



Ban Asbestos Canada

February 18, 2016

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of Ban Asbestos Canada and the millions of Canadians we represent, we would like to congratulate you on your election and early days as Prime Minister of Canada. With the federal election behind us, Canada now has the opportunity to make its people proud by showing the world that Canada will once again base public policy on scientific evidence and will act to protect public health. This should include implementing a comprehensive ban on asbestos and putting an end to the negative role we have played on the international stage with regard to asbestos.

This is an urgent issue. Every year, 145,000 Canadian workers are exposed to asbestos at their workplace and tragically over 2,000 are diagnosed with often fatal asbestos cancers and other diseases. The toll world-wide is now over 100,000 annually. Yet Canada continues to allow the use of asbestos and does not have a comprehensive strategy to phase out asbestos or to promote safe substitutes. Previous governments have refused to ban asbestos, sullyng Canada's international reputation by ignoring scientific and technical information. Many Canadians have been ashamed of their government's whole approach to asbestos.

Prime Minister, you have the power to restore Canada's reputation and save Canadian lives by moving to ban asbestos in 2016. We are hoping that your government will be able to announce your intent to ban asbestos by April 28, 2016, the National Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job.

More specifically, we urge you to:

1. **Pass legislation officially banning the use, exportation 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.

.../2

banasbestoscanada@gmail.com

banasbestoscanada.ca

731 Gravel Drive, Hanmer, Ontario, P3P 1R8

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. Alternative asbestos free brake pads are already manufactured in Guelph, Ontario. This means that substituting for asbestos will also create Canadian jobs.
4. **Prohibit the use of asbestos containing materials in federally-funded infrastructure projects.** As is the case for brake pads, the use of asbestos cement pipe is also on the rise in Canada. Substitutes are readily available. It is very important that asbestos cement pipe and other asbestos products not be permitted in federally-funded projects.
5. **Work with municipalities on asbestos disposal.** Asbestos products in any form (brake pads, pipes or tiles) are eventually cut and processed, producing dust, which may uncontrollably spread to the workplace and broader community. There are also concerns about asbestos disposal in Canadian landfills. Municipalities need help to deal with this.
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.
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. 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 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.

Canada's first opportunity to show the world that we care about stopping the tragedy of asbestos, Canada's and the world's biggest occupational killer, will be April 28th, 2016, the National Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job. We believe that this day offers a tremendous opportunity for you, Mr. Prime Minister, to make things right in response to the asbestos epidemic. We realize that there will be extensive work to do to develop and implement a comprehensive asbestos strategy as outlined above. We are ready to work with you to make this a reality.

Warm regards,



Dr. Andréane Chénier
On behalf of Ban Asbestos Canada

c.c. Minister of Health