

Dr. Mark Stafford Smith  
Chair, Science Committee  
Future Earth

November 25, 2015

Dear Dr. Mark Stafford Smith,

Attached is a letter from scientists and civil society organisations around the world, asking Prof. Paul Shrivastava, as Executive Director of Future Earth, to support our call for scientific evidence to be respected at his university, Concordia University, which is one of Future Earth's five centres.

In 2015, Concordia's John Molson School of Business in Montreal, where Prof. Paul Shrivastava is a faculty member, commissioned, funded, published and praised a report [1] which states that the scientific evidence supports the use of chrysotile asbestos, that the World Health Organization supports its use and that exposure to high levels of chrysotile asbestos causes no harm to health. As you likely know, all this information is utterly false. The report was written by a consultant hired by asbestos industrialists to promote a project to export millions of tons of chrysotile asbestos to India and other countries in the global South from the Jeffrey asbestos mine in Quebec, which is the subject of the report. In the section of the report, detailing the author's background, the author's financial connection to the asbestos industry and to the project, which is the subject matter of the report, is not disclosed.

The report is very helpful to the asbestos industry in promoting the continuing sale every year of 2 million tons of chrysotile asbestos, placed in homes, schools and public buildings in India and elsewhere. As you know, denial by the asbestos industry of the scientific evidence showing harm caused by all forms of asbestos has resulted in environmental contamination and hundreds of thousands of unnecessary deaths.

The report states that independent scientific bodies, such as Quebec's National Institute of Public Health, Quebec's Directors of Public Health, the Canadian Medical Association, etc. are ill-informed about asbestos harm and therefore should not be believed. The report promotes scientists, funded by the asbestos industry and who support use of chrysotile asbestos, as being the scientific experts who should be trusted to set public policy.

One of the experts promoted by Concordia's report, John Hoskins, also questions whether climate change is just a hoax and a lot of hot air (see attached editorial). Dr. Hoskins, who is a paid representative of the asbestos industry, was in Vietnam on November 18, 2015 as keynote speaker at a workshop promoting use of chrysotile asbestos in Vietnam.

The mission of Future Earth is to promote respect for the best available scientific evidence and

knowledge. As the International Joint Policy Committee of Societies of Epidemiology states in its Position Statement on Asbestos, the scientific evidence is indisputable that all forms of asbestos cause harm to health and, as recommended by the World Health Organization, all use of asbestos of any kind should stop.

To date, Concordia University has refused our request to retract the report and to hold an independent, transparent investigation. Instead, the university has stated that the publication of this false scientific information represents "the essence of academic freedom".

We trust that you and Prof. Shrivastava share our view that publishing false scientific information, denying harm caused by asbestos or manufacturing doubt about climate change, does not represent "the essence of academic freedom", but represents a failure of academic, scientific and ethical integrity.

We hope that you and Prof. Shrivastava will respond positively to our request and demonstrate that Future Earth is committed to upholding scientific evidence.

I request that you kindly confirm that Dr. Stafford Smith has received this message.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ruff, on behalf of the signers of the letter

Founder, RightOnCanada.ca; recipient, National Public Health Hero Award by Canadian Public Health Association; recipient, Special Award, Collegium Ramazzini

[1] "Lessons from the Quebec Asbestos Industry: Can there be meaningful dialogue and consensus when facts come up against feelings?" <https://www.dropbox.com/s/kjdgqv8d2dtffer/concordia%2C%20lessons%20from%20the%20quebec%20asbestos%20industry%2C%202015.pdf?dl=0>