

# **What We Heard: Report on Engagement Activities**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) was established in 2002 by Ontario Power Generation Inc., Hydro-Québec and New Brunswick Power Corporation in accordance with the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act (NFWA)* to assume responsibility for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel. Used nuclear fuel is presently safely stored on an interim basis at licensed facilities at nuclear reactor sites in Ontario, Québec and New Brunswick, where it is generated, and at AECL's nuclear research facility in Manitoba.

NWMO's first mandate was to study options for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. In 2005, NWMO completed its study and put forward its recommendation to Government. On June 14, 2007, the Government of Canada selected the NWMO's recommendation for Adaptive Phased Management (APM).

Technically, Adaptive Phased Management (APM) has as its end-point the isolation and containment of used nuclear fuel in a deep repository constructed in a suitable rock formation. Collaboration, continuous learning and adaptability will underpin our implementation of the plan which will unfold over many decades, subject to extensive oversight and regulatory approvals. All aspects of NWMO's work will meet or exceed all applicable regulatory standards and requirements for protecting the health, safety and security of humans and the environment.

APM moves towards a goal Canadians have themselves identified: safe and secure long-term containment and isolation of the used nuclear fuel that we produce with the flexibility for future generations to act in their own best interests. The NWMO now has the mandate to implement the Government's decision.

In this document we outline what we heard during our initial outreach and engagement activities, as we prepare for implementation of APM.

### *Dialogue and Engagement - Our Goal*

The work of the NWMO is premised on the understanding that citizens have the right to know about and participate in discussions and decisions that affect their quality of life, including the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. Citizens bring special insight and expertise which result in better decisions. Decisions about safety and risk are properly societal decisions and for this reason the priorities and concerns of a broad diversity of citizens, particularly those most affected, need to be taken into account throughout the process. A critical component of APM is the inclusive and collaborative process of dialogue and decision-making through the phases of implementation. We are in the early stage of our efforts and will report out regularly on our activities.

## RECENT ACTIVITIES

With the delivery of its recommendation to the Government of Canada in November 2005, the NWMO completed its dialogue with Canadians on a preferred long term management approach for used nuclear fuel. While awaiting the Government's decision on the management approach to be adopted for Canada, NWMO had limited interaction with interested Canadians. With the decision by Government in June 2007, NWMO began the process of reconnecting with those who had been involved in the NWMO's study and those who may well have an interest in, or be potentially affected by, the implementation of APM.

NWMO's dialogue and public engagement efforts are being conducted, iteratively, through a series of stages. Our initial work began in Summer 2007, and continued through to the end of March 2008. Over the course of this period, the NWMO:

- began to reintroduce the organization and its Vision, Mission and Values, to interested Canadians;
- reviewed the government decision, and Adaptive Phased Management to increase awareness and understanding; and
- invited comment on NWMO's draft strategic objectives, and initial direction for the Implementation Plan.

The principal activities during this stage of work included individual briefings, group presentations, meetings of several Citizens' Panels, and outreach through the NWMO website.

### Discussion Documents

To help launch discussion during this phase of work, we prepared a brief concept paper, *Preparing for Implementation*. It outlined our strategic objectives and posed some questions which may be helpful in starting the dialogue. Within this same period, we also released a new corporate brochure, in order to introduce people to the NWMO and Adaptive Phased Management as Canada's approach for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. Highlights from *Preparing for Implementation*, including the seven strategic objectives as described in the document, are outlined below.

***Preparing for Implementation concept paper: A Starting Point for discussion***

We intend to move forward in stages in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, taking the time that is necessary to collaboratively plan and then confirm each step before moving forward together.

As a starting point, the NWMO is working to prepare a plan to guide work over the near term. Like all of our endeavors, this is being done collaboratively and sequentially. We will move one step at a time, ensuring there is a firm foundation for each subsequent step in the process. We want to hear a diversity of voices as we seek advice and receive direction on the design of our processes and the issues to be explored.

Time has elapsed since the NWMO last met with interested individuals, organizations, Aboriginal people and citizens-at-large during preparation of our report to the Government. Now as we begin to assume our implementing role, we would like to invite you to help us take stock and to think through first steps.

