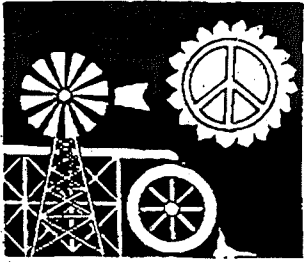


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Durham Nuclear Awareness

Box 2331, Oshawa, Ontario, L1H 7V6 Tel/FAX 905-725-1565

January 3, 1995

Hon. Bud Wildman
Minister of Environment and Energy
135 St. Clair Ave. West
12th floor
Toronto, ON
M4V 1P5

By FAX: 416-323-4682

Dear Mr. Wildman,

As you know, Durham Nuclear Awareness strongly supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Environmental Standards (ACES) on an improved standard for tritium in drinking water. The primary recommendation of ACES to lower the tritium standard to 100 Bq/L immediately and 20 Bq/L within five years was a reasonable compromise between zero discharge and the current unacceptably high level of tritium pollution being released by Ontario Hydro and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL). For conflict of interest and betrayal of public trust, we demand your resignation for the recent decision to allow a level of 7,000 Becquerels per litre for tritium in drinking water.

As Minister of both Environment and Energy, you are in a clear conflict of interest, inasmuch as you are responsible for environmental standards as well being the Minister to whom Ontario Hydro reports. Your support for Ontario Hydro has clearly blinded you to your duty to protect public health by putting reasonable controls on environmental contamination. Resignation is your only honourable recourse. In addition, in order to prevent similar conflicts in the future, the government should separate the Environment and Energy portfolios.

After you released the ACES report in May 1994, you received over 2,000 letters and cards of support for its recommendations - mostly from citizens of Ajax and Pickering concerned about tritium emissions from the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station. The ACES recommendations have generated more response from the public than any other single issue during your tenure as Minister of Environment and Energy. You have shown contempt for this massive outpouring of public support, as well as for the recommendations of your own advisory committee.

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Based on a re-evaluation of radiation risk made by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP), your Ministry proposed to lower the tolerable level of tritium in drinking water from the current 40,000 Bq/L to 7,000 Bq/L. After more than four decades of research, the ICRP found that it had been underestimating the cancer-causing effectiveness of radiation by a factor of about five. However, the key observation that ACES made was that the ICRP-based level was based on an expected one-year exposure. Assuming an average 70-year life expectancy, ACES therefore recommended a 70-fold reduction in the allowable amount of tritium. Thus ACES recommended an immediate reduction to 100 Bq/L, with a further reduction to 20 Bq/L within five years. For the first time in Canadian history, ACES was recommending a truly health-based limit for emissions of a radionuclide.

You boast in your news release of December 22 that you are setting a lower interim drinking water standard for tritium. However, you know full well that the 7,000 Bq/L level was already supported by Ontario Hydro, Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. and their nuclear industry allies. Meeting the 7,000 Bq/L objective will not require any emissions reduction or installation of any pollution reduction equipment at any Ontario Hydro or Atomic Energy of Canada Limited nuclear facility.

You also note in your December 22 news release that Ontario Hydro...

"...has made a corporate commitment to control its tritium discharges so that levels at water treatment plants near its facilities stay below 100 Bq/L on an annual average basis".

Annual averaging is a deliberately misleading approach, designed to conceal very large peaks of tritium in nuclear facility emissions. As you are well aware, the ACES recommendation was for a 100 Bq/L limit AT ANY POINT IN TIME, not as an average figure for a week, and certainly not as an annual average. Ontario Hydro and AECL can in fact release far more tritium pollution than they already do, and local drinking water intakes would still be within an annual average of 100 Bq/L.

You have asked the federal government to reduce limits for radioactive emissions. This is a cynical attempt to avoid responsibility for the action that you have taken. As you know, changes to dose limits in response to ICRP recommendations are already under way at the federal level, as is the review of the Drinking Water Guidelines for radionuclides. You had the chance to ensure that the standard for tritium would be tightened beyond

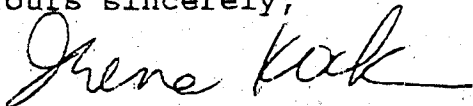
what the industry itself is willing to accept, but instead you caved in to their pressure. Your attempt to pass the responsibility to the federal government is typical provincial/federal buck-passing -- a cynical and hypocritical political manoeuvre.

Your decision is a complete capitulation to Ontario Hydro -- putting their financial savings ahead of public health and safety. As you know, in August, Ontario Hydro told your Ministry that it could cost over a billion dollars to upgrade its nuclear stations to meet the standard recommended by ACES. We believe that this was an attempt to blackmail you and your government -- and it obviously succeeded. Knowing how blackmailers operate, we must ask ourselves what they will demand of you next. As Hydro admitted, the tritium standard would have set a precedent for other radioactive pollutants from nuclear plants -- in particular noble gases. Ontario Hydro will have saved money, but those of us who live close to the nuclear plants will pay with increased risks of developing cancer, birth defects and other diseases from exposure to unacceptably high levels of radioactive pollution.

It is sad that as an NDP Environment and Energy Minister you have become a puppet of Ontario Hydro and the nuclear industry. However, perhaps it should be seen as a new aspect of government policy, consistent with the Premier's recent promotion of CANDU reactor sales to China. This would also explain your opposition to the modest reforms of nuclear emergency planning proposed by your colleague, David Christopherson.

In conclusion, we want you to know that we will do our best to inform the public about this indefensible and unforgivable decision.

Yours sincerely,



Irene Kock

c.c. Advisory Committee on Environmental Standards
 Jim Wiseman, MPP Durham West
 Sean Conway, Liberal Energy Critic
 Leo Jordan, Conservative Energy Critic
 Premier Bob Rae

