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Environmentalists worry about relationship between Bruce Power and its regulator

Monday, April 13, 2015 (Kincardine, ON) - The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's (CNSC) ambiguous regulatory requirements put Ontarians at risk, say environmental groups presenting at this week's hearings on Bruce Power's request to continue operating the Bruce nuclear station.

"The CNSC's mix of vague regulatory requirements and reliance on industry-produced assessments makes it easy for licencees like Bruce Power to downplay risks and avoid upgrades in safety or emergency preparedness measures. That's why we're calling for more public scrutiny of the Bruce nuclear station," says Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA).

Both CELA and Greenpeace made detailed submissions to this week's hearings chronicling the gaps and loopholes in the CNSC safety standards. They say their review of the most recent and publicly available safety documentation reveals the station's accident risk has increased dramatically and provincial and municipal off-site nuclear emergency plans are incomplete despite years of operation.

"The increasing accident risk and incomplete emergency plans aren't being addressed because the CNSC basically allows Bruce Power to regulate itself. This is unacceptable and dangerous," said Shawn-Patrick Stensil, Senior Nuclear Analyst with Greenpeace Canada.

This week CELA and Greenpeace will ask the CNSC to award Bruce Power a temporary licence so safety and emergency plans can be evaluated before Bruce Power is allowed to proceed with rebuilding the remaining Bruce A reactors.

With eight reactors, the Bruce site is the largest nuclear station in the world. One of the oldest reactors at the Bruce A station was due to close next year and be rebuilt so it can continue operating, but Bruce Power says it delayed this repair work until it secures a new multi-billion dollar power purchase contract with the Ontario government.

"In light of the regulatory gaps, loopholes, incomplete emergency plans and increased risk from the Bruce A reactors, a five-year licence is too long. We need more public scrutiny of the CNSC and Bruce Power before the life-extension of the Bruce A reactors can take place," said Stensil.

Ms. McClenaghan and Mr. Stensil will make presentations to the Commission asking for clearer rules, more public oversight and a shorter licence, later this week.

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