



## News Release

For immediate release

November 18, 2008

### **Canada Kills UN Convention**

On October 25, a Canadian delegation to a United Nations convention opposed right-to-know requirements on the global trade of a potent carcinogen, chrysotile asbestos.

Representatives of the Canadian government organized against the inclusion of chrysotile asbestos on a list requiring an export country to inform an importing country of the scientific dangers of asbestos and information pertaining to its proper handling and work practices.

The World Health Organization estimates 100,000 deaths annually from exposure to this carcinogen. Over 125 countries and all U.N. agencies responsible for public and occupational health support a global ban on asbestos, and the Rotterdam convention, for putting human health over trade.

Canada allied itself with a handful of countries to deny underdeveloped countries the right to be informed of a deadly carcinogen. Canada, the only industrialized and democratic country of the bunch, obstructed the purpose of the convention together with Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Peru, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Mexico, Iran, India and Pakistan. We challenged over 115 countries supporting the listing of asbestos which included all 27-European Union states and over 41 countries that have already banned asbestos.

“Canada demonstrated arrogant indifference to the pleas of almost all public-interest scientists supporting a global ban. This convention and the listing of asbestos is merely a measure of common decency. Our government is out of step with our traditional allies,” said Larry Hubich, co-chair of the Saskatchewan Ban Asbestos Committee.

“Our reputation as a peace broker has been replaced by an indifferent isolationism when it comes to protection of public and occupational health in the poorer developing countries. These countries are without protective legislation, medical care and worker’s compensation for victims of unendurable pain, suffering and premature death. Surely they have the right to know about the dangerous substances they are importing from Canada,” adds Bob Sass, co-chair.

“Canada could have easily gone with the overwhelming majority of nations since the Rotterdam Convention only deals with the right to know and not commercial trade. We chose instead to support a policy experienced as violence, by workers, farmers and ordinary human beings in poorer developing countries and diminished our reputation in international politics,” added Sass.

For more information, contact the Saskatchewan Ban Asbestos Committee co-chairs, Larry Hubich at 537-330 or Bob Sass at 249-0206.