

# **BAN ASBESTOS FRANCE**

**Association de lutte contre l'amiante**

<http://www.ban-asbestos-france.com>

**Patrick HERMAN (président)**

**Tél/fax : 05 65 62 23 02**

**Algues 12230 Nant**

**Email : [patrick.herman@free.fr](mailto:patrick.herman@free.fr)**



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Dear Premier Charest:

We urgently request your solidarity with workers in India and the Global South. We appeal to you to stop exporting asbestos to India and other countries where it is handled by desperately poor workers under dangerous conditions and is creating a public health tragedy of disease and death for decades to come.

Quebec's export of asbestos brings dishonour to the international reputation of Quebec.

Prominent health experts in Quebec, as well as the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Teachers' Federation and professors of health at nine universities across Canada, have all asked that Quebec's indefensible export of asbestos stop.

Health professionals in Quebec and elsewhere have condemned the misleading and untruthful information disseminated by the asbestos industry, pointing out that this untruthful information is endangering public health, especially in the world's emerging economies.

95% of all asbestos ever used is chrysotile asbestos and everywhere it has been used, it has left behind a tragic epidemic of disease and death, such as the epidemic of mesothelioma, lung cancer and asbestosis happening today in Quebec and in other industrialized countries that, to their regret, used it in the past.

Consequently, Quebec and other Western industrialized countries, such as the U.S., Europe and Australia, no longer use asbestos because they know from experience that it is impossible to use it safely. In fact, your government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to remove chrysotile and other forms of asbestos from Quebec's schools, hospitals and buildings in order to protect the lives of the Quebec people.

We ask you not to practise a double standard: exporting chrysotile asbestos to people overseas while removing it from buildings in Quebec.

Your government's own Quebec National Public Health Institute (INSPQ) has published fifteen reports, all of them documenting that it has proven impossible to handle chrysotile asbestos safely in Quebec itself, in spite of Quebec's advanced technology and substantive regulatory regime. Consequently, your own Public Health Institute has recommended against your government's policy of increased use of chrysotile asbestos.

We note that the Quebec government has asked the Canadian government to obstruct a U.N. environmental convention, the Rotterdam Convention. This Convention gives countries the right to be informed that chrysotile asbestos is hazardous, before it is exported to them. We consider it dishonours Quebec's reputation to thus undermine human rights and to give greater priority to the interests of the asbestos industry than to the rights and the lives of people in developing countries.

We ask you to take this opportunity to show the international solidarity that the people of Quebec believe in. We ask you to put the health and lives of workers in India and the Global South ahead of short-sighted politics.

All the major trade unions of India and labour support groups have called for a ban on asbestos. Please listen to the voices of workers in India, as well as to your own Quebec health experts.

The government of South Africa, which was a major supplier of chrysotile asbestos, has now banned it. If the government of South Africa can put the lives of people ahead of the interests of the asbestos industry, we hope that you, representing the people of Quebec, will do the same.

We await your response with much hope.

Respectfully,

BAN ASBESTOS FRANCE