

Mr. Barclay Howden
Director-general
Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

Dear Mr. Howden:

Allow me to say that, generally, I have been impressed with the way your agency is handling the spill of toxic and radioactive materials at Cameco Corporation's fuel conversion facility in Port Hope. The Commission has challenged the company to clean up more of the contamination than it originally proposed, and CNSC staff have paid many visits to the site to ensure that the full extent of the spillage is plotted and dealt with.

I am writing to express my concern, however, by the apparent decision of CNSC staff to allow a substantial amount of the contamination to remain in the ground under the UF₆ facility. The company announced in Port Hope this week that only the top 2 feet of soil has been removed, and the CNSC has given it permission to proceed with pouring concrete for a new floor.

That means at least 60 per cent of the contamination will remain under the building, despite the fact that uranium and arsenic were detected as deep as 8 metres. The company gave no reason for this decision, and 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.

Without any explanation, we are left to wonder if the CNSC is repeating the mistakes the AECB made years ago when it allowed Eldorado to deposit radioactive waste all over our community – a mistake that the taxpayers of Canada are on the hook for \$260 million to correct.

At a recent (Jan. 28) public forum, Cameco executives made some worrisome admissions. No, they cannot guarantee that the contamination, which is spreading out over its site like an expanding ink blot, has not already reached Lake Ontario. Yes, they are pleased with the CNSC decision on the building because taking more dirty soil out from under it might have weakened the foundation of the building.

It is worrisome that, more than six months after the leak was discovered – by accident, apparently – this company still does not know how far it goes. It is worrisome that commercial considerations seem to be determining the extent of the clean-up.

As the nuclear regulator, we need you to explain why Cameco is not being made to clean up what it spilled. All of it, including what has leached out more than 130 metres from the building itself.

I am also curious why CNSC staff made this decision, and not the Commissioners. At the December and January meetings where this was discussed, Ms Keen made clear that the

Commissioners wanted to personally make decisions on every aspect of the remediation. Why was that not followed in this case?

In reply to my questions, Cameco spokesperson Doug Prendergast said Cameco has said all along that it will do “some limited soil removal” but that full-depth removal of soil is not needed. That is still the company’s position. He admitted that the initial clean-up plan submitted to the CNSC did not mention removing any soil, and the CNSC has pushed for the company to do that. But extracting only 2 feet seems minimal and, in the circumstances, morally and socially irresponsible. Is the CNSC going to allow the company to avoid cleaning up the two plumes of contamination that have spread out across its site, heading for the lake?

I hope you can answer my questions. People in Port Hope have not been successful over the years in getting explanations that allow us to understand the actions of the nuclear regulator. We hope this will change.

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

John Miller
Port Hope
905-885-5553
semiller@sympatico.ca