en/index.html>

ICFTU Resolution on Global Asbestos Ban. 2005.

http://www.icftu.org/www/pdf/statements/124EB_E_12_a_Asbestos%20%20EB%20resolution%20%20FINAL.pdf

International Agency for Research on Cancer. IARC Expands List of Diseases Related to Asbestos. 2009

<http://www.thelancet.com/oncology Vol 10 May 2009, pages 453-454>

Australian Asbestos Data²
(tonnes)

	Australian Production	Asbestos Imports	Asbestos Exports	Asbestos Consumption
1960	14,164	37,198	7,529	48,834
1970	740	68,605	443	68,902
1975	47,922	49,794	24,524	73,192
1980	92,418	25,239	51,172	66,485

Australians now dying of asbestos-related disease were most probably exposed to a mixture of domestic and foreign asbestos. We believe that it is more likely than not that much of the asbestos imported to Australia came from the mines in Québec.

Recognizing the catastrophe caused by hazardous asbestos exposures in Australia, our Government took the sensible step on 31st December 2003 to ban the import, use and sale of products containing chrysotile asbestos. However the amosite and crocidolite have been banned more than 20 years earlier. Although a de facto asbestos ban now exists in Québec and Canada, the Premier of Québec Hon. Jean Charest and the Prime Minister of Canada Hon. Stephen Harper insist that asbestos can be used safely under controlled conditions. This assurance seems to be a outright lie and is tarnishing good name of Canada and its people.

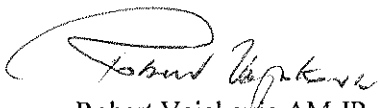
Commenting on the outrageous prospect of the Québec Government financing a new asbestos mine, on November 26, 2010 in my address to the ADSA ecumenical service, I said:

“Our organisation is sincerely wishing the people in Québec a long and prosperous life, one free from asbestos harmful consequences. The right to life is inviolable... It is unacceptable for Canada, a developed country which does not use asbestos, to dump this known human carcinogen on vulnerable populations overseas. Such behaviour is an abomination which undermines the worldwide standing and reputation of Québec.”

We respectfully appeal to the Governments of Québec and Canada to stop the mine. We ask you respectfully to forward our letter to the appropriate Canadian authorities as a matter of urgency.

We are sincerely hoping to receive replies from Premier Charest and Prime Minister Harper as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully



Robert Vojakovic AM JP
President of the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia Inc.

² Data from the United States Geological Survey