

Why is it difficult to establish cause and effect for the GE workers.

GE workers were exposed to multiple toxins, including many compounds now recognized as human carcinogens. Noel Kerin stressed this in his preliminary report to the City and County Health Unit on his findings from the intake clinic.

Although there is now considerable, internationally accepted evidence (IARC) for the current WSIB approach of “one chemical, one cancer”, it cannot possibly do justice to the GE cohort. This is because the potential synergistic effects of the exposures to multiple toxins and/or chronic low-level exposures in humans has not yet been established scientifically. Consider the complexity of what would be needed to do so. First, in animal studies, a huge matrix of different combinations of chemicals at different relative concentrations would have to be tested. Such studies require massive funding and clear results are not guaranteed. From a scientific point of view, it is much easier to look for one chemical, one cancer effects. Workers can be supplied with devices that measure the levels of exposure to workplace toxins and their health followed over time to seek correlations. Monitoring multiple exposures over time is a much more complex experimental design and would need to be guided by the results from the extensive animal experiments to permit a rational selection of what combinations should be monitored. Perhaps all of this will happen in the future but at the moment the only logical course to take is to give the GE workers the benefit of the doubt and assume that their health issues were caused by workplace exposures.