

Dr. Alan Shepard
President & Vice-Chancellor
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec

April 18, 2017

Dear President Shepard,

We urgently ask that Concordia University retract the report that Concordia commissioned, financed, published on Concordia University's official letterhead, disseminated and praised, [Lessons from the Quebec Asbestos Industry: Can there be meaningful dialogue and consensus when facts come up against feelings?](#)

The false scientific information and the irresponsible arguments put forward in the report are currently being quoted and used in order to undermine the work of the upcoming United Nations (UN) Conference on trade in hazardous substances that takes place in Geneva April 24 - May 5, 2017.

The International Chrysotile Association (ICA), based in Quebec, represents and promotes the interests of the global asbestos industry. It has published a report, [Rotterdam Convention – COP8 Meeting – 2017](#), to defeat the recommendation of the Convention's expert scientific committee to put chrysotile asbestos on the Convention's list of hazardous substances (Annex III). The aim of this endeavour is to deny countries in the Global South their right to Prior Informed Consent with regard to chrysotile asbestos increasingly being shipped to their countries.

It is urgent that Concordia University take immediate action to stop Concordia's report and the fallacious information the report contains from being used by the asbestos industry at the UN conference to defeat efforts to protect populations in the Global South from asbestos harm and to deny their right of Prior Informed Consent.

Asbestos is one of ten chemicals that the [World Health Organization has identified](#) as being of major public health concern, [noting that it causes more than 107,000 deaths of workers](#) every year, with additional deaths among the general population. Asbestos is identified as the biggest occupational killer every year of workers in Quebec and across Canada.

On page 4 of its report, the ICA reproduces the following text taken from page 22 of Concordia's asbestos report:

Strategies and tactics of the anti-asbestos lobbies

- Proactively claim moral high ground by accusing proponents of forwarding profit objectives against public health priorities and human rights.

- Accuse all involved stakeholders, including public relations professionals and legal counsel of immoral behaviour.
- Engage in a highly emotional campaign without relying necessary on the factual elements.
- Fight the fight on emotions not facts, by ignoring scientific evidence, showcasing victims and their families and invoking the caveat that no risk is acceptable risk.
- Mobilize effort coming together over a cause perceived to be urgent.
- Bring advocates from international ban asbestos movement into the fray.
- Make victims and victims' family visible in the debate (instrumentalization).
- Attack opponents' science.
- Promote their position as scientific but without offering real scientific published studies.
- Get activists from WHO and/or national medical associations antis to speak out.
- Mobilize the political opposition.

Chrysotile asbestos represents 100% of the global asbestos trade. Concordia's report falsely claims that the scientific evidence supports the use of chrysotile asbestos and that those who oppose the asbestos trade are acting in an irrational, emotional and unethical manner.

The arguments put forward by the asbestos industry and reproduced in Concordia's asbestos report, promote the use of chrysotile asbestos. These arguments have been rejected as dangerous nonsense by the Quebec, Canadian and world scientific community. Not a single reputable scientific body in the world supports the arguments and recommendations that Concordia financed, published, disseminated and praised.

Concordia's report was contaminated by gross, undeclared conflict of interest. The report was written by a Concordia academic with no scientific credentials, who had acted as a paid consultant and spokesperson for the asbestos industry.

In a [complaint submitted on July 26, 2015](#), scientists and health advocates asked Concordia University to retract its asbestos report on account of the false and harmful information and ethical improprieties it contains, which, in our opinion, do not comply with the Quebec government's [Policy for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

An issue of added concern to us is that Concordia University's John Molson School of Business, which published the asbestos report, [houses Future Earth](#), a major international research platform providing the knowledge and support to accelerate research and public engagement on environmental issues and sustainable development.

On November 24, 2015, scientists and health organisations around the world [wrote to Prof. Paul Shrivastava](#), Professor at Concordia University's John Molson School of Business and

[Executive Director of Future Earth](#) requesting that he support their call for the asbestos report to be retracted and for Concordia University to carry out an independent, transparent investigation of how a report containing such gross scientific and ethical improprieties was published by Concordia University and what action was needed to prevent any further re-occurrence.

Prof. Shrivastava did not support the request that Concordia retract the report and carry out an independent, transparent investigation.

Concordia did not retract the report and did not carry out an independent, transparent investigation.

We believe that if Concordia refuses to retract the asbestos report and allows it to be used at the UN upcoming Conference to cause human and environmental harm in countries in the Global South, this would be in direct contradiction with the mission of Future Earth and would make Concordia unfit to continue as a Future Earth centre.

REQUEST:

- We call on you to uphold the standards of academic and ethical integrity that are expected of a reputable university.
- We call on you to retract Concordia's asbestos report and tell the ICA to remove from their [Rotterdam Convention – COP8 Meeting – 2017](#) report the text they are reproducing from Concordia's asbestos report, as this violates Concordia's intellectual property rights and Concordia has retracted the report.

We request an immediate response on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

NOTE: Titles and affiliations are given for identification purposes only. Some of the signers have been involved in asbestos litigation.

Kathleen Ruff, Founder & Co-Coordinator, Rotterdam Convention Alliance (ROCA); Director, RightOnCanada.ca; Senior Human Rights Adviser, Rideau institute, Ottawa, Canada; Honorary Fellow, Collegium Ramazzini

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ORGANISATIONS

- International Commission of Occupational Health, ICOH
- Building and Woodworkers International, representing 12 million workers in construction and building materials industries in 130 countries
- Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment
- Asian Network for the Rights Of Occupational and Environmental Victims (ANROEV)
- School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- Canadian Voices of Asbestos Victims
- Association Henri Pézerat, France
- International Ban Asbestos Secretariat
- Ban Asbestos France
- Occupational Knowledge International
- Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (US)
- Environics Trust, India
- Chemical Sensitivities Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada
- Abeva / Asbestos Victims Association of Belgium
- Dutch Committee of Asbestos Victims / Comité Asbestslachtoffers
- Centre de Recherche et d'Education pour le Developpement (CREPD)
- Anjali Society for Rural Health & Development, Gujarat, India
- Toxic Action network Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan
- Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, AMWU

- Consumers' Association of Penang, Malaysia
- Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends' of the Earth, Malaysia)
- European Asbestos Forum Foundation, Europe
- Victims of Chemical Valley for Asbestos and Occupational Disease
- The Association of German Asbestos Victims / Bundesverband der Asbestose Selbsthilfegruppen
- The Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia Incorporated
- People's Health Movement, Canada
- Taiwan Occupational Safety and Health Link, Taipei, Taiwan
- Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA, Australia
- GMB Trade Union - United Kingdom and Ireland
- Council of Work and Environment Related Patients' Network of Thailand (WEPT), Nonthaburi Province, Thailand
- Ecological Alert and Recovery - Thailand (EARTH), Nonthaburi Province, Thailand
- Information Centre "Volgograd-Ecopress", Russia
- BaliFokus Foundation, Indonesia.

COPIES TO:

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