

The Critical Role Scientists And Health Professionals Can Play To Prevent Asbestos- Related Harm.

Recent examples and lessons learned.

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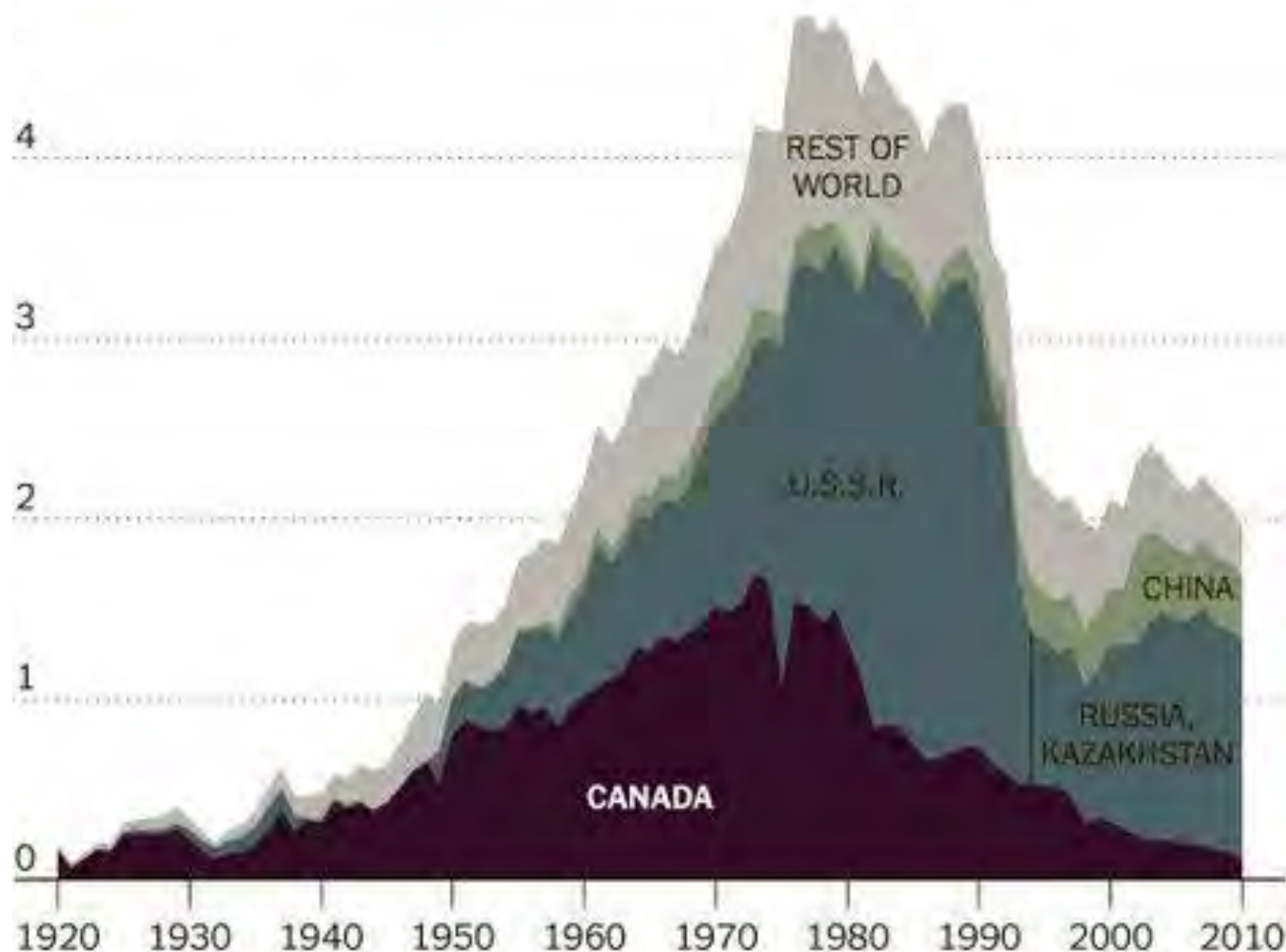


World Asbestos Production

Although world asbestos production has declined since peaking in 1977, the mineral is still mined, and used, around the world.

