

January 14, 2015

BY REGISTERED MAIL

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A3

Re: Rotterdam Convention: request to position Canada against the inclusion of chrysotile and its derivatives at the 2015 COP-7 meeting.

Dear Prime Minister,

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to defending the principles of the safe and controlled use of all products, fibres or substances that could pose a risk to human health. Our organization comprises approximately 30 regional entities, including municipalities from the Chaudière-Appalaches and Estrie regions of Quebec. We represent our communities and have a complete understanding of all the issues that could affect our collective, economic and social future.

Our chrysotile mines were shut down because of an ill-advised, brutal and devastating decision by the Parti Québécois government under Madame Pauline Marois that was taken for primarily political considerations. Since then our regions have been suffering: jobs have disappeared, unemployment is rampant, and poverty is flourishing. The political decision to recall the loan from Jeffrey Mine did nothing to help the situation: in fact, it did just the opposite. The anti-asbestos lobbies and their supporters are becoming increasingly active and persistent. Their objective is clear, and well-known to all. They are seeking a global ban on the use of chrysotile fibres, and ultimately all products containing them or their derivatives.

Including chrysotile in the Rotterdam Convention's PIC list is obviously a move in that direction. There can be no forgetting that all products or substances included on that list become **products to be banned and/or severely restricted**.

(Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention: list of chemicals)

Canada has always objected to the inclusion of chrysotile fibres in the Rotterdam Convention's PIC list because of the scientific knowledge that exists, and the fact that it is possible to work safely with this product. The closing of our mines should not be an excuse for abandoning this industry. The weight of your decision on the international front will be increased tenfold if you maintain your historic position despite the current situation. This will demonstrate the seriousness of your past decisions.

We are hereby asking our political leaders to take the time to fully understand how best to secure the economic and social future of our communities. The presence of hundreds of millions of tons of solid mining residue in our regions represents immense potential for our economic development. Metals and minerals such as magnesium, nickel, chrome, cobalt, etc. are clearly present and available. The development of these reserves holds promise for the emergence of new industries capable of creating wealth and quality employment.

The anti-asbestos crusade does not feed solely on the cause of protecting health. There are other significant interests at play, and they are sworn to achieve a global ban on asbestos, including chrysotile **and all products containing it**. Everything is fair game for these groups, even the inclusion of chrysotile, particularly since it will then be on the list of products to be banned and/or severely restricted. There were fierce battles for its inclusion at the Conferences of the Parties (member-states) in 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2013. We are convinced that 2015 will be no exception. Everything will be done by the Convention Secretariat, in collaboration with all the anti-asbestos lobbies, to ensure that COP-7 agrees to the inclusion. The Conference of the Parties (COP) is a favoured forum for the anti-asbestos lobbyists, and has unfortunately become an instrument of their cause.

REMEMBER THAT THERE IS NOTHING NEW SCIENTIFICALLY OR MEDICALLY THAT WOULD JUSTIFY A CHANGE OF POSITION IN 2015. FURTHERMORE, NO NEW SCIENTIFIC STUDIES HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED THAT WOULD RECOMMEND INCLUSION. NOT EVEN THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION HAS MANAGED TO PUBLISH A SINGLE STUDY WORTHY OF THAT NAME THAT WOULD ARGUE FOR A CHANGE OF DIRECTION AT THE 2015 COP-7.

You obviously understand the reasons we are addressing you on a subject of such importance for us and our communities. It is key to our collective, economic and social destiny. We are also fully aware that Quebec, as well as the entire country, is favoured by the presence of large quantities of natural resources, often the envy of other countries. But to continue to profit from these resources, we have to be able to use them. Likewise, sustainable development requires that there be development. We are convinced that if a country like Canada allows the inclusion of a natural mineral fibre like chrysotile, a precedent would be created that could be devastating for the development of our natural resources. And all the more so because it has been clearly demonstrated that today, this natural mineral fibre (chrysotile) can be used safely and responsibly. It has also been scientifically demonstrated that controlled use in the workplace, with potential exposure to one fibre per cubic centimetre (or less), presents such a low risk to human health as to be for all practical scientific purposes unmeasurable.

The fact that all of this is ignored by the anti-asbestos lobbies is absolutely no reason for officials in countries around the world not to be aware of the most recent science on the matter.

On behalf of our communities, we are asking you not to support, and in fact to refuse, the inclusion of chrysotile on the Rotterdam Convention PIC list at the Conference of the Parties (COP-7). Should chrysotile be banned or severely restricted, all development of our mining sites and all economic development for our regions would become problematic, and would likely be subjected to constant constraints, harassment, objections and nuisances, thereby preventing any investment. There will then be no hope of developing our regional potential. This cannot be allowed to happen.

We are counting on your support to avoid the worst. If you are interested in discussing this matter further, we are available to meet or speak with you at your convenience. You will find below the list of other addressees. It is our hope that your government will create a committee to support our request.

Sincerely,

Serge Boislard, Chairman
Mouvement PRO Chrysotile québécois

cc: The Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Honourable Greg Rickford, Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council

The Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Health

The Honourable Christian Paradis, M.P. for Mégantic-L'Érable, Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie

The Honourable Denis Lebel, Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec

To contribute to the development, defence and promotion of the safe use of chrysotile.
**Mac Donald Informatique, Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford
Caisse d'Économie de la Vallée de l'Amiante, Comité des gens d'affaires de l'Amiante
The municipalities of Thetford Mines, Asbestos and St-Joseph de Coleraine
Ressources naturelles du Québec and the SADC de l'Amiante
ARE VALUED PARTNERS.**