

REPORT ON ASBESTOS

History of Asbestos Use in Ontario and Canada:

Asbestos-containing materials were used widely throughout Canada and other countries of the world during the 1900's. This naturally occurring mineral was used in building construction for its thermal properties, high tensile strength, low electrical conductivity, and its ability to withstand chemical breakdown. This fibrous material when inhaled over a long period of time can lead to adverse health effects. Building materials with bound asbestos or asbestos that is in good condition pose little danger of releasing airborne fibers unless physically damaged (drilled, cut, sawn, ground, or sanded).

Technically speaking, an important factor when assessing the potential hazard associated with asbestos is its degree of friability which is why friable asbestos-containing materials (ACM) have been banned from use in Ontario. The most common types of friable ACM included sprayed fireproofing and sprayed thermal insulation (ceased use in 1973), sprayed acoustic texture coat finishes – stucco (ceased use in 1982), and mechanical thermal system insulation (ceased use in 1982).

Non-friable ACM include vinyl floor tile – VAT (ceased use circa 1982), vinyl sheet flooring – VSF (ceased use circa 1982), floor adhesives (ceased use circa 1992), acoustic ceiling tile (ceased use circa 1982), plaster finishes (ceased use circa 1960's), drywall joint compound (ceased use circa 1980), roofing materials (ceased use circa 1991), and asbestos cement sheeting, piping, and gasket materials that may still be in use today.

The use of asbestos and asbestos-containing materials was prevalent between the years of 1919 – 1984.

Background to Toronto Conference Involvement:

In the summer of 2011 the Ontario Ministry of Labour was called into one of the Pastoral Charges in Northern Waters Presbytery after an organization/worker raised a complaint about the possibility of asbestos being in the building. The staff at the church could not produce a substance survey report that had previously been done indicating that there was asbestos in the building. Because the church staff was not aware of the report or that the report was on the premises, then the staff and workers did not know there were any issues around asbestos.

A meeting was held with representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Northern Waters Presbytery, and Conference staff in August to discuss this legislation and the impact it will have on our Congregations.

The Ministry of Labour is concerned about the health and safety of the workers – both those that work in our churches and outside contractors that may be doing work in the buildings. In the above noted case, orders were issued to the church to become compliant with the existing Provincial legislation.

Existing Legislation:

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, regulations concerning asbestos have been in force since 2007 (regulation O.Reg 278/5). This regulation deals with *Asbestos on Construction Projects and in Buildings and Repair Operations*. A comprehensive guideline has been issued by the Ministry of Labour to explain the act and the obligations of property owners. In the church setting, this means the Congregations/Pastoral Charges through its Board of Trustees (or equivalent). This guideline can be obtained on-line from the Ministry of Labour's website:

www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/asbestos/index.php.

The key impact of this legislation to our Congregations is that the 'owners' must take certain actions to protect its workers, the users of the buildings, and potential contractors who may be doing work in the building. The pivotal point in this regulation is that the owners hold a legal obligation to know where the asbestos is, to inspect it, and to deal with it appropriately. On the workers side, people must be aware of the presence of asbestos in the church buildings.

Next Steps:

A professional substance survey must be completed on each building as to the presence of asbestos, with the priority on buildings built or renovated in the period of 1920 – 1984. Once the survey is completed, the resulting report must be reviewed with the current staff and anyone who contemplates doing repairs or renovations. The report must be kept at all times on the premises with all staff knowing the location of said report. All buildings must be in compliance with this act.

If asbestos is identified as being present on the premises a physical inspection must be completed on an annual basis to determine if the asbestos is still in good condition. These annual inspections must be recorded and kept on site.

Since 2005 the standards have changed with respect to work in buildings with the presence of asbestos. If proper precautions and preventions are taken then there should be no accidental exposure to asbestos. If work is to be done in the buildings where there is known asbestos then it is strongly recommended that only licensed trades people should be hired to do this work.

The Presbyteries will have oversight on this matter as to the compliance of this regulation. The Property Committee for Northern Waters Presbytery has already sent out a letter to all of its Congregations asking for input as to the status or renovations, ages of buildings, etc. (I have attached a sample letter to this report for information).

November 2011.

(Sample Letter sent by Northern Waters Presbytery)

To: Trustees of

From: Property Committee of Northern Waters Presbytery

Re: Asbestos Management in church buildings and manses.

The Ontario Ministry of Labour recently brought to the attention of the Presbytery the need to manage asbestos in church buildings. Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, regulations concerning asbestos have been in force since 2007 (regulation O.Reg 278/5). A comprehensive guideline has been issued by the Ministry of Labour to explain the act and the obligations of property owners. This guideline is obtainable on line at:

www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/asbestos/index.php . Trustees and property people must familiarize themselves with its contents!

Asbestos was in use between 1918 and 1984, both on its own (eg. pipe Insulation, loft insulation, ceiling tiles), and as a component of compound building materials (eg. floor tiles, dry wall compound, exterior siding and many others). The good news is that it does not necessarily have to be removed as long as it remains undisturbed.

The pivotal point in the regulations is that people must be aware of the presence of asbestos. A professional survey must be done of each building with the resulting report covered with all staff and anyone who contemplates doing repairs or renovations. The report must be kept available on the premises at all times and must be updated every year. All buildings must be in compliance with this act!

At this time Presbytery and Conference are studying the best way to have the surveys done and just how to pay for them. As it is bound to take some time to cover all the church buildings in the Presbytery, priorities must be set.

Accordingly would you please supply the following information to the Property Committee of Northern Waters Presbytery before 15th December 2011.

1) Are you planning renovations to the church or manse by the end of 2012?

2) Are you now aware of the presence of asbestos in your buildings?

How?

Where?

- 3) When was the church or manse originally constructed?
- 4) Please provide also records of past renovations or additions including the dates the work was done.
- 5) Have you had a survey for asbestos done in the past?

Please give details.

The most immediate concern is for churches presently engaged in a renovation or major repair, or planning for this by the end of 2011. If you are in this category, please notify me immediately by telephone or e-mail.

Yours sincerely,
Sue Scottinwood
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