



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne
du cancer

March 10, 2009

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M. P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

I am writing to you today to express concern regarding our Federal Government's continued support of the asbestos industry in Canada.

Since the inception of the Chrysotile Institute, our Federal Government has spent more than 19 million dollars towards its support. Disappointingly, this financial support continues to be reflected in this year's federal budget.

Federal financial support continues despite the fact that the Canadian Government has publicly recognized that all forms of asbestos, including chrysotile, are carcinogenic, and that the main health risks associated with all forms of asbestos is occupational. The carcinogenicity of all forms of asbestos has also been confirmed by both the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the National Toxicology Program in the US.

The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) supports the World Health Organization's assertion that 'the most efficient way to eliminate asbestos-related diseases is to stop the use of all types of asbestos'.

The CCS is deeply troubled that despite the evidence of carcinogenicity of chrysotile (and all other forms of asbestos), and the awareness that appropriate safety precautions are not always followed in importing countries, Canada continues to export chrysotile without explicitly warning importing countries of the dangers associated with exposure.

While the Society wants to ensure elimination of asbestos going forward, it is also important to actively monitor and treat the people who have already been affected from exposure and protect Canadians, families and communities whose livelihood depends on asbestos.

As such, we are calling on the federal government to re-direct financial support towards the adoption of a comprehensive strategy addressing all aspects of the asbestos issue, including:



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- immediately setting a clear timetable for phasing out the use and export of asbestos;
- the implementation of a national surveillance system to track health outcomes of people who have been exposed to asbestos;
- the creation of a public registry of buildings that contain asbestos;
- the provision of transition support for affected communities;
- and the inclusion of chrysotile on the Rotterdam Convention's Prior Informed Consent list.

We sincerely appreciate your government's commitment to the fight against cancer but also recognize that it is only by continuing to work together that we will end this terrible disease. Therefore I ask that you mandate a senior official from your office to work with us and other members of the health community to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that addresses all aspects of asbestos and will help eliminate asbestos related diseases across Canada and around the world.

Regards,

Dr. Barbara Whyllie
President and CEO