

Environmental groups demand censored nuclear risk study

August 19, 2015 (Ottawa) - Environment groups are asking the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) today to release a suppressed study detailing the weaknesses of offsite emergency response at the Darlington nuclear station in the event of a Fukushima-scale accident.

“The CNSC has betrayed the public trust by concealing a study revealing risks to Toronto. The study should be released so these hazards can be addressed transparently and appropriate emergency plans put in place,” said Shawn-Patrick Stensil, a senior energy analyst with Greenpeace.

The CNSC is holding a hearing today in Ottawa on Ontario Power Generation’s (OPG) application to extend the operating life of the four aging Darlington reactors 60 km east of downtown Toronto. The procedural request asks for the suppressed accident study to be released by next month so its findings can be used in public submissions to the second round of public hearings scheduled for November.

“Following the Fukushima disaster citizens asked the Commission to assess whether emergency response in the Toronto could cope with a major accident at Darlington. It is alarming the CNSC would withhold objective information on the public safety risks,” said Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA).

In 2014, the CNSC did release an accident study and claimed it responded to public concern. But according to Access to Information, the public study is profoundly different from the original draft censored by CNSC management. The censored study analyzed the impacts of a Fukushima-scale accident at Darlington, but when apprised of the results, senior management instructed staff to redraft the study to consider a much smaller accident.

“This is yet another example of how CNSC isn’t accountable to Canadians or objective on nuclear risks. It is past time for the next government to clean up the CNSC by insisting that they put the public interest above that of the nuclear industry,” said Dr. Gordon Edwards, president of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility (CCNR).

The groups that filed the request include CELA, CCNR, Durham Nuclear Awareness, Greenpeace, New Clear Free Solutions, Northwatch, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) and Sierra Club Canada.

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