The GOC and the Canadian asbestos industry are marshaling forces and facts for a challenge to the proposed EPA ban on certain asbestos products and phasing-out of all asbestos use over a ten-year period. Canadian Minister of Mines Robert Layton announced on April 22 that the federal government, together with the province of Quebec and the asbestos industry, will lend financial assistance totalling C$5 million to the Montreal-based asbestos institute to restate Canada's position on the controlled use of asbestos. The federal government and the Quebec provincial government further agreed to consider renewing this financial support for an additional three years.

In announcing the funding, Minister Layton acknowledged that a "primary purpose" was to "have the EPA reconsider its position, given the scientific evidence that is overwhelmingly in favor of continued asbestos use under controlled conditions." In essence, the Canadians argue that the EPA has not studied sufficiently the hazards associated with asbestos substitutes and challenge the wisdom of replacing the controlled use of asbestos with "untested and unregulated substitutes."

The asbestos institute seized the opportunity to launch the opening round in its fight with the EPA. In a communiqué released April 22, the institute charged that the "scientific community" was "shocked" by the EPA's methodology in recommending a ban on asbestos in the U.S. and insisted that the EPA's decision was at odds with the most recent scientific findings on the subject. The institute based its accusations on analyses of the EPA decision by twelve "researchers" from Canada, the U.S., France, and Great Britain. According to the asbestos institute, the researchers, who reportedly are experts in such fields as epidemiology, toxicology, biostatistics, and environmental sciences, question not only the scientific evidence behind the EPA decision, but also the EPA's alleged failure to explore the dangers of asbestos substitutes. The institute also claims that several of the experts have called into question the FGA's cost/benefit analysis. (A copy of the institute's press release is being sent to EUR/CAN.)

6. The GOC is preparing written comments which it will submit to the EPA this summer. Canadian officials fear that the EPA ruling will affect not only asbestos sales to the U.S., but the world-wide asbestos market, since third world nations frequently follow the U.S. lead in adopting regulatory standards. The Canadians will also present the