

Mr. Barclay Howden
Director-general
Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

Dear Mr. Howden:

I wrote you more than three months ago (on Feb. 2) to express my concern about the apparent decision of CNSC staff to allow a substantial amount of the contamination to remain in the ground under Cameco Corporation's UF₆ facility in Port Hope. In January, your agency gave the company permission to pour concrete for a new floor, even though it had removed only the top two feet of contaminated soil (It had measured contamination as deep as 8 metres.).

I wrote: "I am respectfully asking you for the reason your agency did not make Cameco clean up 100 per cent of the contamination that its negligent practices allowed to leak onto our town's waterfront."

I did not get a direct answer. Instead, your staff sent me copies two letters you sent to Cameco, including one of Jan. 25, 2008, in which you authorize Cameco to install new equipment and structures, but also ask it to justify its determination of the amount and properties of the soil remaining under the building. That seemed to be a caveat on your complete agreement to allow the company to leave all that contamination in the ground.

I have heard nothing since. I was therefore surprised to hear Andy Thorne, general manager of the facility, give a briefing to the Municipal council of Port Hope last night (May 20), in which he said Cameco's reconstruction of the UF₆ floor has the complete agreement of the CNSC and there is no need to clean up any more soil under it.

He did not indicate Cameco has been given any directive from your agency to clean up any of the soil outside the footprint of the building either. As you know, two plumes of the leak have carried an unspecified amount of uranium, fluoride and arsenic into Lake Ontario, which seems to constitute a violation of Section 36 of the Fisheries Act.

I therefore have three questions of the CNSC staff, and I would appreciate a speedy answer:

1. Has your agency informed the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans about the possible violation of the Fisheries Act, which you learned about from Cameco on May 14 in Ajax?
2. Can you explain the technical, economic and environmental justification for the CNSC staff accepting Cameco's argument that removing any more soil will undermine the footings of the UF₆ building? How is that consistent with your mandate to protect the environment?
3. How do you respond to the suggestion that the CNSC appears to be letting commercial considerations trump protection for the environment?

Thank-you for considering my questions, and I look forward to a reply.

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