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To: The Members of the Quebec Commission On Uranium Mining in Quebec

From: James V. Penna Ph.D,

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I am taking this opportunity to reflect upon some of my experience over the last 34 years since the founding of ICUCEC in 1980:

The founding of ICUCEC was a response to the Cluff Lake report (January 1, 1978) that opened up a new era in uranium mining in Northern Saskatchewan. The report failed to include the many concerns of Northerners and rebuked many Church officials for not participating. In fact the Churches through the then existing ICEC—Inter-Church Energy Committee – worked tirelessly helping Northerners prepare their briefs. It was quite telling, twenty years later at a hearing in Saskatoon, that northern leaders were complaining that their concerns voiced at the Cluff Lake hearings were still not being heard! Although baseline health studies were requested by figures such as Dr. Rosalie Bertell, none were undertaken.

After attending many hearings and making presentations to panels it has been my experience that the uranium mining agenda both of the Industry and of governments, Provincial and Federal, has continued to move ahead despite all the legitimate ethical, environmental, social, and economic issues raised.

An ethical analysis based on a holistic and objective respect of nature was always marginalized in favor of a utilitarian self-serving industrial economic approach. In a verbal exchange between a former CEO of Cameco and myself, I was abruptly told that they also have an ethics. In other words, good and bad are all relative or in the eye of the beholder! In the early years, presenters were ridiculed when they advocated the many new energy alternatives that were developing. Now, even nuclear advocates are piggy backing the nuclear industry onto the alternatives.

The environmental issues were many. Here are but a few examples. There was and still is the contamination with high levels of arsenic. This was brought to the attention of panels by the late professional uranium explorer and miner, Mr Jiri (George) Strnad. At first the issue was ignored and then it was acknowledged and experts were brought in to deal with it. However arsenic still continues to proliferate in waste tailings. Subsequent episodes of accidental releases of molybdenum and selenium show that it is not only highly toxic radioactive waste being released into the environment but even other dangerous chemicals that are used, generated or released.

At Cluff Lake, Amok (Areva) was found to be releasing contaminated wastewater downstream while they were testing upstream. To the credit of CNSC (Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission) inspectors, this was discovered on one of their visits.

However, given the nature and number of uranium mining operations and the limited CNSC inspection personnel available, it is impossible to have ongoing inspection. Hence CNSC has to rely on self-reporting by the uranium mining companies. The Saskatchewan Department of the Environment is even less capable of doing on site inspection.

In the early 1980s, at the Cluff Lake operation highly toxic liquid tailings were placed into concrete vaults and then stored in large metal buildings. They had to be removed to the outside because of the build-up of dangerous levels of radiation. Once outside and placed on a pad, and due to frost and heaving, they began to leak toxic liquids. In order to deal with them Amok (Areva) used the excuse that they wanted to extract gold from the waste. So they ran the waste through the mill and then proceeded to dispose of it into their open liquid waste lagoons and then simply dumped the empty casks into the same lagoons where they are still located today.

In June, 2011 I attended a hearing in Saskatoon by a panel of experts from Virginia that came to study uranium mining in Saskatchewan. An Areva official admitted that one of the issues they are facing with the decommissioning of their Cluff Lake operations is seepage from a tailings lagoon contaminating a nearby fen. When asked how this was being dealt with the reply was that they were trying to create a diversion of the flow from the lagoon. The Virginian panel member rhetorically asked, "For how long . . . for eternity? "

The Tailings Management Facilities (TMF) at Cameco's Key Lake operation have been compromised and were found by a University of Saskatchewan research project to be contaminating waters 10 kilometers down stream. When ordered to correct the problems Cameco took advantage of the situation to enlarge the Tailing Management Facilities to hold even more liquid wastes.

It is worthy of note that one of our ICUCEC stalwarts Maisie Schiell had to seek information about the Cluff Lake operation through the U.S Freedom of Information Act. She spent her last thirty years drawing attention to the impact on the biota by alpha emitters from radium in the waste that was being released into the environment. On her deathbed she wrote the following letter:

Maisie Schiell
June 7, 1915 – May 21, 2008

To Saskatchewan Citizens:

As I lie on my deathbed I have an urgent message for Saskatchewan citizens in our democracy where we citizens are responsible for what our governments are doing.

Our governments are allowing the mining development of extremely high-grade uranium. Nowhere else in the world are such dangerous, radioactive, high grade ores mined the milling of which inevitably leaves radium- 226 in sediments in the near-by lakes.

It is up to us citizens to find out how this could seriously affect future life in the environment, and after a number of centuries seriously affect human life.

We need to understand this by self-study if possible. (We are not learning this in the education systems.)

I beg Saskatchewan citizens to find out more about this. (I have spent over 30 years trying to.)

Maisie Shiell

Maisie Shiell's plea highlights a major problem: an intentional agenda not to inform the public of what is actually the nature of uranium mining and of the entire nuclear chain. There is widespread ignorance about the nature of the uranium industry. Many people are easily swayed by slick and well-crafted public relations efforts of the uranium industry players.

On the granting of licenses to uranium mining companies the rules and regulations of CNSC required that any significant changes to the original approved project would trigger a new environmental hearing. At the JEB pit which was a pit created by open pit mining at the MacArthur Lake site, new significantly different proposals for the pit were approved without any new hearings. ICUCEC took the CNSC to court because of their failure to follow their own regulations.

