

City of Burien  
City of Tukwila  
City of Des Moines  
City of Federal Way  
City of Normandy Park  
Highline School District

# AIRPORT COMMUNITIES COALITION

October 25, 2000

Mr. Tom Fitzsimmons, Director  
Washington State Department of Ecology  
Ecology Building  
300 Desmond Drive  
Lacey, Washington 98504-7600

VIA FAX: 1-360-407-6006

Dear Director Fitzsimmons:

I am writing to protest, in the strongest possible terms, the removal of Mr. Tom Luster from his role as the Department of Ecology lead Environmental Specialist on the Port of Seattle third runway 401 permit process. The apparent intrusion of politics into this very important environmental process raises very troubling issues and reinforces the widely held perception that inappropriate pressure is being exerted to push this project through the regulatory process.

Earlier this year the Port of Seattle launched an extensive public relations campaign intended to bring pressure to bear on the Department of Ecology to issue the permits required for the third runway project. This campaign has included a number of questionable tactics, including:

- The intervention of Trade and Economic Development Director Martha Choe - at the request of Port officials - that resulted in a May 16 meeting with Governor Locke, Chief of Staff Joe Dear, yourself and Port Executive Director Mic Dinsmore to discuss the third runway permit status.
- Publication of opinion columns critical of the DOE by former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice and Bellevue developer Bob Wallace. The Rice article was authored by a local public relations company under contract to the Port of Seattle - the same PR firm retained by the Port to draft letters "supposedly" from the public to the regulatory agencies in support of the project.
- A secret meeting at Port offices on September <sup>28</sup>27 (the day before the Port withdrew their 401 certification application), between Joe Dear, Ray Hellwig, DOE Northwest Regional Office Director, yourself and Mic Dinsmore to discuss the 401 permit status.
- And finally, the sudden and unjustified removal of Senior Environmental Specialist Tom Luster from the third runway project. Mr. Luster had worked on the third runway permit from the beginning of the project and has served in a professional and even-handed manner, always insisting that science and the law, not politics, guide the permit decision.

Taken together these developments paint a very troubling picture and call into question the integrity of the 401-permit process.

The ACC was notified of the decision to remove Mr. Luster by Ray Hellwig yesterday afternoon. In his message, Mr. Hellwig said that he wanted us to know how Ecology was "moving forward" with the 401 application. He characterized the decision as a workload management issue. While this decision is troubling on its merits alone, Mr. Hellwig's participation in the September 27 meeting mentioned above gives cause for even greater concern.

City of Burien  
City of Tukwila  
City of Des Moines  
City of Federal Way  
City of Normandy Park  
Highline School District

# **AIRPORT COMMUNITIES COALITION**

---

Tom Luster has been involved on the third runway project for the past three years. His knowledge of the water quality and storm water issues surrounding this project - particularly how they related to the Port's permit application - is critically important. In addition to the three years of institutional memory and scientific knowledge, Mr. Luster brings to the project much needed integrity.

The Port will soon, for the third time in three years, submit application for environmental permits needed to build the third runway were again submitted by the Port of Seattle. Port officials have been quoted as saying that a favorable decision is expected in January. Given the sequence of events set forth in this letter, we understand their optimism.

We demand a stop this unwarranted and improper interference in the permit process. Restore some integrity in the process by returning Mr. Luster to the project immediately.

Sincerely,

Bob Sheckler, Chair  
Airport Communities Coalition

Cc: Governor Gary Locke  
Congressman Adam Smith  
Senator Julia Patterson  
Senator Tracy Eide  
Representative Mark Milosia  
Representative Maryann Mitchell  
Representative Shay Schual-Berke  
Representative Karen Keiser  
Representative Dow Constantine  
Representative Erik Poulsen