

Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum UK

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Blood in the Canadian Snow

Asbestos widows and victim support groups have called on Britons not to holiday in Canada this winter until it stops mining and exporting asbestos.

Canada, one of the few remaining countries to export deadly asbestos, is looking to establish new mining operations at the Jeffrey Asbestos Mine in Quebec. The Quebec government is actively considering a \$58 million loan to the company which could mean an export of 5 million tonnes of asbestos over 25 years to developing countries.

Today (6 December), an Asian delegation is arriving in Quebec to protest the planned development of the Jeffrey Asbestos Mine. During a week of meetings and events, delegates from India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong will detail the deadly consequences of exposure to Canadian asbestos in their countries. To support their efforts, a coalition of groups from the UK will hold a protest outside **Canada House, Trafalgar Square, in London at 11am on 9 December**, the day the delegation will hold a press conference in the Quebec National Assembly. Other protests will take place across the World.

Among the protestors in London will be Vera Rigby, the widow of Barrie Rigby who died from asbestos exposure whilst working as an electrical engineer in the 1960's. She today said:

"Barrie, my husband, 62 years old is dead, killed by exposure to asbestos. Canada is not only mining the killer material but exporting it to some of the most desperate and deprived countries in the world. People should think twice about visiting a country that is exporting devastation to other wives and families."

Pauline Ward, the widow of Harry today said:

"How can a country like Canada be so callous? I wouldn't wish on anyone what my husband Harry went through, the heartache of his suffering is seared into my memory and that of my family. Canada knows what this stuff does and yet they carry on and even expand the trade. The Autumn Colours are in sharp contrast to the colour draining from Harry's face as he died. Anyone who skis in Canada should think of the snow as the white dust that killed him."

Tony Whitston, Chair of the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK said:

"Quebec not only exports asbestos, but its Premier, Jean Charest, claims that its asbestos can be safely used overseas, in spite of his own medical associations telling him otherwise. By supporting an asbestos mining and export business Canada flies in the face of a ban on the export and import of asbestos around much of the world.

"The fact that the Quebec government is considering supporting production of asbestos shows how out of touch with reality they are. Exporting a deadly product to vulnerable countries is hugely cynical."

Ends

Notes to Editors

- 1. For further details about the demonstration and the campaign against Canada's trade in asbestos contact Tony Whitston, Chair of the Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum on tel: 0161 636 7555 Or 07748189837.**
- 2. The protest by the Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum, International Ban Asbestos Secretariat, trade unions, TUC, Construction Safety Campaign, Hazard's Campaign and widows of those who have died of asbestos-related diseases will start at Canada House Trafalgar Square at 11am on 9 December and then travel to the offices of the Quebec Government.**

A delegation which will include asbestos victims' families and Labour MPs will hand in a letter to the Prime Minister at No 10 Downing Street at 2pm.