

## Hydro staff queried on poison comment

VANCOUVER (CP) — Agriculture Minister James Hewitt has ordered an internal investigation of reports that a British Columbia Hydro supervisor told Upper Squamish Valley residents that their children could play with Tordon 10K which are labelled hazardous.

Bill Coutts, Hydro rights-of-way supervisor, admitted in an interview he told residents in the valley about 80 kilometres northwest of Vancouver "it was unlikely any harm would come from

this (children playing with pellets)."

John Sexton, a spokesman for the Crown corporation, said Thursday, Hewitt, who is also a Hydro director, questioned Hydro staff about an article in a Vancouver newspaper Wednesday which carried Coutt's admission. He said Hewitt will be issuing a statement concerning the matter.

Researchers in the United States say Tordon 10K, a pesticide Hydro was using to control brush, may cause cancer and birth defects. A federally-registered label on packages of the chemical specifically states it should be kept away from children and that it could be harmful if swallowed.

Stuart Craig, an officer with the provincial pesticide control branch, said Thursday, a Hydro supervisor may have lied on a permit appli-

cation for the Upper Squamish Valley.

When the corporation first applied to use the chemical in the valley, it said domestic water supplies may be nearby and the application was turned down by Bain Vance, branch head, on January 29.

Coutts later wrote the branch and said the corporation had checked the area and found no domestic water supply was involved in the area where Hydro wanted to apply the chemical.

"Hydro made the claim that they'd checked out the area and Mr. Vance took their word for it," Craig said. "The two statements are contradictory; it would appear he made the first statement without checking the area."

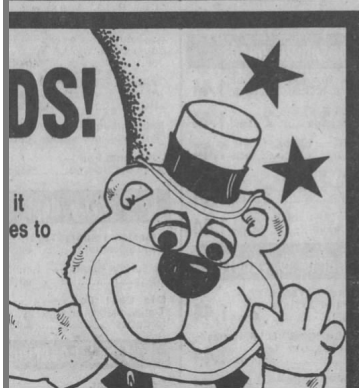
No branch inspector was sent out to the area to verify Hydro's claim and Vance granted the permit May 8, on the basis of Coutt's letter.

Application of the chemical began on property owners' land in the area June 25 but was later shifted to another area after 25 families, who have wells in the area angrily protested the area was frequented by children and available to open-range cattle.

Spraying of the other area, an Indian reservation, started July 4, but was halted by the band three days later.

"This will make us very cautious in the future on applications made by Hydro," said Craig. "We have no way of knowing whether this is a deliberate attempt to get the project going on Mr. Coutt's part or an oversight — it would appear they lied to us up to a point."

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Tue, Jun 28, 2022