

April 15, 2016

BY EMAIL

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

For 10 years, the Harper Conservative government systematically undermined efforts to ban asbestos in Canada, despite the fact that it's the leading cause of workplace-related death for Canadian workers. Today your government has the opportunity to reverse this terrible legacy, and protect thousands of Canadians.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) represents over 635,000 members across Canada. Our members work in hospitals, schools, libraries, universities, and many other buildings where asbestos continues to be a major hazard. Our members work in landfills where requirements to dispose of these materials do not protect our workers. Often, the disposed materials resurface unexpectedly. When they do, they become a serious danger. Our members are being exposed every single day, yet Canada continues to import products that contain this deadly substance.

Asbestos kills people. It stopped being a debate long ago, as medical and other experts have shown definitively that asbestos exposure leads to rare, incurable forms of cancer and lung disease. It's already been banned in 56 other countries, but the federal government has stood in the way of progress.

Until now.

Your government has acknowledged the truth about asbestos by banning its use in federal building projects. This is an important first step, but it must not be the last. The federal government must introduce a comprehensive ban on the use, import and export of asbestos and asbestos-containing materials in Canada. Anything short of this measure would fail thousands of workers across Canada, and only continue of the legacy of hypocrisy of the previous government.

Beyond the ban, we need to deal with the asbestos that's already present in our buildings. Addressing this problem starts with creating a national registry that

.../2

Canadians can access and easily find out where the danger lies. We must also systematically remove asbestos from these buildings and dispose of it safely. Transitioning to an asbestos-free Canada will require support for Canadian workers, municipalities and enterprises, but it must be done for the safety of our workers and all Canadians.

For far too long, lives have been put at risk by the indifference of the former federal government. We are urging your government to acknowledge the dangers posed by asbestos and to introduce a long over due comprehensive ban immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MH' followed by a stylized flourish.

MARK HANCOCK
National President

:jv/ceu
c.c.: T. Mulcair; R. Ambrose