



#### The Rideau Institute

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June 13, 2011

Prime Minister Stephen Harper House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

# Dear Prime Minister Harper:

On June 20, 2011, the 143 countries that have ratified the U.N. Rotterdam Convention will meet in Geneva. At that meeting, the delegates will decide whether to approve the recommendation of the Convention's expert scientific body to put chrysotile asbestos (the only form of asbestos traded in the world today) on the Convention's list of hazardous substances.

For more than seven years, Canada, along with a handful of other countries, has blocked this recommendation, thus putting protection of the interests of the asbestos industry ahead of protection of global health.

We ask that at the June Conference of the Parties, Canada, for the first time, support the listing of chrysotile asbestos.

The purpose of the Rotterdam Convention is to bring about responsible trade of hazardous substances by requiring that exporting countries obtain "prior informed consent" before shipping substances, which are on the Convention's list, to another country.

The Convention's mission is environmental justice. In particular, it empowers developing countries by providing them with a basic human right – the right to information and the right to refuse hazardous substances that a country does not have the means to safely manage. This critical information thus enables developing countries to more effectively protect their citizens from harm.

We ask you to support the listing of chrysotile asbestos for the following reasons:

- 1) Chrysotile asbestos is listed as a hazardous substance under Canadian law. It is, in our view, wrong to apply a double standard of inferior protection for people in developing countries.
- 2) The Convention's expert body (the Chemical Review Committee), composed of 31 scientists from around the world including Canada, has repeatedly recommended, after careful consideration, that chrysotile asbestos should be put on the Convention's list of hazardous substances. By blocking the recommendation of the scientific experts, Canada is jeopardizing the very purpose of the Convention, which is to put scientific evidence ahead of political interests.

3) By putting the interests of the asbestos industry ahead of the protection of human health and the environment, Canada, in our view, is not acting as a responsible global citizen, thus harming Canada's international reputation.

We would appreciate your immediate response on this critical matter relating to international cooperation to protect environmental, worker, and human health around the world.

Sincerely,

Dr Jean Zigby, CCFP, FCFP, MDCM; President, Canadian Association of

Physicians for the Environment

Kathleen Ruff, Senior Human Rights

Rideau Institute

# **ON BEHALF OF:**

### **ORGANISATIONS**

Canadian Cancer Society

Canadian Medical Association

Conféderation des syndicats nationaux

Association des médecins spécialistes en santé communautaire du Québec

MiningWatch Canada

Sierra Club Canada

La Ligue des droits et libertés du Québec

La Société pour vaincre la pollution, Montréal

Environmental Defence Canada

Alternatives, Ouébec

Canadian Auto Workers-Canada

Nature Québec

International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Canada

**Prevent Cancer Now** 

Public Service Alliance of Canada

Centre justice et foi/revue Relations, Québec

**Ecojustice Canada** 

Canadian Union of Public Employees

International Longshore & Warehouse Union Canada

Science for Peace, Canada

United Steelworkers Local 480

Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice

British Columbia & Yukon Territory, Building & Construction Trades Council

Saskatchewan Federation of Labour

Canadian Federation of University Women

International Longshoremens Association Local 1657

KAN Centre for Environment and Development

National Network on Environments and Women's Health

Construction and Specialized Workers' Union Local 1611

Canadian Public Health Association

Asbestos-related Research, Education & Advocacy Fund

Canadian Association of University Teachers

Canadian Association of Research on Work and Health

Saskatchewan Provincial Building & Construction Trades Council

International Women's Rights Project

Conservation Council of New Brunswick

Calgary Raging Grannies

**Breast Cancer Action Montreal** 

Canadian Society of Asbestos Victims

Saskatchewan Regional Council of Carpenters & Millwrights

Parksville/Qualicum KAIROS

New Brunswick Lung Association

Injured Workers All Across Canada (IWAAC)

Boilermakers Lodge 359

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

Reach for Unbleached, Comox, British Columbia

Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia

Greenspiration

International Institute of Concern for Public Health

S.H.A.M.E., Sarnia's Hometown Activist Movement Emerging

Public Health Association of British Columbia

Canadian Federation of University Women, Nelson and District Club

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Mine Labour Protection Campaign, India

Environics Trust, India

Pathar Khadan Majdoor Sangh, India

Ban Asbestos Network Korea, South Korea

Asian Citizen's Center for Environment and Health, South Korea

# ASSOCIATED LABOR UNIONS - TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES

Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, Korea

Uganda Network on Toxic Free Malaria Control, Uganda

Ban Asbestos Network of India

Women in Europe for a Common Future, Germany

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Australia

Friends of the Earth Korea

Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization, United States

Ban Asbestos Network Japan

Organisation Béninoise pour la promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique, BÉNIN

Asian Ban Asbestos Network

ABREA - Associação Brasileira dos Expostos ao Amianto (Brazilian Asbestos Exposed People Association), Brazil

Center for Research on Occupational Diseases, Iran

Pesticide Action Network - Ethiopia

Jagdish Patel ,Peoples Training & Research Centre, India

Association Nationale de défense des victimes de l'amiante (ANDEVA), France

International Ban Asbestos Secretariat, UK

Rural Workers Organisation, Tamil Nadu, India

La Red de Acción sobre Plaguicidas y Alternativas en México y el Centro de Análisis y Acción en Tóxicos y sus Alternativas, Mexico

Comité Anti Amiante Jussieu, France

Pollution Control Association of Liberia

New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, U.S.

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Center for Environmental Health, Oakland, CA, U.S.

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AGENDA, Tanzania

Northeast Asbestos Support & Awareness Group, U.K.

Kgalagadi Relief Trust, South Africa

Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATIONS, GHANA

Merseyside Asbestos Victim Support Group, U.K.

Empire State Consumer Project, New York, U.S.

Tanzania Consumer Advocacy Society, Tanzania

Occupational Health Section, American Public Health Association, U.S.

Gender and Environmental Rights Initiative, Nigeria

The Construction Institute, Boston, MA, U.S.

Midstate Education & Service Foundation, NY, U.S.

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