



Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition

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September 1, 2010
Via fax 416 314-7337

The Honourable John Wilkinson
Minister of the Environment
77 Wellesley Street West
11th Floor, Ferguson Block
Toronto ON
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Dear Minister Wilkinson,

**Re: Acting on the Advice of your Drinking Water Advisory
Council regarding a new Ontario drinking water standard for
Tritium**

Congratulations on your new appointment as Ontario's Minister of the Environment at a time when the Province is poised to take so many green environmental policy initiatives.

We are writing to you from the Occupational and Environmental Working Group of the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition about a stricter Ontario drinking water standard for tritium, a measure which our member groups and the Medical Officer of Health of Toronto have advocated. We urge you to act soon on this matter early in your term because the groundwork has been provided in advice from Ontario's Drinking Water Advisory Council's (ODWAC) May 21, 2009 *Report and Advice on the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standard for Tritium* prepared for former Minister Gerretsen. This report, which followed on February 2007 hearings, extensive research and meetings with experts, recommends that the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standard for tritium should be revised to 20 Becquerels per litre (BQ/L) from the current level of 7,000 BQ/L. We strongly support this recommendation.

The ODWAC report provides rationale for the Council's recommendation for this standard as follows:

- the standard relates to health effects from long term chronic exposure,

- is within the range considered by the Council (7 BQL to 109 BQ/L) for a 10 to the minus 6 risk level,
- is based on a running annual average, and,
- is achievable in drinking water without significant cost to the nuclear power industry according to the Canadian Nuclear Association.

Recent recommendations also support lowering the drinking water standard for tritium. Last week, Dr. Patsy Thompson, Director General, Directorate of Environment and Radiation Protection and Assessment for the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, presented their recommendations to significantly lower the standard to 100 BQ/L to an International Scientific Symposium on Human Health and the Biological Effects of Tritium in Drinking Water held at McMaster University in Hamilton. This recommended standard results from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's recent Tritium Studies Project (June 2010), which included consideration of the ODWAC Report.

This is not the first time Ontario has considered changing the standard. In May 1994, the Advisory Committee on Environmental Standards (ACES) concluded after study that Ontario should lower the standard to 100 BQ/L and that this limit be further reduced to 20 BQ/L over five years. We urge you to consider going immediately to the more health protective 20 BQ/L because the nuclear facilities in the Province already routinely achieve this level of safety.

We hope you will act on the advice of your Ontario Drinking Water Advisory Council and implement the most health protective and achievable standard for tritium in Ontario's drinking water. We look forward to hearing from you on this request and would be willing to meet with you and your staff to discuss this.

Yours truly,

Co-Chairs of the Occupational and Environmental Working Group of the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition

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