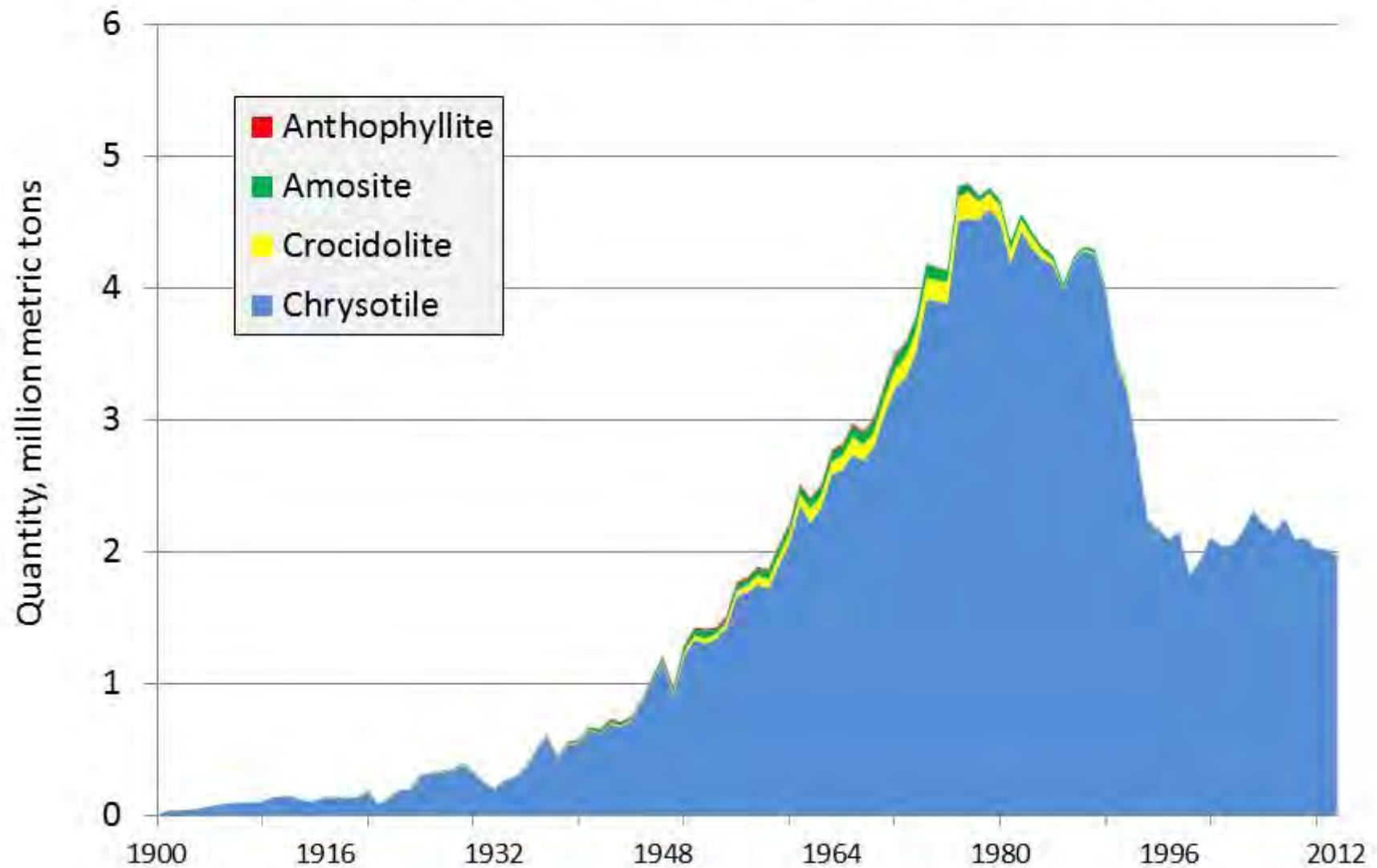
WORLD ASBESTOS PRODUCTION

5 million metric tons



Source: United States Geological Survey

World Production of Asbestos, by Type




Jeffery Open Pit Asbestos Mine, Canada




Quebec asbestos mines determined to expand


By 2005, after 100 years in operation, the last two asbestos mines in Quebec

- **Had exhausted their asbestos deposits.**
 - **Were facing economic and environmental difficulties.**
 - **Were seeking financial support to open up new mining areas.**
 - **Were determined to increase their asbestos export to developing countries.**
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It was critical to stop the re-launch of the Quebec asbestos industry

- **If successful, Quebec would export millions of tons of asbestos for years to come.**
 - **Canada would continue to be the leading propagandist for the global asbestos trade.**
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It was difficult to stop the re-launch of the Quebec asbestos industry

- The Quebec and Canadian governments financed and supported the asbestos lobby organisation (the Chrysotile Institute)
 - Every political party in the Canadian House of Commons and in the Quebec National Assembly supported the asbestos industry.
 - The asbestos miners had played a heroic part in the fight for workers' rights in Quebec and had support of Quebec union movement.
 - Climate of omerta. No asbestos victims speaking up.
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Scientists and health professionals in Quebec played a critical role

- **They challenged the scientific misinformation put out by the Chrysotile Institute**
 - **They called on the government to end its funding of the Chrysotile Institute**
 - **They put forward the human reality and human suffering being caused**
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Quebec scientists urge Canadian government to stop blocking U.N. Rotterdam Convention

Quebec experts speak up against chrysotile asbestos

Isabelle Hachey, La Presse, le 23 octobre 2008

Twenty-five Quebec medical doctors and experts in public health are urging the federal government to stop supporting the Canadian chrysotile asbestos industry and to stop blocking the UN Rotterdam Convention which world trade in hazardous substances.