After an extensive examination of discovery the judge accepted to have the case go to court assessing that it was not just a frivolous case. ICUCEC prevailed and the Saskatoon court ruled in its favor. Panic must have set in since this would require the mining operations around the JEB to stop. So Areva as one of interveners applied for a stay of execution until the matter could be appealed. The appeal court, in a hearing in Calgary, overturned the decision. So ICUCEC proceeded to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, but it refused to hear the case. The Saskatoon Court hearing was clearly based on the issue of the failure to follow the regulations, however the decision in the Calgary Court of Appeal was based on economic considerations. Ironically the issue was clearly a point of contention since many decisions by CNSC always contained direct or indirect reference to the contentious matter and stating that all regulations were fulfilled. Unfortunately this is probably no longer an issue now since thousands of environmental assessments have been waived or greatly limited with the granting of long-term licenses.

The sad and depressing experience over the years is that the CNSC has proven to be as much an advocate for furthering the nuclear industry as the nuclear industry itself. This has been the experience of many other participants in public hearings. Public participation has been systematically eroded and all but eliminated and exists in name only. Announcements and documentation for upcoming hearings are available on very short notices with untimely and inconvenient dates for hearings. With next to no money individuals and groups are hard-pressed to find the time and resources to prepare and do an adequate evaluation and prepare briefs. ICUCEC has received minimal grants in the past. Recently, however, after being told that a grant that was first approved, it received notice that money was no longer available. CNSC in fact failed to provide the documentation for which ICUCEC was waiting several years, then suddenly, just recently, a hearing date was announced. The short notice of thirty days to examine documents which took months, if not years, to prepare is

certainly not enough for a thorough study. On such short notice it is impossible to engage a professional expert to prepare a brief, as ICUCEC was planning.

In several reports from a the MacArthur River Panel which held hearings in the 1990's, despite the well-intentioned recommendation of the Panel to proceed with the proposed mining operation only under certain conditions, the Saskatchewan Government appeared to be only interested in receiving the possibility of a go ahead. Government permission was then granted for mining to proceed without requiring all the recommended conditions. One of the conditions in the MacArthur River Project, for example, was to delay any activity for 5-years to deal with some serious issues.

Several years later, in a private conversation Dr. Don Lee who was the Chairperson of the MacArthur River Hearings told me that every woman who appeared before the Panel was opposed to or had serious concerns about the MacArthur River project.

The unfortunate firing of the former CNSC President Linda Keen and replacement by the current President Binder , who is obviously a strong advocate of things nuclear, openly highlights the influence of the federal Government and the bias of the CNSC. When this occurred, a fellow student and former campus colleague of mine who was a past member of the CNSC confided to me that he was very concerned about what was transpiring at the CNSC. When I learned that Mr. Kevin Scissions, who was an official staff member of CNSC in charge of monitoring Northern Saskatchewan uranium mines and is now retired, was invited by nuclear advocates to speak in Virginia, I was not surprised!

On the social front the communities in Northern Saskatchewan have suffered from the divisions in their communities. Because of the desperation, due to lack of work, some have embraced and financially benefited from the nuclear industry. Others who oppose are often ostracized and sometimes feel threatened.

The uranium companies have been very aggressive in winning over aboriginal communities with community grants, educational materials and scholarships, and by quietly and sometimes openly attending community meetings and holding information sessions across the north. These public relations efforts are not restricted to the north. Saskatoon has been aggressively targeted in order to guarantee their social license for a nuclear agenda. They even seek out local artists and offer money for acknowledgment as sponsors. Over the years the industry has attempted to win over even clergy from various denominations by hosting meetings or trips to northern mines. They have a very aggressive bill board which depicts the company as a good corporate citizen contributing to the well-being of society, even to the point of helping to fight cancer! They do not refer to what they do; effectively, only name imprinting.

The economic costs are yet to be computed. Despite the royalties, jobs and immediate financial benefits, the long-term costs cannot be calculated. Consider the irremediable and uncontained waste found in the historical legacy mines around Uranium City, the yet unproven longevity of faulty and already compromised tailings management facilities at the so-called transitional mine at Cluff Lake and current operations at MacArthur River, McClean Lake, Key Lake and Cigar Lake.

The companies are anxious to have the monitoring and responsibility for the spent mines and tailings management facilities revert to the Province as quickly as possible under the Provincial Industrial Reclamation Act. Areva is anxiously awaiting to divest itself of any responsibility for the Cluff Lake operations. The province of Saskatchewan will then be responsible for any leaking lagoons and other radioactive waste containment.

One of the major discoveries by members of ICUCEC in the past was to clearly demonstrate the connection between Canadian uranium and nuclear weapons production. Despite denials, records show that Cameco Corporation had direct business relationships with facilities fabricating nuclear materials for weapon production in the US. This is not to mention that the stockpile of depleted Canadian uranium in US facilities is the source of many nuclear tipped rockets and bullets used in such places the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and other theatres of war.

Finally, the irony of uranium mining in Saskatchewan is that Canadian export of uranium is being returned to us by way of radioactive fall-out from Fukushima and contamination of Pacific and the west coast of Canada. As an anti-nuclear advocate has stated, "when you export uranium, you export cancer." What Canada has exported is now being imported! And we can do nothing about it: Only God can save us! Contrary to what Ontario Power Generation wants us to believe, anti-radiation pills will not work after the fact.

There is only one solution: stop the mines - keep uranium in the ground!

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement. I wish you well in your deliberations and greetings to the citizens of Quebec.

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