



**Canadian Association
of Physicians
for the Environment**

Monsieur François Legault
Premier Ministre du Québec

September 21, 2020

Dear Premier Legault:

We commend you and your government once again for mandating an independent organisation (le Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement, BAPE) to investigate the issue of asbestos and asbestos mining wastes in Quebec. We especially commend your government for insisting that priority be given to scientific evidence and health.

On November 18, 2019, we sent you a [letter, signed by dozens of organisations and scientists around the world](#), calling on your government to respect scientific evidence and health regarding asbestos.

We expressed concern that the government of Quebec is permitting the international asbestos lobby (the International Chrysotile Association, ICA) to operate in Quebec as a non-profit organisation. The [Quebec government states](#) that non-profit organisations incorporated in Quebec carry out moral or altruistic activities of a cultural, social, philanthropic, national, patriotic, religious, scientific, artistic, professional, athletic, sportive or educational nature.

The ICA does the opposite. It harms the public interest. It disseminates false information, denies the harmfulness of chrysotile asbestos, endangers human life and contributes to widespread suffering and death.

The Board of Directors of the ICA includes no-one who resides in Quebec. The Companies Act requires that an organisation have a representative who is physically present in Quebec. Emiliano Alonso Pelegrin, is listed in Quebec's corporate registry as being the physical representative of the ICA in Quebec. He resides in Belgium. The phone number that the ICA provides to contact the ICA is his phone number in Belgium.

The overseas Directors of the ICA are not altruistic individuals dedicated to serving the public interest. They are asbestos salesmen living in Russia, Kazakhstan, Zimbabwe, India and Mexico, who are dedicated to placing chrysotile asbestos in schools, homes and buildings in developing countries for the purpose of increasing their financial profits.

In response to our November 2019 letter, Ewan Sauves, your press secretary, [stated on your behalf](#) that you found the facts put forward in our letter worrying and that you would wait to learn the findings of the BAPE Inquiry into asbestos.

The BAPE Commission of Inquiry has now submitted its [report](#) to your government. The Commission totally rejected the information disseminated by the ICA that chrysotile asbestos is an excellent product that can be safely used, that breathing in high levels of chrysotile asbestos fibres causes no harm whatsoever to health and that those who oppose asbestos

use, such as the [Quebec Medical Association](#), are corrupt hysterics whose recommendations should be rejected.* Instead the Commission stated that the scientific evidence has clearly demonstrated that all forms of asbestos, including chrysotile asbestos, cause harm to health. The Commission called on your government to take a number of important actions to better protect the people of Quebec from asbestos harm. It specifically asked that Quebec's occupational exposure regulation for chrysotile asbestos be made ten times stricter than the lax standard that is currently in place – a standard that was created by and continues to be promoted by the ICA.

The focus of the Commission was on the health and safety of the population of Quebec. Clearly, the scientific evidence that the Commission has put forward applies not just in Quebec but to people everywhere. It is our belief that neither the Commission nor the people of Quebec would support a double standard which would treat the lives of workers and communities overseas as being of less value than the people of Quebec and not deserving of the same level of protection as the people of Quebec.

- We respectfully call on your government to adopt the recommendations made by the Commission so as to protect the health and safety of workers and the people of Quebec.
- We respectfully call on your government not to treat people overseas as having less value than the people of Quebec. It would bring dishonour on Quebec and is against the public interest for Quebec to help legitimize the use of asbestos as a safe product for populations overseas, while knowing full well that this is false information that will destroy lives.
- We respectfully call on your government to take action to deregister the ICA as a non-profit organisation because its goals and activities harm the public interest by promoting a product which is banned in Quebec and by disseminating false information that causes suffering and loss of life.

We note that the Quebec Companies Act allows the Registrar of Companies, who comes under Quebec's Ministry of Work, Employment and Social Solidarity, to ask a judge of the Superior Court to annul the registration of a non-profit organisation for reasons of the public interest (Article 231). There is a legal precedent in which the Registrar successfully asked a judge to [deregister a non-profit organisation](#) whose activities went against the public interest (Les amis de toutes les minorités sexuelles which promoted pedophilia).

The ICA helps the companies it serves to ship hundreds of thousands of tons of asbestos to countries like Indonesia, India and Vietnam every year. The people who, as a consequence, will die have no way to protect themselves against the deadly misinformation disseminated by Quebec. We trust you agree that this is not in the public interest.

The BAPE Commission of Inquiry marks an important turning point for respecting science and health in the issue of asbestos. We believe it is essential that populations overseas be included in this positive change.

We ask that the Registrar of Companies request a Superior Court judge to annul the registration of the ICA. It is clear that the ICA violates the requirement in the law that a non-profit organisation registered in Quebec not harm the public interest. By taking this action, the

Quebec government will demonstrate that it respects human solidarity and will not be complicit in harming populations overseas.

The lives of populations overseas matter.

We look forward with hope to receiving your response.

Respectfully,



Kathleen Ruff, recipient of the medal of the Quebec National Assembly



Jean Zigby, MD, CCFP(PC), Past President, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment - Association Canadienne des Médecins pour l'Environnement

Copies to:

Christian Dubé, Minister of Health and Social Services

Jean Boulet, Minister of Work, Employment and Social Solidarity

Dominique Anglade, Leader, Parti libéral du Québec

Manon Massé et Sol Zanetti, Québec solidaire

Pascal Bérubé, Leader, Parti québécois

Anne-Sophie Doré, lawyer, Centre québécois du droit de l'environnement

*** See, for example, statements published by [AIC News](#):**

May 20, 2020: "Since the end of the 1970s, the use of asbestos fibre, including chrysotile, has been the object of a ferocious, almost zealot-like crusade for its total banishment."

October 15, 2019: "the current anti-asbestos crusade is nothing more, but nothing less than a 21st century trade war. ... So why are the anti-asbestos zealots ... "

February 5, 2019 "their crusade against chrysotile, the anti-asbestos lobbies. ... Big, occult interests have been feeding this noxious crusade that pictures chrysotile in a totally unfair manner ... relentless pressure from anti-asbestos crusaders."