

Gil Shochat  
CBC Television  
Toronto

February 4, 2012

Dear Mr Shochat:

RE: "Is the federal government relying on junk science to justify its support for re-opening asbestos mines in Quebec"

You will recall that you contacted me on several occasions last year while preparing your documentary recently aired on CBC television. I mentioned to you at the time my suspicion that this would be an unbalanced report, but I had no idea what a slanderous piece of yellow journalism the final product would be. Shame on you! This broadcast was a contemptible brew of innuendo, half-truths, and distortions more suited to the Rupert Murdoch broadcast empire than Canada's national broadcaster. As a patriotic Canadian taxpayer I would love to be proud of the CBC; instead I am ashamed that CBC television has a history of slanderous pseudo-documentaries (how much was the settlement to your previous physician-victim?) Your wilful misinterpretation of documents and your staged scenes of Indian actors tossing about bundles of asbestos (fake, I hope) made me cringe.

That your mud-slinging hit it's target is confirmed by a telephone call from my sister who said 'did you see that? He was paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to lie about asbestos'. Neither she, nor I, heard your explanation that this funding from the QAMA would probably have been sent to the University to pay the salaries of research assistants and to purchase research supplies, and that, under the Canadian system a salaried university professor, such as Dr McDonald, is unlikely to have personally pocketed any of the money.

As you know, I am no friend of Canadian asbestos and it's export to developing countries. I do not, however, believe that the end justifies the means. I am reminded of the old adage that "if you can't believe what you read in a newspaper about a topic you are familiar with, why should you believe anything else in the rag." I thus rarely watch CBC television.

As you also know, I am highly qualified to form judgments about the quality of your work. To quote from a Declaration I wrote yesterday in support of an American mesothelioma victim of Quebec asbestos:

1. I am an epidemiologist with extensive knowledge of the epidemiology of asbestos-related disease and state-of-the-art in the history and knowledge of asbestos-related diseases, and also the hazardous nature of asbestos-containing products and the ability of such products to

cause disease in humans. For 30 years, from 1978 to 2008, I was a Medical Consultant with the Ontario Ministry of Labour. My job duties included assisting with the preparation of the Ontario Asbestos Regulation and performing epidemiologic research studies of asbestos-exposed working populations in the Province of Ontario. I also consulted with the Ontario Ministry of Environment on the Ambient Air Standard for Asbestos. I am currently a Research Scholar and Assistant Professor with the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto. I am on Active Staff with Clinical Practice in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at Mt Sinai Hospital, a University of Toronto teaching hospital. I am also a Clinical Associate Professor in the Program in Occupational Health and Environmental Medicine and Department of Family Medicine at McMaster University, and an Associate Member of the McMaster Institute for Environment and Health. I held an Advisory Appointment with the United States Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board Asbestos Panel from 2008 – 2011. I have authored or co-authored over ninety peer-reviewed papers concerning various areas of epidemiology and statistics, with many of these devoted to the epidemiology of asbestos-related diseases.

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1. In summary, based on the evidence presented, I conclude to a reasonable degree of medical certainty that Mr. X is suffering from malignant pleural mesothelioma, causally related to exposure to Canadian asbestos, including asbestos exposure from his work with NAPA-brand brakes which contained Abex's asbestos-containing brake linings. It is my opinion, to a reasonable degree of medical certainty, that all identified asbestos exposures that Mr. X sustained contributed to the cumulative dose that he sustained over his lifetime, and as such, are substantial contributing factors to the development of his malignant pleural mesothelioma.

**I DECLARE, UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY, THE TRUTH OF THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.**

I challenge you, Mr Shochat, to declare, under penalty of perjury, the truth of the allegations presented in your report.

It is appropriate, here, for me to declare any "conflict of interest" which might bias my views of your work.

1. I am a 1976 graduate of the Faculty of Medicine at McGill University and I make small annual contributions to the alumni fund.
2. I have known Dr Bruce Case for many years. We have encountered one another at scientific conferences. About 10 or 15 years ago we worked together on a presentation to the Quebec Worker's Compensation Tribunal concerning the causation of lung cancer in Quebec asbestos miners by the dust they breathed in the workplace. We have, however, also publicly disagreed about aspects of asbestos research, as evidenced by our letters published in the Annals of Occupational Hygiene. I contacted Dr Case yesterday to obtain your contact information.

3. Dr Corbett McDonald was a professor at McGill during the time I was in Medical School. We have since encountered one another, and have had conversations, at scientific conferences, most recently at a mesothelioma meeting two years ago.

4. I have known Dr David Egilman for a number of years. We have encountered one another at scientific conferences, most recently at a mesothelioma meeting two years ago. We are in irregular correspondence, including several email exchanges during the past week dealing with aspects of the retention of Quebec asbestos in the lungs of brake mechanics.

In closing, I challenge you and the CBC to make me proud of your work and reporting. I regret to say that I am pessimistic about this challenge being met.

Sincerely,

*Murray Finkelstein*