



Ban Asbestos Canada

August 25, 2016

VIA EMAIL AND REGULAR MAIL

The Right Honourable Prime Minister Trudeau
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Right Honourable Prime Minister Trudeau,

Ban Asbestos Canada and its member organizations represent millions of Canadians, from the legal community, medical community, victims groups, families, community organizations and trade unions. Collectively and individually, we have called for your government to enact a comprehensive ban on asbestos. We have had support from employer organizations, Premiers, Mayors, your Ministers and in May 2016 from you, Honourable Prime Minister.

Canada has the opportunity to show the world that we care about stopping the tragedies caused by asbestos, which is Canada's and the world's biggest occupational killer, taking over 2,000 lives every year in Canada alone. Previous Canadian governments have refused to ban asbestos and sullied Canada's international reputation by ignoring scientific and technical information and ignoring the voices of afflicted Canadians. You can change all of that by simply announcing a clear intent to ban asbestos, beginning with the establishment of an expert panel. The expert panel would study the various issues around asbestos, consult with the provinces and territories and develop a proposal for a comprehensive national asbestos strategy. We have outlined the elements of a proposed strategy in the attached document.

This presents a tremendous opportunity for you, Honourable Prime Minister, to make things right in response to the epidemic of asbestos-related diseases. If you announce the establishment of an expert panel, Canadians young and old, including every member of Ban Asbestos Canada, will applaud your decision.

This is an urgent matter. Your government needs to make commitments that we will take action so that asbestos will no longer take the lives of more than 5 Canadians each and every day. Please announce a ban on asbestos in the very near future, accompanied by the commitment to establish an expert panel.

Yours truly,

Dr. Andréane Chénier
BAN Asbestos Canada

CC Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science
 Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment
 MaryAnn Mihychuk, Minister of Labour
 Jane Philpott, Minister of Health
 Gerald Butts, Senior Political Advisor to Prime Minister

Enclosure

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Proposal for a comprehensive asbestos strategy for Canada:

1. **Pass legislation/regulation officially banning the use, export and import of asbestos.** As 56 other countries have done, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan and South Korea and many other Canadian trade partners.
2. **Prohibit importation of asbestos containing materials.** According to Statistics Canada figures, imports of asbestos-related items rose to \$6 million in 2014 from \$4.9 million in 2013. The bulk of these goods consisted of replacement asbestos brake linings and pads, reaching \$3.6 million in imports in 2014—a seven-year high. Other imports included raw asbestos, friction materials, pipes and tiles.
3. **Substitute for safe alternatives.** 40 percent of Canada's asbestos imports (by dollar value) over the past decade have been brake pads and linings, totalling more than \$100 million. Innovation in developing and manufacturing alternatives will create good jobs in Canada. Alternative asbestos free brake pads are already manufactured in Guelph, Ontario, forced to compete with lower cost asbestos brake pads from other countries. The same is true for the other major asbestos product currently in use in Canada, asbestos cement pipe.
4. **Prohibit the use of asbestos containing materials in federally-funded infrastructure projects.** It is very important that asbestos cement pipe and other asbestos products not be permitted in federally-funded projects or in other construction.
5. **Work with municipalities on asbestos disposal.** Asbestos products in any form (brake pads, pipes or tiles) are eventually cut, processed and disposed of, potentially producing dust, which may uncontrollably spread to the workplace and broader environment. There are also concerns about asbestos disposal in Canadian landfills. Municipalities need help to deal with this, along with enforceable requirements for safe disposal.
6. **Support a pan-Canadian registry of asbestos exposure locations and asbestos diseases.** This would involve working with Provincial and Territorial Premiers and First Nations on establishing a pan-Canadian asbestos disease registry as well as a registry of buildings and other asbestos exposure locations.
7. **Ensure the protection of the public and worker in asbestos remediation.** We need federal/provincial collaboration to formalize asbestos remediation work into a regulated Red Seal trade. This will ensure proper remediation practices and the full protection of these workers who otherwise risk being put in harm's way. It will also protect the public who could be subject to environmental exposures from improper remediation.

Accompanying this, we need to provide economic incentives for asbestos abatement (training abatement experts and helping institutions and homeowners with the burden of removal).

8. **Support a comprehensive health response to asbestos diseases.** This will involve working with the Provinces and Territories to support the early detection and effective treatment of asbestos diseases, especially mesothelioma, the terrible cancer caused predominantly by asbestos which currently kills around 500 Canadians annually. This should include a national mesothelioma health network to ensure sharing of innovative medical research findings and maximize collaboration among expert health professionals.
9. **Provide support for transition for affected businesses, workers and communities.** We need to ensure that those who have been making asbestos products, and their communities, have support for the transition process.
10. **Work with the Provinces and Commit to a leadership role at the Rotterdam Convention.** Canada should support adding chrysotile asbestos to the list of hazardous products under the Rotterdam Convention.
11. **Remove the exclusions for asbestos-containing materials in WHMIS 2015 (GHS).** Asbestos is excluded from Canada's implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). Products that currently fall within the GHS scope are used in workplace and domestic settings, many of which are confirmed carcinogens and considered as reproductive hazards. Excluding asbestos from the scope of GHS is unconscionable, especially now that other jurisdictions, such as the U.S. and European Commission have included it.