

Trudeau must strengthen federal nuclear safety law say environmentalists

8 March 2016 (Toronto) – In the run-up to the fifth anniversary of the Fukushima disaster, over a dozen environmental groups are asking Prime Minister Trudeau to strengthen Canada’s key nuclear safety law to address weaknesses exposed by the Fukushima disaster and public concern regarding the independence of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC).

“While other countries increased the independence and transparency of their nuclear regulators in the wake of Fukushima, Canada under Harper went in the other direction. It’s time for Canada to catch up and strengthen our nuclear safety legislation,” said Shawn-Patrick Stensil, Senior Energy Analyst at Greenpeace Canada.

In an open letter to the Prime Minister Trudeau, 14 organizations ask for a Parliamentary review of the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act*. The letter reminds the Prime Minister that investigations into the Fukushima nuclear accident concluded it was “man-made” because a lax regulator ignored the known potential for earthquakes and tsunamis in the region.

The groups also say the Harper government’s dismissal of former CNSC president Linda Keen damaged public confidence in the CNSC and exposed conflicts in the responsibilities of the president. Since then the CNSC’s impartiality has been publicly questioned. As an example, the groups cite CNSC president Michael Binder’s criticism of Quebec’s independent environmental assessment board last year after it recommended against uranium mining.

“We’re worried the CNSC has become the cheerleader for the industry it is supposed to regulate. In light of the lessons learned from Fukushima, we urge the Prime Minister to restore the necessary independence and public trust in the CNSC,” said Theresa McClenaghan from the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA).

Beyond strengthening the independence, transparency and public participation opportunities at the Commission, the groups identified five key areas the legislative review should address: upgrades to the CNSC’s legislated approach to environmental assessment; the need to affirm Aboriginal engagement; clarification of the Commission’s role during nuclear emergencies; establishing term limits for licences; and shifting the CNSC to a Ministry without the mandate to promote nuclear power.

“Based on ongoing dealings with the CNSC and lessons from the Fukushima disaster, there’s an urgent need to modernize Canada’s nuclear safety law,” said Mark Mattson president of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper.

The groups who signed the public letter include the Association de protection pour l’environnement des Hautes-Laurentides, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, CELA, Coalition pour que le Québec ait meilleure mine,

Coalition for a Green Clean Saskatchewan, Conservation Council of New Brunswick, Ecojustice, Greenpeace, the Inter-Church Uranium Committee, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper, MiningWatch Canada, Nature Quebec, New Clear Free Solutions, Northwatch.

- 30 -

For more information:

Read the open letter here: <http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/Global/canada/pr/2016/03/Trudeauletter.pdf>

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