

October 13, 2011

John H. McArthur, Chairman, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada
Dean Emeritus, Harvard Business School

Dear Chairman McArthur:

We are writing to you, as the Chairman of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, to draw your attention to an extremely serious matter that relates to the professional and ethical standards of the Foundation.

We understand that the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada does not have a Code of Ethics, which is an unfortunate omission in this day and age. However, we assume that the Foundation does support normal professional and ethical standards.

For example, we assume that the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada does not condone the dissemination of gross deceptive misinformation and the deliberately false representation of the position of a major United Nations organization, namely the World Health Organization.

Any university or reputable research body would take action to repudiate such conduct, which renders informed debate impossible. Any student behaving in such a way would be expelled.

Yet, a Distinguished Fellow of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Baljit S. Chadha, is acting in exactly this manner, with the collaboration of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

The information Mr Chadha puts forward – such as stating that chrysotile asbestos does not cause mesothelioma and that any scientist who examines the scientific literature will conclude that chrysotile asbestos presents no risks of any significance to public or worker health in Asia – has been repudiated by medical and scientific authorities in Canada and around the world as absurd and dangerous nonsense that will lead to loss of life.

Perhaps you might wish to submit to medical experts, who are your colleagues at Harvard or at another university or at the Environmental Protection Agency, the presentation by Mr Chadha that the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada has published on its website and ask if this presentation meets minimal academic and ethical standards. We are convinced that they will inform you that it is absurd and dangerous misinformation that no reputable organisation would publish.

We consider it to be a grave violation of ethics that Mr Chadha, in spite of having being asked to desist, continues to falsify the position of the World Health Organization (WHO), stating that the WHO supports the use of chrysotile asbestos and exposure levels of 1 f/cc as being safe for health.

This is a complete falsehood. The WHO's position is that all use of chrysotile asbestos must end and that there is no safe exposure level to chrysotile asbestos. The WHO has repudiated Mr Chadha's false information and requested that a correction be published (see Appendix below).

If one of your students insisted on falsifying the position of a leading U.N. agency, in spite of having been asked to desist, would you condone this unethical conduct and turn a blind eye? We certainly hope not.

Prof. Woo, President of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, was requested to take action on this matter by Prof. Cathy Conrad at the Symposium held at Saint Mary's University in Nova Scotia on October 6, 2011.

Prof. Woo stated that the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada does not wish to duck the issue. With respect, that is exactly what Prof. Woo did, as you can hear on this video of the exchange <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFvNvOldl1E>.

First Prof. Woo said that Mr Chadha's term as a Distinguished Fellow of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada is about to expire and used that as an excuse to duck the issue.

Prof. Woo then substituted a completely different issue to the one that was raised. He stated that Asian countries have different practices and health standards than we have in Canada. He stated that, for example, in Asia one will see child labour, no helmets being used by people riding motorbikes, smoking at public events. This is true. This is not, however, the issue Prof. Woo was asked to address.

Canada does not send out deceptive propaganda to Asia, promoting smoking and child labour and falsely claiming that "the scientific evidence" proves that these are good things and cause no harm.

The issue Prof. Woo was asked to address is the fact that a Distinguished Fellow of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Mr Chadha, is doing exactly this. He is disseminating, on the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's "Conversation" on its website and in a public relations campaign in the media, appalling, deceptive misinformation that falsely claims that the scientific evidence shows that asbestos is a good, safe product for Asian countries to use and will cause no harm.

A "conversation" is fine, but a reputable think tank upholds minimal professional and ethical standards. The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada would not publish on its website, we assume, absurd and deadly misinformation that "the scientific literature" shows that smoking and child labour cause no harm. Yet you are allowing the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's website to put forward this level of crude deception regarding asbestos.

In our opinion, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada should not be complicit with disreputable information, particularly when that deceptive information causes loss of life.

OUR COMPLAINT:

We therefore wish to submit the following complaint and ask that the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada take immediate action.

- The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada is violating minimum intellectual standards in condoning and promoting gross misinformation by its Distinguished Fellow, Mr Chadha.
- The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada is violating minimum ethical standards by refusing to take action regarding the unethical conduct of its Distinguished Fellow, Mr Chadha, who falsely claims that the World Health Organization supports the use of asbestos, when, in fact, the World Health Organization opposes the use of asbestos.

ACTION REQUESTED:

We ask that you take immediate action on our complaint. We trust that you will not duck this serious issue. Leaders do not duck issues, particularly when an allegation of unethical conduct is involved and where loss of life is at stake.

We are sure that you and other Board Members of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada would not wish their children or family members to be harmed and killed by deadly misinformation. We ask that you show a similar care for populations in Asia.

In this regard, we draw to your attention the following article, *Asia's emerging asbestos epidemic* on the United Nations University website, October 5, 2011
<http://unu.edu/articles/population-health/asias-emerging-asbestos-epidemic>

Specifically, we ask that the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada:

- Remove Mr Chadha's disreputable information from its website.
- Ask Mr Chadha to stop promoting discredited misinformation and, if he refuses, remove his title of Distinguished Fellow, so that he cannot now and in the future use the title of present or former Distinguished Fellow of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

We would be happy to provide detailed documentation and we would appreciate your prompt response.

