

NEWS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUE



The Public Service Alliance of Canada / Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OTTAWA....The Public Service Alliance of Canada has called on the federal government to commission an independent study of all health hazards surrounding the use of video display terminals.

The study should include the long-term effect of such a work environment on the reproductive functions of both men and women, said Alliance Vice-President Bill Doherty in a letter to Donald Johnston, president of the treasury board. The Alliance represents thousands of federal public service employees who operate video display terminals.

Referring to the fact that there has been an "unusually high incidence of abnormal pregnancies," Mr. Doherty outlined the Alliance's position "that requests for temporary work transfers by pregnant video display terminal operators must be granted."

"No medical doctor or scientist at this time will guarantee that no harm will come to an unborn child through the pregnant female continuing to work at a video display terminal. Therefore reassignment during pregnancy is the only safe procedure."

In the letter Mr. Doherty protested the employer's lack of a firm policy of transferring pregnant women who operate video display terminals.

"Occupational health problems surrounding the use of video display terminals have been recognized by labour, employers and some members of the medical profession," the letter said.

"Some ergonomic factors are easily recognizable such as posture problems and visual problems. However, the recognition of problems relating to radiation is in dispute. Scientific data relating to the detection of radiation from video display terminals as of this date is not evident. In spite of this, the phenomenon surrounding the unusually high incidence of abnormal pregnancies continues to grow.

"The Alliance has long been concerned regarding the introduction of this technology without adequate testing. Surely we can draw on experience such as workers' exposure to asbestos, formaldehyde, polychlorinated biphenyls, numerous pesticides and other chemicals and substances that have now been established as carcinogens.

"Our members must not be experimental objects in order to bear the burden of proof in an epidemiological study that may establish the link between this type of work environment and abnormal pregnancies."

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