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MEDIA RELEASE

Groups Across Canada Call for an Inquiry into the Future of Nuclear Power

Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility

Three Mile Island taught us all that nuclear power is inherently dangerous. With Chernobyl the whole world witnessed the awesome power of a total nuclear meltdown. At Fukushima we are seeing simultaneous partial meltdowns in 3 reactors and 4 spent fuel pools....

Canada's reactors have a different design, but the potential for catastrophe is ever present. It was not an earthquake and tsunami that caused Japan's nuclear catastrophe -- it was the resulting total electrical blackout at the plant: the loss of onsite and offsite power. Such a blackout can be caused in a variety of ways....

Like other countries, Canada needs to reassess the risks and benefits of nuclear technology. This is too important a matter for nuclear engineers alone; it must be a societal decision.

Federal political parties are being challenged by groups across Canada to declare their support for a far-reaching non-partisan Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Nuclear Power in Canada, independent of the nuclear industry and the CNSC, to be launched at the earliest possible date.

As part of that inquiry process, the groups are asking that no new licenses for nuclear power plants – whether new build projects or refurbishment projects, or off-site transportation of nuclear wastes produced by nuclear reactors – be granted until the Royal Commission has concluded its work.

Groups from across Canada are joining together in this appeal in hopes that the people of Canada will be adequately consulted on the future of this inherently dangerous industry. “The basic question is this: do Canadians wish nuclear power production to be expanded or to be phased out?” said Gordon Edwards, President of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility.

“The endorsing groups are unanimous in their view that the Canadian Nuclear Industry, the Canadian Regulatory Regime and the Canadian and Provincial governments have failed to disseminate sufficient objective scientific information about the hazards of nuclear reactors, the specific health dangers of radioactive exposures, and the potential ecological consequences of major reactor malfunctions, in language that citizens and decision-makers can readily understand,” said Michel Duguay, coordinator of le Mouvement Sortons le Québec du Nucléaire.

These groups are also unanimous in their feeling that political accountability and transparency has been insufficient in the nuclear field, as governments have often seemed to depend almost exclusively on the advice of the Canadian nuclear industry and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, without a sufficiently open and democratic process at the political level.

These groups feel that the risks of nuclear power should be assessed not only from the point of view of the physicists and engineers who populate the Canadian nuclear industry and its licensing agency, the CNSC, but also by independent bio-medical experts and people trained in the fields of biology and ecology, as well as experts drawn from the social sciences, who are independent of any promotional bias, and by our democratic institutions of government.

“Most importantly, however, the groups feel that ordinary citizens must have an opportunity to voice their views on nuclear power and to explore the implications of alternative non-nuclear energy technologies and strategies” said Michel Fugère of le Mouvement Vert Mauricie.

Before proceeding any further down the nuclear path, we ask the Canadian government to finally give ordinary Canadians a chance to debate the risks and benefits of nuclear power in relation to its alternatives in a politically meaningful forum.

Additional Background Material:

- (1) List of endorsing groups as of March 31 2011: www.ccnr.org/list.pdf
- (2) “Meltdowns in CANDU reactors” : www.ccnr.org/Melt_CANDU.pdf
- (3) CNSC safety concerns about CANDUs : www.ccnr.org/concerns.pdf

Contacts:

Gordon Edwards, Ph.D., CCNR President, (514) 839 7214

Michel Duguay Ph.D., MSQN Coordinator, (418) 802 2740

Michel Fugère, Mouvement Vert Mauricie (MVM), (819) 532 2073
– see list (www.ccnr.org/list.pdf) for contacts in various provinces