

OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NETWORK OF INDIA

Date: - April 25, 2010

OEHNI/Apr/112

Dear Premier Charest

Your letter dated March 5, 2010 demonstrates deep apathy, bordering racism, towards the workers and communities in India. You seem to have sold your mind, your heart and your soul to the asbestos industry. We don't understand why you are practising such a shocking double standard. At the Kyoto climate change meeting in Copenhagen, you told the world media that politicians must respect science and not deny inconvenient scientific truths. But when it comes to the asbestos industry, you readily abandon science and put forward the lie that Quebec's asbestos can be safely used, when even your own government health experts have told you this is not true. This is gross hypocrisy on your part and we expected better of you.

In your letter, you say that the ILO supports your position. This is a lie and you know it, Mr Premier. The ILO, just like the WHO, has called for an end to the use of all forms of asbestos (ILO Asbestos Resolution 2006) in order to protect the lives of workers. We are shocked that you would try to brush us off with such an obviously false excuse.

You are well aware that the number one cause of occupational deaths in Quebec still today continues to be asbestos. In 2009 of the 185 Quebec workers who died from a work accident or an occupational disease, 102 of these deaths were caused by asbestos. Thus, 55% of worker deaths from any cause were due to asbestos. And if one looks at deaths from occupational disease, over 75% were caused by asbestos exposure.

Given the public health crisis caused by asbestos in Quebec, we are aware that you are no longer using asbestos. We are glad you are not exposing your own citizens to asbestos harm. But do we not count? Do you think we are second-class human beings? We do not believe that your closed mind and your heartless indifference reflect views of the people of Quebec. We appeal to them for their solidarity and support. We appeal to them to stop exporting and promoting asbestos in India or elsewhere overseas.

While we continue to struggle in our country to have this toxic substance banned, we hope you will do the right thing by putting a stop to this deadly trade and by putting a stop to the irresponsible, false information that asbestos can be safely used. We believe continued trade and use of asbestos is a crime against humanity.

Looking forward to a more humane response from you.

Sincerely,

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