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Mr. Norman Rubin
Director, Nuclear Research
Energy Probe Research Foundation
225 Brunswick Ave.
Toronto, Ont.
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Dear Mr. Rubin:

As you are aware, the federal government has the primary jurisdiction of nuclear issues, with both the technical expertise to evaluate radiation health risks, and the legal mandate to regulate discharges from nuclear facilities. In this context, Ontario relies upon the advice of expert staff in Health Canada regarding the effects of radiation on human health.

Nevertheless, as a result of concerns raised about the validity of the existing objective for tritium of 40,000 Becquerels per litre (Bq/L), my ministry proposed a revised tritium objective. I subsequently asked the Advisory Committee on Environmental Standards (ACES) to review the rationale documentation and to consult with the public. Having reviewed the report of ACES, and considered the issues raised by the committee, I have taken the following actions.

Firstly, I have established a new interim Ontario drinking water objective for tritium, of 7000 Bq/L, reduced from the current 40,000 Bq/L objective.

Secondly, in light of the federal responsibilities, I have requested my federal colleagues at Health Canada and Natural Resources, act to reduce allowable radiation limits nationally and consider the matters raised by ACES.

More specifically, I have written to Anne McLellan, federal Minister of Natural Resources responsible for the Atomic Energy Control Board (AECB), to request her commitment to expedite the reduction of the allowable radiation dose. In 1990, the International Council on Radiation Protection (ICRP) reduced the recommended allowable annual dose to the public, excluding background and medical/dental x-rays, to 1 millisievert

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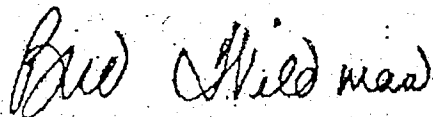
(mSv) per year. The AECB continues to use 5 mSv per year, although actual operating emissions at Ontario Hydro facilities are much below this level. In addition, I have referred the ACES report to Diane Marleau, Minister of Health, requesting that the issues ACES has raised be considered in the development of the revisions to the Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines (CDWG) for radionuclides. Ontario, the other provinces and the federal government work together to develop CDWGs. Typically, Ontario adopts the CDWGs as the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives.

In my view, ACES has provided an important perspective as a result of their review and public consultation on the tritium drinking water issue. They have raised a number of policy considerations, in particular relating to the difference in risk levels used for regulating radionuclides and risk levels used for industrial chemicals and pesticides. These issues warrant extensive national debate.

Finally, I would like you to know that I have discussed the ACES recommendations with the president of Ontario Hydro. As result, Ontario Hydro has made a corporate commitment to continue to control their tritium discharges so that levels at water treatment plants, near their facilities stay below 100 Bq/L on an annual average basis. They will be reporting publicly on their performance record in this regard.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



C.J. (Bud) Wildman
Minister