

Pressures rise on Canada to ban asbestos

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Canada's largest union and the third party in the Commons ramped up pressure Wednesday on the government to make good on a promise to ban asbestos.

The New Democrats presented a bill in the Commons that would completely ban the heat-resistant fibrous mineral that is woven into building and other materials, but has been found to cause deadly lung disease.

At the same time, the Canadian Labour Congress launched a public information campaign, pointing out that [asbestos exposure](#) is the number one cause of occupational death in Canada, responsible for about one third of all workplace deaths.

"Thousands of Canadians are diagnosed with cancer annually due to exposure to asbestos," said New Democrat MP Sheri Benson.

"Five months ago, the Prime Minister pledged to ban asbestos. Every day action is delayed, more lives are put at risk. The Liberal government must impose a complete ban on asbestos immediately."

Canada once dominated world production of asbestos but the closure of two mines in 2012 marked the suspension of its production for the first time in 130 years.

It continues to be imported in some goods.

Pressed on the issue, Science Minister Kirsty Duncan said the health and safety of Canadians is "a top priority" for the government.

"When it comes to asbestos, the science is clear," she said. "That's why we've committed to a ban on asbestos and right now I'm leading an internal process across departments," she said.

Duncan pledged to announce the government's plans soon, adding that it had already moved to ban asbestos in new [government](#) construction and has created a "national asbestos inventory"—a calculation of how much asbestos there is in Canada.

"We all have the same goal, this is not a partisan issue," she said.

Nearly 60 countries have banned [asbestos](#), but not China, Russia, India, Brazil or Canada. The United States has a partial ban in place.

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