

Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum UK

Tony Whitston (Chair)

Joanne Gordon (Secretary)

Tel: 0161 636 7555/07748189837

E Mail: asbestos.gmavsg@virgin.net

Press Release..... Press Release...(Immediate Release)..... Press Release.....

Asbestos Victims Condemn Canada

On the 29th June the Quebec Government finally announced that the deferred loan guarantee of \$58 million to re-open the Jeffrey Asbestos Mine would go ahead to recommence the mining of chrysotile (white) asbestos.

The Quebec Government's own health authority, the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Public Health Association have all called for the end of the use of chrysotile asbestos.

Five million tonnes of asbestos will be exported from the Jeffrey Asbestos Mine to developing countries, and mostly to India, over the next 20 years.

There has been international condemnation of the proffered loan guarantee, especially from health campaigners in India. The New Delhi health campaigner

Mohit Gupta has accused Canada of being "hateful" and "racist", asking whether, "only light-skinned people [are] entitled to breathe clean air and drink clean water."ⁱ

Heidi von Palleske, from Canada, whose parents died from mesothelioma says of the Canada Day celebrations and the announcement of funding for the Jeffrey Mine:

"They are partying on the blood of my parents and on the grief of asbestos victims."

We will win. Maybe not today, but mark my words we will win!"

Tony Whitston, UK Asbestos Forum Chair says:

"Just a week before Action Mesothelioma Day, 6 July, when hundreds of UK mesothelioma sufferers remember thousands who have died from mesothelioma, mostly from the use of Canadian asbestos, this is truly shocking news. Shame on the Quebec and Canadian Governments for putting profit before the lives of the poorest people! Shame on Canada for its hypocrisy: its callous disregard for the lives of others while imposing a de-facto ban on the use of asbestos for Canadian citizens. Shame on Canada!"

END (Contact Tony Whitston, Forum Chair: 0161 636 7555/07748189837)

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that about 125 million people worldwide remain exposed to asbestos in the workplace. More than 107 000 people die each year from asbestos-related lung cancer, mesothelioma (a specific form of lung cancer), and asbestosis resulting from occupational exposures. One in every three deaths from occupational cancer is estimated to be caused by asbestos.

Kathleen Ruff, author of *Exporting Harm: How Canada Markets Asbestos to the Developing World* statement

- The Québec government's own health authority (the National Public Health Institute of Québec), as well as Québec health experts, all oppose the Québec government's policy of increased use of chrysotile asbestos. (Chrysotile asbestos represents 100% of the world asbestos trade and represents 95% of all asbestos every sold.) Instead of supporting its own health experts, the Québec government, like the federal government, supports the asbestos industry.

- The Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Public Health Association, as well as the World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation, have all called for the use of chrysotile asbestos to end as the only way to eliminate asbestos-related diseases. The Québec government and the Canadian government refuse to listen.

- In Québec itself, the Québec government does not follow its own policy for increased use of chrysotile asbestos in Québec. Instead, it exports over 95% of its asbestos to the developing world.

- In Québec itself, the government's Occupational Health & Safety Commission (CSST) has a policy of "zero exposure" to chrysotile asbestos for Québec workers. However, the Québec government says that exposure to high levels of asbestos (1 f/cc, which is a ten times greater exposure level than permitted by provinces across Canada, by the US and by industrialized countries and a hundred times higher than that permitted by a number of countries) is perfectly safe for people overseas.

- In Québec itself, the government has published a report by its own health authorities on a two-year investigation on use of asbestos in Québec. The report found that asbestos is virtually no longer being used in Québec, but that in the tiny number of workplaces where it was still being used, there was a 100% failure rate to practise "safe use" standards.

- Publications, funded by the Québec and Canadian governments and bearing the Québec and Canadian flags, to promote use of asbestos overseas, state that in India, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Taiwan, a 99.8% success rate has been achieved in meeting "safe use" standards and that it is easy for developing countries to use asbestos safely. These statements are false and misleading. This is government-funded misinformation that harms and kills people.

- Québec and Canada are leading propagandists for the global asbestos industry and present one of the greatest public health obstacles to making progress in eliminating asbestos-related diseases in the world.

ⁱ <http://www.ibassecretariat.org/lka-new-asbestos-mine-in-quebec.plp>