



International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War Canada

We are committed to the abolition of nuclear weapons, the prevention of war, the promotion of non-violent means of conflict resolution and social justice in a sustainable world.

Letter to heads of the Government of Canada

Dear Honourable Mr. Carney and Honourable Mr. Poilievre,

The recent decision to fund experimental small modular nuclear reactors in concert with the province of Ontario raises many concerns. As an organization of physicians with capacity, expertise, and responsibility for public health, we would like to draw your attention to a couple of points.

We will not dwell on the economic and environmental implications of nuclear technologies that are unproven or the lack of adequate support for alternatives. Our focus is on the link between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the inadequacy of the current regulatory framework to protect public health.

A civilian nuclear industry is essential in providing the critical elements for nuclear weapons production. It builds the required scientific capacity. It provides material and absorbs the weapons' waste stream. Heralded as a source of electricity "too cheap to meter" it has become a mixed blessing and, until recently, less relevant to global energy needs.

Canada's initial foray into the nuclear age was to support the production of weapons. We supported the US, France and the UK to build their arsenals. We exported nuclear technology and capacity to enable India and Pakistan to build their own weapons. Despite this, Canada promotes itself as an avowed proponent of peaceful use of nuclear technology. This is a chimera. The reality is that civilian and military nuclear use are inextricably intertwined.

Thus, the expansion of nuclear power supported by Canada creates conditions for the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. It will create a market for high assay level enriched uranium (HALEU) which will increase the risk of diversion and facilitate enrichment to weapons-grade material.

The nuclear industry is regulated, globally, by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and, nationally, by the Canadian Nuclear Security Commission (CNSC). While it articulates standards designed to protect workers, it has a conflict of interest when it comes to protecting public health. There is increasing evidence that current standards inadequately protect workers and are totally inadequate to protect vulnerable populations.

>There is a need for independent expert assessment of the wider public health implications of the expansion of nuclear power. The CNSC, directed by the Ministry of Mines and Natural Resources, must not be given this responsibility alone. This requires the input of expertise in public health. A process under the leadership of the Public Health Agency of Canada would bring a much-needed balance to the assessments of the current regulatory agency which is viewed as being



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increasingly captured by industry concerns. The fossil fuel industry was never subjected to an appropriate level of scrutiny with public health consequences that we now struggle to mitigate. It is critical that we do not make the same mistake with the nuclear fuel industry.

We would urge, in the strongest terms, that the Public Health Agency of Canada be directed to assess the public health implications of this expansion.

In closing, we highlight our concern that the use of nuclear weapons, whether deliberate or accidental, could create a world that becomes unlivable. More than half the nations of the world support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The only way that we can delink nuclear power from nuclear weapons is to ban them completely.

Canada has not supported the TPNW.

If Canada is serious about the reducing the threat of nuclear power to our collective health, it must support this treaty and work effectively towards nuclear disarmament. Current efforts fall far short of what is necessary.

Otherwise, Canada's lack of caution in the support for nuclear expansion increases the risk that these civilization ending weapons will be used.

We are happy to help with any efforts that provide an independent assessment of the public health implications of current plans for nuclear power expansion in Canada.

Our collective health depends on it.

Sincerely,

John Guilfoyle, MB BAO BCh FCFP
President, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War Canada