

Letter to Justin Trudeau:

A policy vacuum for Ottawa's radioactive waste

For immediate release

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Montreal. Thirty five prominent Canadians, including Chiefs of First Nations, leaders of major public interest groups, elected officials, cottagers scientists and doctors, have written a collective letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau asking him to stand up for the health and safety of Canadians by suspending three ill-considered projects to abandon long-lived radioactive wastes beside major water bodies like the Ottawa and Winnipeg Rivers.

The authors of the letter point to a fundamental problem: the federal government has never developed a policy for the long-term care of its radioactive wastes other than irradiated nuclear fuel. That policy vacuum is allowing a consortium of private nuclear multinational corporations to adopt quick and dirty approaches to radioactive waste "disposal" that will surely jeopardize future generations.

The letter challenges Trudeau stop the consortium's ill-considered plans and to initiate a broad consultation with First Nations and other Canadians to formulate a federal policy on caring for radioactive wastes other than irradiated nuclear fuel. In the 1980s and 1990s, public hearings were held in five provinces over a ten year period to develop a policy for managing irradiated nuclear fuel from nuclear reactors, but for other types of post-fission radioactive wastes there is no federal policy. Such a policy must be tailored to protect the health and safety of Canadians and the environment, not to suit the convenience of the nuclear industry.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) is supposed to conduct an environmental assessment on each of the three projects, but the CNSC is not sufficiently independent of the industry it regulates, according to a federal Expert Panel Report published in June. "In its 17 year history, the CNSC has never refused to grant a licence to any major nuclear facility. Not even once," said Dr. Gordon Edwards, President of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility.

"The CNSC has shown how out of touch it is with the public," said Gilles Provost, a well-known science journalist, "by failing to disseminate pertinent information in major centres like Ottawa, Montreal and Laval. These cities take their drinking water from the Ottawa River, and there could be a huge radioactive dump on the River in just a year or two."

Ginette Charbonneau, a physicist with the Ralliement contre la pollution radioactive, says "The government has to give ordinary Canadians a chance to educate themselves about these radioactive wastes and their dangers. Citizens should be asked to help formulate principles and directives for the long-term management of these wastes based on health and safety, rather than the convenience of the industry. We need a federal policy."

Text of the letter to Trudeau (in English): http://ccnr.org/Trudeau_pack_5_e.pdf

Text of the letter to Trudeau (in French): http://ccnr.org/Trudeau_pack_5_f.pdf

For more information:

Gordon Edwards, mathematician, (514) 489-5118 or (514) 839-7214

Ginette Charbonneau, physicist, (514) 246-6439

Gilles Provost, scientific journalist, (514) 523-5704 ou (514) 773-5704