Sincerely,



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DR COLIN L. SOSKOLNE, PhD, Professor, School of Public Health, University of Alberta; Fellow, American College of Epidemiology; Fellow, Collegium Ramazzini, Immediate Past-President, Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics; Alberta, Canada

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DR SUSAN M. KENNEDY, PhD, Professor Emerita, School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia; Founding Director, UBC School of Environmental Health; Founding President, Canadian Association for Research on Work and Health; Former Scientific Director, BC Environmental and Occupational Health Research Network, BC

DR ERICA FRANK, MD, MPH, Professor and Canada Research Chair, University of British Columbia School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, British Columbia

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DR JEAN ZIGBY, MD, CCFP, Family Physician, Palliative Care Specialist; President, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Montréal, Québec

DR SOPHIE GOSSELIN, M.D, CSPQ, FRCPC-EM, Attending Emergency Physician & Clinical Toxicologist, Mc Gill University Health Centre; Assistant Professor of Medicine, McGill University, Québec

DR ARTHUR L. FRANK, MD, PhD, Professor of Public Health, Drexel University, Philadelphia PA, US

DR. CAROLE O'BEIRNE, M.Sc., M.D., FRCPC Pediatrics, Staff Pediatrician, Department of Pediatrics, Toronto East General Hospital; Part-time Associate Staff, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Emergency Medicine, Sick Kids Hospital; Lecturer, Department of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Ontario

DR. SADHANA PRASAD, BSc, MD, FRCP(C), FACP, Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine, McMaster University, Ontario

DR MARCEL GOLDBERG, MD, PhD, Professor of Public Health, Versailles Saint Quentin University and Institute of Health & Medical Research (INSERM), France

DR MORRIS GREENBERG, MB, FRCP, former HM Senior Medical Inspector of Factories; former Senior Medical Officer, Division of Toxicology & Environmental Health, Department of Health, UK

DR ANNIE J. SASCO, MD, MPH, SM, DrPH, HDR, Institute of Health & Medical Research (INSERM) Director of research, Epidemiology for Cancer Prevention; previously International Agency for Research on Cancer Unit Chief and World Health Organization Acting Chief, Program for Cancer Control; Fellow, Collegium Ramazzini; Bordeaux Segalen University, France

PROF. MEYER BROWNSTONE, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto, Political economy,; Chair Emeritus of Oxfam Canada, Ontario

DR WARREN BELL, MD, past founding President, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, British Columbia; Past President, Association of Complementary and Integrative Physicians of BC; Rural Preceptor, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, BC

DR ÉRIC NOTEBAERT, M.D., MSc, CSPQ, Professeur Agrégé, Faculté de Médecine, Université de Montréal.; Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment; Scientific Circle, David Suzuki Foundation, Québec

DR JOHN O'CONNOR, MD, Family Physician; Health Director, Fort McKay First Nation, Alberta; advocate for the health of First Nations communities downstream of the Alberta Tarsands; board member, Safe Drinking Water Foundation, Alberta

GIDEON FORMAN, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

DR. ROBERT C DICKSON, Calgary, Alberta

DR. CATHY VAKIL, MD, CFPC, FCFP, Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario

THEODORA CARROLL, founder and former Executive Director of Oxfam-Quebec and Oxfam-America; former Executive Director, World Law Foundation; former President, EcoVision; former consultant for: Canadian International Development Agency, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Environment Canada, Health Canada, British Columbia

DR MEG SEARS, PhD, Ottawa

DR MICHÈLE BRILL-EDWARDS, MD, FRCPC, Ottawa

NOTE: Above institutions named for identification purposes only.

Cc Prof. Yuen Pau Woo, President and CEO, Asia Pacific Foundation Canada

APPENDIX: REPUDIATION BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION OF MR CHADHA'S MISINFORMATION

October 12, 2011

To Ms Katherine Sedgwick
Deputy Editor, The Gazette
Montreal, Canada

Dear Ms Sedgwick;

Montrealgazette, in its issue from 4 October 2011, published an opinion by Baljit S. Chadha "Why I want to be in the asbestos business"
<http://www.montrealgazette.com/business/want+asbestos+business/5501754/story.html#ixzz1aO7OF5VA>

In this article the author makes an incorrect statement about the position of the World Health Organization on asbestos by saying in the tenth paragraph *"There is peer-reviewed scientific evidence that exposure to chrysotile asbestos respecting the province's industrial exposure standard of one fibre per cubic centimetre poses no health risk. That is the norm at the mine today and by the World Health Organization today. "*

I wish to draw your attention to the fact that in 2006 the World Health Organization stated the contrary *"Bearing in mind that there is no evidence for a threshold for the carcinogenic effect of asbestos and that increased cancer risks have been observed in populations exposed to very low levels (5;9), the most efficient way to eliminate asbestos-related diseases is to stop using all types of asbestos."* (the full text is available at http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2006/WHO_SDE_OEH_06.03_eng.pdf). This position of WHO is still valid.

All official WHO documents regarding asbestos can be found at http://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/asbestos_documents/en/index.html

I would be grateful if you would please consider informing your readers of WHO's correct position on asbestos.

Should you need any further information or clarification please let me know.

Best,

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