“We are taking a position because, as professionals and researchers in the field of health, we cannot allow ourselves to ignore the evidence accumulated to date. Our obligations include the protection of the public interest of Quebec, Canada and at the international level.”




15 Quebec scientists call for end of Quebec asbestos industry

15 scientists publish a powerful statement in Quebec newspaper.

The statement said:

The signers are medical doctors, toxicologists, industrial hygienists and epidemiologists who are members of the public health network of Quebec; several are professors at the universities of Montreal, Laval and Sherbrooke.



Cessons le mensonge


La Presse, le 16 septembre 2009



Selon le Mouvement ProChrysotile, ce sont «des groupuscules idéologiques» et «des extrémistes» qui s'opposent à l'amiante.

Rien ne saurait être plus loin de la vérité. Ce sont des organismes réputés et respectés du monde entier qui réclament l'interdiction de l'amiante dont l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS), la Société canadienne du cancer, l'Organisation internationale du travail, le Congrès du travail du Canada, l'Association médicale canadienne, ou la Confédération syndicale internationale, qui représente 168 millions de travailleurs dans 155 pays.

The scientists pointed out that:

- **Quebec's National Public Health Institute had published 11 reports showing that "safe use" of chrysotile asbestos had proven impossible in Quebec.**
 - **Asbestos-related diseases were the biggest cause of occupational death in Quebec, with numbers increasing every year.**
 - **The people of Quebec were paying millions of dollars each year to remove asbestos from schools and hospitals.**
 - **The Chrysotile Institute's claim of rigorous safety controls overseas was a fabrication that was completely contradicted by the facts.**
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Chrysotile Institute claimed a 99.81% success rate in “safe use” of chrysotile asbestos



“Safe use” of asbestos in India



CBC went to India and filmed a documentary showing workers, covered in asbestos, with only a bandana as protection.

India, Worker Cutting Asbestos Cement Sheets



Indonesia: Local people collecting broken asbestos cement pieces outside factory




Scientists from around the world challenge Quebec government

Quebec accused of hypocrisy on asbestos exports

By Michelle Lalonde, Montreal Gazette, January 29, 2010

MONTREAL – More than 100 prominent scientists and researchers from 28 countries appealed yesterday to Premier Jean Charest on the eve of his trade mission to India to stop exporting Quebec-mined asbestos to developing nations.



Quebec Medical Association urges Quebec government not to finance asbestos mine

Doctors urge Quebec government not to finance re-launch of asbestos mine

La Presse, le 30 juin 2010

The Quebec Medical Association, representing 9,500 members, called on Premier Jean Charest not to give the asbestos industry the \$58 million loan guarantee it has asked for.

It is unacceptable to continue to mine and export asbestos, a substance known for its cancer risks, said the QMA.

Editorials in Quebec media challenge asbestos industry

L'amiante tue

Asbestos kills



François Cardinal, La Presse, July 13, 2010

**The building carefully erected by the
Quebec asbestos lobby is falling apart.**

Asia-Quebec Solidarity Delegation puts forward human message




Quebec medical doctors and health professionals helped asbestos victims and health activists from Asia bring their message to the people of Quebec.

Historic event: after 30 years, asbestos lobby loses Canadian government funding


Pro-asbestos advocacy group shuts its doors

Robert Hiltz, Postmedia News, Montreal Gazette, April 29, 2012

A decades-old pro-asbestos lobby group, currently funded by the Quebec government, will be shutting its doors after notifying the federal government of its plan to dissolve.



Historic event: asbestos industry loses political support in Quebec

- **In 2010, Québec Solidaire is first political party to stop supporting the asbestos industry.**
 - **Other political parties follow.**
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Parti Québécois expresses doubt

- For 50 years, the Parti Québécois promoted the policy of “safe use” of chrysotile asbestos.
- In 2012, the Parti Québécois questioned this policy, saying that Quebec should listen to its medical experts.

Le PQ doute d'une possible utilisation sécuritaire de l'amiante




End of Quebec asbestos industry: government cancels \$58 million loan

Jeffrey Mine will not be re-launched

*La Tribune, Yvan Provencher
October 10, 2012*

(Asbestos) It is the end of the project to re-launch the mine at Asbestos. At a meeting with the mine owners, the government confirmed that it has withdrawn the \$58 million loan to the mine.




LESSONS LEARNED

A) CRITICAL ROLE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The asbestos industry has enormous financial resources, but scientists and health professionals have credibility.

Scientists and health professionals also have a responsibility to defend the integrity and independence of science and public health policy.

When scientific evidence is being distorted so as to endanger health, silence on the part of the scientific community is not neutrality, it is complicity.



LESSONS LEARNED

B) THE NEED FOR SOCIAL ADVOCACY

In order to protect public health policy from being perverted by vested interests, advocacy is essential.

Effective advocacy needs to:

- **be public and visible**
- **be evidence-based, documented and clear**
- **relate to practical realities of the real world**
- **put forward the human impact**
- **appeal to human solidarity and moral values**
- **be repeated as often as necessary until the battle is won**