

SOLIDARITY DELEGATION FROM ASIA TO QUÉBEC

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Human life is more important than asbestos industry profits, says Solidarity Delegation from Asia to Quebec

MONTREAL – A delegation from Asia, including activists, a trade unionist and victims of asbestos arrived in Québec to make a desperate attempt to stop the Quebec government from financing a new asbestos mine (the Jeffrey mine), that would export millions of tonnes of asbestos to Asia, most of it to India.

“We have come to Québec to make a direct, personal appeal to the Québec people,” said Sugio Furuya, leader of the Solidarity Delegation from Asia to Québec. “We decided we must do everything we could to try to stop a terrible wrong: the financing by the Québec government of the the Jeffrey mine.”

The seven members of the Solidarity Delegation from Asia to Québec come from Japan, Indonesia, Korea and India.

“Please listen to us,” said Anup Srivastava, of the Building and Woodworkers International, which represents 13 million workers around the world. “I am here to tell you face to face that the reassurances given to you by the asbestos industry are completely false. They claim that the same strict controls exist in the developing world as in Quebec. This is absurd. All over Asia, you will see workers cutting asbestos-cement roofing with abrasive saws and no protection from the deadly fibres being released. This is totally illegal in Québec. It is common in Asia.”

“In Québec, it is illegal for people to be exposed to damaged pieces of asbestos. In Asia, this is common,” said Muchamad Darisman. Broken pieces of asbestos-cement are re-used for homes and children play amongst asbestos-cement rubble. Many people have never even heard of asbestos, but that doesn’t stop it from killing them.”

“The World Health Organization says that the only way to prevent asbestos-related diseases is to stop the use of any kind of asbestos,” said Kazumi Yoshizaki., who lost her father to pleural mesothelioma in 2005. “Human life is more important than asbestos industry profits. Please listen to the World Health Organization. Please stop exporting asbestos.”

“People have the right to live in safe conditions,” said Rachel Lee. Lee, who is 45 years old, was not exposed to asbestos at work, but lived for two years near a chrysotile asbestos-cement factory in Korea from 1991 to 1992. She has mesothelioma. “Asbestos has caused me, my husband and my two children great suffering. Asbestos has destroyed my life,” says Lee. “I want there to be no more asbestos victims.”

“Québec’s medical associations have with one voice told the government not to finance the Jeffrey mine and to stop exporting asbestos,” said Yeyong Choi. “The government has a moral obligation to put the advice of its medical experts ahead of the lobbying of the asbestos industry.”

“The Québec government is not only exporting asbestos. It is also funding gross misinformation, claiming that asbestos can be safely used,” said Omana George. “ Québec is, in fact, a key propagandist for the global asbestos trade. This has to stop.”

"We appeal to the Québec people. You protect your families from asbestos by refusing to put asbestos in your homes and schools. It is unjust to export to vulnerable people in the third world, a deadly product you refuse to use yourselves," she continued.

"Please do not finance the deadly asbestos trade," urged Furuya. "Invest the \$58 million in sustainable, healthy jobs for the people of Asbestos. Around the world, people are watching to see what Québec will do. We say to you: Do not bring dishonour on Québec. Do not finance the Jeffrey mine."

-30-

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