



October 11, 2005

Dr. Bill Adamson
805 Acadia Drive
SASKATOON SK S7H 3W2

Dear Dr. Adamson:

Thank you for your letter of September 19, 2005, in which you express concern over the health risks to Saskatchewan uranium mine workers from their exposure to radon progeny in the workplace.

In your letter you cite a number of authorities with respect to the risks presented by radon progeny. I can appreciate the seriousness of health concerns that not only affect the workers directly, but also their children.

Please be advised that my Department agrees with the American National Academy of Science and the International Commission on Radiological Protection that there is no known threshold below which exposure to radon progeny can be demonstrated to be harmless or beneficial.

We agree that there is some uncertainty as to the exact level of risk presented by workers' exposure to radon progeny. It was for this reason that the 2003 SENES study referred to in my letter of August 5, 2004 considered the possibility of an epidemiological study using the best available risk estimates and then repeated the calculations using risk factors of 5 and 10 times higher. SENES' conclusion was that an epidemiological study of uranium miners working in the current Saskatchewan uranium mines was not technically feasible for any of the risk estimates considered. The relatively small number of

workers and the slow levels of radiation to which current Saskatchewan uranium miners are exposed would make any such study statistically invalid.

In addition, the 2003 SENES Study found that workers in modern uranium mines receive more radon progeny exposures in their homes, from natural sources, than they receive at work. Even if an epidemiological study was feasible, it would be impossible to separate the effects of radon exposures in the home from radon exposures received at work.

The 2003 SENES study was reviewed by an outside consultant, Dr. G. Howe, and by representatives of the uranium mines' Occupational Health Committees, Saskatchewan Labour, the Canadian Nuclear safety Commission and the uranium mining companies. These reviews concurred with the SENES' conclusions and recommended that an epidemiological study of modern uranium miners not proceed at this time.

In closing, let me assure you that Saskatchewan Labour continues to monitor the radiation exposures of Saskatchewan miners closely. This monitoring, together with the current government regulations, will ensure the protection of workers' health and safety.

Sincerely,

(signed)
Deb Higgins
Minister of Labour

c: Premier Lorne Calvert
Honourable John Nilson, Minister of Health
Honourable Buckley Belanger, Minister of Northern
Affairs
Honourable Peter Prebble, Minister of Corrections and
Public Safety
Honourable David Forbes, Minister of Environment
Honourable Frank Quennell, Minister of Justice.