



Conseil provincial des femmes du Québec
Provincial Council of Women of Quebec

October 2014

I write on behalf of Le Conseil provincial des femmes du Québec/The Provincial Council of Women of Quebec (CPFQ-PCWQ) which is a non-partisan organization of Québec women, working together to improve the well-being of women, their families and Québec society.

CPFQ-PCWQ is a Federate of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) which represents many thousands of Canadians through our Federation of 15 Local and 6 Provincial Councils of Women as well as 20 Nationally Organized Societies. This National Council, founded in 1893, has forwarded a Brief to the Federal Government each year with proposals for legislative changes directly addressing concerns of grassroots women's organizations across the country. At each Annual Meeting, resolutions are adopted which may also have provincial ramifications, and each Provincial Council is urged to bring these matters to the attention of its own Provincial Government.

Since the formation of the CPFQ-PCWQ in 1998, it has approached the Government of Québec with resolutions advocating changes or additions to existing legislation as well as proposals for new legislation. These resolutions have addressed the Council's concerns with a variety of issues in the health and social services as well as environmental issues.

Since the 1970s Councils of Women at every level have expressed ongoing concerns about the dangers of nuclear energy throughout its entire life-cycle, from mining and milling uranium to radioactive emissions and the disposal of hazardous waste. NCWC and the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (PCWO) have made numerous presentations to various Boards and Commissions, for instance the Seaborn Commission in 1997.

Specifically in 1974 NCWC called for 'A Reduction of the Widespread Placement of Nuclear Electric Generating Plants; in 1980 NCWC urged the Government of Canada to call a moratorium on Uranium mining and that no further licences be issued, while at the same time calling for a moratorium on the development of nuclear power and that no licences be granted for new nuclear reactors; and in 1997 NCWC urged the Government of Canada 'to reject as unsafe the Atomic Energy of Canada (AECL) "concept" for the burial of high-level nuclear wastes in the Precambrian shield' as well as raising several other concerns about dealing with the energy future of Canada. This policy was further updated and strengthened in 2004 with a request that the Government of Canada should 'do all that is in the government's power to prevent the expansion of the nuclear industry in Canada (and) encourage the Provinces to phase out the nuclear plants at the end of their cycle.'

In 2008 the National Council of Women of Canada adopted as policy that:

- a) the mining of high grade uranium be phased out, in tandem with the phase-out of nuclear plants at the end of their life cycle
- b) the mining of low grade uranium not be allowed as a replacement for high grade uranium
- c) in the interim, active mines and mills be made safe and abandoned mines be cleaned up and secured.

This policy is based on scientific research showing that uranium mining and milling operations release radionuclides, volatile organic compounds, smog, acid rain precursors and greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and cause pollution of surface and groundwater. Moreover Environment Canada and Health Canada had determined that the effluent from uranium mines and mills is a toxic substance as defined by the Environmental Protection Act and fish, wildlife and plants in the vicinity of uranium mines have been contaminated by radioactive materials posing a risk to consumers of food grown nearby.

In 2010 members of CPFQ-PCWQ expressed their concern about the proposed plan by Bruce Power in Ontario to ship 16 very large deteriorating, radioactive steam generators from its nuclear reactors at its Lake Huron site of operations, through the Great Lakes and along the St. Lawrence River and by ocean to Sweden, for recycling and sale into an unrestricted market. As the proposed route of this dangerous shipment passed directly through Québec we were extremely concerned about it and wrote to then Premier Charest to express this concern, Our sister Council in Ontario (PCWO) was strongly opposed to this plan, and made a submission to this effect to the meeting of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission in September that year.

NCWC and its affiliated Provincial Councils have long supported a policy of using the "*precautionary principle*" when assessing projects that may well put human health and safety and the environment at risk.

It is noticeable that the Grand Council of the Crees has already declared a ban on uranium exploration and mining in a vast territory of northern Québec and the Assembly of First Nations and Labrador has declared total opposition to uranium mining in any of the 43 communities they represent. Many doctors and medical associations have called for a ban on uranium mining in Québec as have major environmental groups throughout the Province.

CPFQ-PCWQ and Councils of Women across Canada are proud to join with these and many other groups in opposition to the exploration and mining of uranium in Québec.

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