

Churches and the Nuclear Industry



**Churches have an extensive history of involvement
in nuclear issues in Canada.**

The **Inter-Church Uranium Committee** (ICUC) was formed in Saskatchewan in 1976 as a result of the hearings into the Warman Uranium Refinery. The group was disbanded at the end of the inquiry in 1979 but was reformed in the early 1980s to provide oversight on the expanding uranium mining industry.

According to their website: *“Without our efforts Saskatchewan would have had been saddled with nuclear reactors, possibly a nuclear waste repository, an even more damaging mining industry and a public ignorant of the long-term environmental effects of radionuclides in Saskatchewan. The committee spearheaded a public education campaign about the dangers of uranium mining. The first major impact of the committee, following a number of public meetings and workshops, was a Joint Statement by Church Leaders in the Province of Saskatchewan (June 1983) calling for a moratorium on uranium mining until more was known about the potential consequences and because of the use of uranium in nuclear weapons. Thirteen church leaders, Anglican, Lutheran, United, Roman Catholic and Mennonites, signed the statement.”*
(<http://www.icucec.org/icucec-history>)

The **KAIROS** network is made up of about eighty churches and community groups across the country including the Anglican Church of Canada, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Christian Reformed Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Presbyterian Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada. Participants come together from a wide range of churches, faiths and community groups to take joint action for social change, including opposing nuclear energy in Saskatchewan. (<http://www.kairoscanada.org/en/who-we-are/members/>)

The **Catholic Bishops of Alberta** released a statement (**Pastoral Reflections of the Catholic Bishops of Alberta on Nuclear Energy, 2009**) raising the same concerns as the anti-nuclear groups in Alberta, especially the inadequacy of the province’s consultation process. The paper states: “People have a right to participate in decisions affecting their own lives. For participation to be meaningful, it needs to be an informed participation. The Alberta Gov’t has commissioned and published a “Nuclear Power Expert Panel Report” drawing on the expertise of engineers, physicists and business professors. This information is certainly helpful. However, those making the decision to introduce nuclear power to Alberta need to hear from more than technological and financial experts. The expertise of other disciplines, including ecology, life sciences, social sciences and ethics need to be drawn upon.”

Closer to home, **Pastor Allan Gairns, Minister of the United Church in Manning** and a town councilor wrote an excellent paper titled: “Why We Should Just Say No To Nuclear Fuel and Fission”. Pastor Gairns states: *“And that (the dangers of uranium outside the Earth’s crust) is exactly what we have experienced with all the spills of mine tailings, heavy water, burst pipes, and other accidents regarding uranium mining, power plants and waste management sites. Nuclear proponents keep telling us that it’s safer now; that the spills and accidents of the past are in the past. The experts say, as they did before the accidents happened that they have learned*

from the past. Technology, they say, has overcome human limitations and error and made the nuclear industry safer. But, what remains is this: we are exposing our living space that God gave us to elements that will kill it.”

Pastor Gairns continues: *“Other denominations by association, through ecumenical coalitions, may have differences in doctrine, but share a concern for God’s creation and humanity’s role as part of the created. In his December 31, 2008 message, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, stated, “God doesn’t do waste!” While, he was talking about waste in general created by a consumerist society, the Archbishop in his video broadcast [YouTube.com] named nuclear waste amongst the many things God doesn’t do.*

Who Is Telling The Truth?

The churches and their congregations banded together over the years to voice their concerns on issues that affect their communities and they are doing so again over nuclear issues in Canada. The Catholic Bishops of Alberta did not attend the anti-nuclear rally at the Legislature on October 27 but the concerns they raise in their Pastoral Reflections paper are identical to those raised by the Albertans who were at the rally.

The churches are praised for their responsible behavior in these matters, and rightly so. However, the community groups raising exactly the same concerns are being denounced as “radicals and fear-mongers”. We are not radicals; we are the farmers that grow your food. We are the people who will be most affected by the reactors.

We knew nothing about nuclear energy one year ago when the Weberville site was chosen over the Lac Cardinal location. We attended the information sessions and started reading everything we could get our hands on. We were encouraged to submit questions to Bruce Power and we did so. We also submitted questions to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), the Alberta Government and to MD of Northern Lights (MD 22). Our confusion and fear grew as the answers started coming in. The answers we received (in writing) from Bruce Power, the CNSC and our three levels of government were contradicting each other. Consider the following:

Bruce Power repeatedly told us there are no emissions from the reactors; we have the brochures. On the other hand, we have a report from the CNSC saying there are emissions from the reactors. Who’s telling the truth; Bruce Power or the CNSC (nuclear regulator)?

In their 2008 Economic Impact Report, Bruce Power claimed 4 reactors would cost \$12 billion while Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) quoted Ontario a price of \$13 billion for each reactor. Four reactors would cost \$52 billion or \$40 billion more than Bruce Power’s estimate. Who’s telling the truth; Bruce Power or AECL?

We asked who would pay the cost overruns. Mel Knight vowed that the risk is borne by investors while Bruce Power responded that: “the Alberta Government will examine this issue, should it apply.” Who’s telling the truth; Bruce Power or Mel Knight?

We asked Bruce Power: “Which regulatory body has certified each of the reactors you are considering?” Bruce Power responded: “The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission”. We asked the CNSC: “Does the CNSC certify each of the reactors Bruce Power is considering?” The CNSC responded: “Please be informed that the CNSC does not certify reactors.” Who’s telling the truth; Bruce Power or the nuclear regulator (CNSC)

Bruce Power, Mayor Callioux and Reeve Tupper all said the project must be supported by the community or it wouldn’t get built. The survey by the MD of Peace showed 70% of their residents opposed the reactors while two surveys of MD 22 showed 84% of residents opposed the reactors. Why will our officials not keep their word?

We’ve been called radicals and fear-mongers, though if you read this paper, you’ll see we made no statement at all. The comments on the front page all come from the churches that we trust. The statements on this page all come from Bruce Power, the CNSC and our three levels of government. Of this group, we don’t know who to trust as none of them will answer our questions anymore. Maybe you should call them and see what they say.

We are simple farmers and stewards of the land trying to leave a healthy legacy to our children. We are well intentioned community members and we support sustainable development. We just want answers and we want the truth. So far, both have been hard to get.

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