

Atomic Energy of Canada reports record profit

Staff cuts, reorganization, the completion of four reactors and a new atomic cancer therapy machine enabled Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. (AECL) to post a record profit last year — despite a Candu sales slump, reports Alan Bass of *United Press Canada*.

Profits rose 15 per cent to a record \$22.6 million during the 1983 fiscal year, in spite of a drop in revenue of nearly \$97 million, the Crown corporation reports. AECL revenues totalled \$408.6 million during the fiscal year, compared to \$505.5 million during 1982.

"The year has been one of mixed results in difficult times," AECL chairman Robert Despres said in the company's annual report to Energy Minister Jean Chrétien. "However, accomplishments by the company give us a measure of confidence for the future."

Important gains

AECL said its financial performance benefited from the successful completion of four new 600-megawatt Candu reactors in New Brunswick, Quebec, Argentina and South Korea. The company also cut costs by laying off 600 employees and streamlining several operations.

Important gains were also made in the sale of radiation equipment and isotopes, which rose 25 per cent and brought in revenue of \$84.3 million.

The company was especially pleased with prospects for its Therac-25 high energy linear accelerator, used for cancer

treatments. The first unit was shipped to a Toronto clinic this year and another will soon be shipped to a Halifax hospital. AECL said it has orders to build 11 more, five for Canadian customers and six destined for the United States.

Despite the record profit, company officials acknowledged that the international market outlook for Candu reactors would probably remain bleak for several more years. The impact of economic recession had slowed the demand for new energy in Canadian and export markets, Mr. Despres said. Canada has not had a new reactor order in five years.

"While there are indications of a turn-around in the economy, it will likely be some time before economic improvement is reflected in restored business confidence," Mr. Despres said.

"Since increased electric power supply is related to planned growth in business and industrial activity, the prospects of the nuclear sector are a reflection of broader confidence in the economy and will be improved only when this confidence is manifest."

However, the Canadian nuclear industry got a significant boost last month when the federal government freed up \$640 million in loans to Romania, enabling work to resume on two Candu reactors.

Construction was halted last year when the government froze the loans because Romania had defaulted on international debt payments.

Innovative training centre

Former federal Employment and Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy and Manitoba Education Minister Maureen Hamphill recently opened an innovative computer-based technical training facility, the Manitoba Technical Training Centre.

Made possible by a \$454 000-allocation from the federal government's Critical Skills Growth Fund, the centre is the first of its kind in Canada and it will be a major educational centre for technical skills upgrading.

"We are living in an age of rapid technological change," said Education Minister Maureen Hamphill, "and the education system must respond in new and exciting ways. The Manitoba Technical Training Centre is an example of Manitoba's and Canada's response to the changing needs of the workplace."

Excellent example

Mr. Axworthy said the centre is an excellent example of the kind of training facility envisaged when the Skills Growth Fund was created under the new National Training Act.

"I expect this new centre, along with the 26 other Skills Growth Fund projects which I announced recently with the province, will be a significant factor in meeting the technological challenges faced by Manitoba and Canada in the immediate future."

Control Data Canada Ltd has been awarded a contract to operate the centre and to install the company's PLATO computer-based education system.

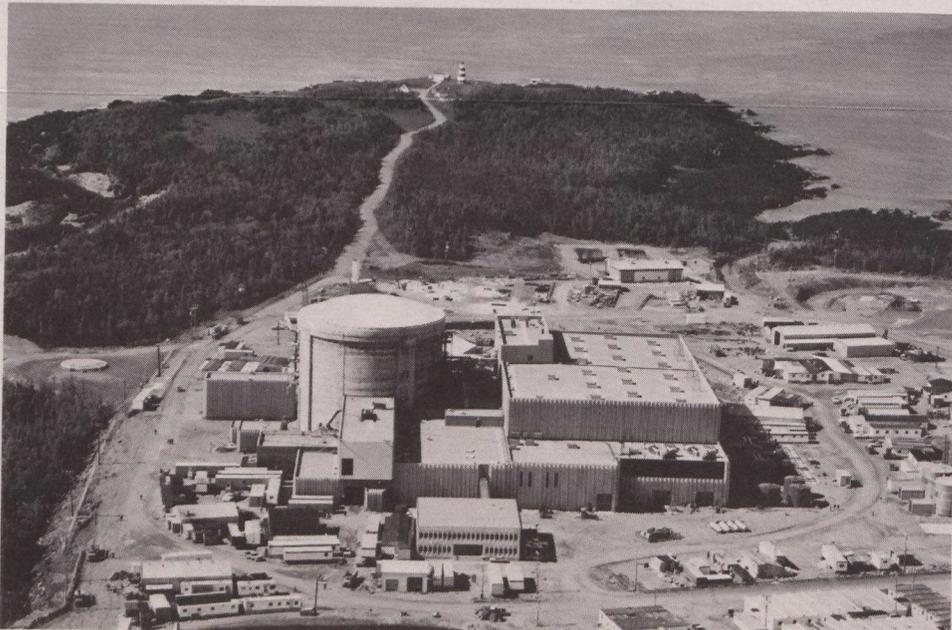
Wide range of courses

Capacity for the centre has been set at 60 students. Courses available through the PLATO system will cover a wide range of technical skills.

With the computer-based system the students will be able to select the courses they need to achieve technical upgrading and will be able to participate at their own pace.

The computer-based system eliminates the need for traditional classroom-style courses allowing a greater diversification of course offerings.

A major aspect of computer-based education is its interactive capabilities. Students must participate with the computer, responding to it either through an easy-to-operate keyboard or by merely touching the terminal screen.



Point Lepreau, Quebec, a 600-megawatt Candu nuclear generating station.

Tom Bochsler