



## Ban Asbestos Canada

August 19, 2015

### **Please join with us in calling for Canada to ban asbestos**

This year, approximately 2,000 Canadians will receive the grim news that they have cancer caused by asbestos. Many will die, including most of those (approximately 500 people annually) diagnosed with mesothelioma, a cancer uniquely caused by asbestos exposure. This is Canada's share of over 100,000 asbestos cancer deaths worldwide every year. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has documented that all forms of asbestos cause cancer. The World Health Organization has stated that there is no known safe exposure limit for asbestos, regardless of what "acceptable exposure limits" may exist, and for many victims there is no cure. With evolving technology, there are safe and effective alternatives to asbestos so its use is no longer needed. In response, over 50 countries have banned asbestos. Now is the time for Canada to join them.

Ban Asbestos Canada is a network of asbestos victims, families who have lost or are losing a loved one to asbestos, non-profit advocacy groups, public health organizations and experts, and labour and employer organizations. We have come together to call on Canada's political parties to support a complete ban on asbestos in Canada. We are also asking for their support for a comprehensive Canadian asbestos strategy. That strategy would ensure that we maximize protection from the large quantities of asbestos remaining in our work places, public buildings and home environments; provide the best possible medical care to people who are diagnosed with an asbestos-related disease; and, support affected communities and industries in the transition to elimination of asbestos. An overview of the proposed Canadian asbestos strategy is attached.

Never in Canadian history have so many voices been raised in support of a ban, including recent editorials in the Toronto Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star. The editorials responded to Health Canada's recent changes to its website information on asbestos, which shifted from formerly downplaying the hazards of asbestos to an emphasis on the harmful health effects.

- Globe and Mail – July 4, 2015 – "The next logical steps are a ban on asbestos and a comprehensive plan for its safe removal from homes, schools, office buildings and cars."
- Toronto Star – July 4, 2015 – "Providing accurate warnings is a useful first step. But what's really needed is a total ban, coupled with a national asbestos removal program."

The upcoming federal election provides the opportunity to make a historic breakthrough on asbestos. The question around asbestos is no longer whether or not it is safe. That debate

was settled by science – there is no such thing as safe asbestos. The question now is whether Canada’s political parties will commit to finally move forward with a complete ban, accompanied by a comprehensive strategy to protect the public, to support the victims, and to address the lingering problem of asbestos in our built environment. We are all at risk, as asbestos was commonly used in building materials for decades; it’s in our homes, our schools, our hospitals, and unfortunately in many unpredictable and unexpected places. Sadly, asbestos use continues today in Canada – in imported brake pads, asbestos cement pipe and even children’s crayons!

So we will be asking all the federal parties to support an asbestos ban and comprehensive asbestos strategy for Canada.

Please join us! Our plan is to publish a list of individual and organizational supporters on September 30, 2015, as backing for our call on political parties to state their positions.

You can express your support, including letters and e-mails of support, by email at [banasbestoscanada@gmail.com](mailto:banasbestoscanada@gmail.com). Please share this letter widely, to maximize support in the coming weeks. Please also consider signing the petition at Change.org ([click here](#)).

Thank you.

### **Key elements of a Canadian asbestos strategy:**

- A ban on mining, fabrication, importation and use of asbestos and asbestos products. Including development of time limited transition plans for elimination of any current asbestos products such as brake pads and asbestos cement pipe.
- Develop a public registry of all buildings and other current exposure locations, accompanied by a plan for remediation and removal of the asbestos from those locations.
- Develop a registry of Canadians exposed to asbestos and their health status, to support screening and early medical intervention to minimize health impacts.
- Support an asbestos disease health network, to ensure the best possible research and innovation in health care.
- Implement a compensation fund to ensure compensation to asbestos disease victims where an occupational link cannot be established.
- Support Canadian research and innovation on alternatives to asbestos and provide this technology to countries around the world who have not yet banned asbestos.
- Support international efforts for a global ban on asbestos, starting with active support for the listing of chrysotile asbestos under the Rotterdam Convention.
- Enshrine Canada's asbestos strategy in law, including annual reporting on progress.

### **Sources:**

- Canadian data: Occupational Cancer Research Centre
- World data: World Health Organization
- That all forms of asbestos cause cancer: IARC monograph on asbestos, 2012