In preparing to implement Adaptive Phased Management (APM), we have proposed seven Strategic Objectives to guide our way forward for the next five years. These Strategic Objectives flow from the NWMO's Vision, Mission and Values, and the principles and intentions that Canadians said were important for APM.

- We are seeking to build long-term relationships with interested Canadians and Aboriginal people and involve them in setting future direction.
- We are continuing to build a strong research program designed to broaden NWMO's foundation of technical and social knowledge. This will bring to bear the most advanced international expertise to support implementation of APM.
- We are developing and refining a funding formula and trust fund deposit schedules that address financial surety and long-term program funding
- We are developing processes to ensure the organization and its activities are fully adaptive. This includes continuing to review, adjust and validate plans against factors such as advances in technical learning, evolving societal expectations and values, and changes in energy and environmental policies, composition, volume and form of used nuclear fuel
- We are developing a governance structure that provides Government, the Members (Ontario Power Generation, Hydro Quebec and New Brunswick Power Nuclear Corporation), Board, management, and the public with greater assurance, oversight, advice, and guidance about NWMO activities during the implementation phase.
- We are re-forming NWMO as an implementing organization – one with a full range of social and technical research and environmental and financial capabilities.
- We will collaboratively design a process to select a site, supported by a public engagement program. A later step will involve initiation of a site selection process.

### Individual Briefings and Group Presentations

Through meetings and group presentations, the NWMO provided an historical review of the issue of used nuclear fuel management, the NWMO and the study phase, and an overview of NWMO activities going forward from the Government's decision. Input was invited on all of the NWMO's activities, including the strategic objectives proposed to guide the five-year Implementation Plan. Comments and questions were received, addressed and registered for future analysis. The following table illustrates the range of meetings and group presentations made.

Nuclear site communities including local, provincial and federally-elected representatives, community liaison groups, advisory committees and the Canadian Association of Nuclear Host Communities (CANHC)	We briefed representatives of communities who currently host interim storage facilities for used nuclear fuel concerning NWMO plans. Briefings continue as part of NWMO's efforts to increase and sustain awareness of its activities.
Municipal associations at the national and provincial levels including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Québec Federation of Municipalities, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA), the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM)	We briefed a variety of municipal associations, including speaking at annual conferences, in each of the four provinces involved in the nuclear fuel cycle: New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan. Briefings continue as part of NWMO's efforts to build and sustain awareness among all municipal associations in the nuclear provinces.
Federal and provincial government representatives, Cabinet ministers and Members of Legislative Assemblies, governmental staff	We briefed a variety of government representatives at the federal level and in the four provinces involved in the nuclear fuel cycle. Briefings continue as part of NWMO's efforts to keep governments informed.
National and provincial Aboriginal Organizations, NWMO Elders' Forum and the Niigani working group	We briefed several national and regional organizations distributed across the four provinces involved in the nuclear fuel cycle. Briefings continue as part of NWMO's efforts to reach all national and regional organizations in the four nuclear provinces.
Non-governmental organizations	We briefed a variety of organizations active in the area of the environment and in the faith community. Briefings continue as part of NWMO's efforts to reach all organizations which have expressed interest in this issue.
Nuclear Industry representatives and organizations in Canada and abroad	We briefed the Canadian Nuclear Association and its members, as well as workers in the field. Briefings continue as part of NWMO's efforts to ensure that organizations and worker unions in the field are aware of NWMO's activities and plans.
Academics and practitioners in Canada and abroad working in this area	We briefed a number of academics and convened several small group conversations with practitioners. Efforts continue in this area.
Youth	We made presentations to a number of university classes at their request.
Media	We briefed the Parliamentary Press Gallery, and editorial boards and columnists in the four nuclear provinces. Our

	efforts in this area continue in order to build public and media interest in our work.
Conferences/ Networks/ Roundtables sponsored by others	We participated in a variety of conferences, networks and roundtables sponsored by others, many at which NWMO hosted a booth. Activities ranged from participating in the Fundy Bay Fishermen's Day event in Dipper Harbour, New Brunswick to the Globe environment conference in Vancouver, BC. Our efforts continue in this area.

### Citizen Panels

Citizen Panels, comprised of 15 or so randomly recruited individuals active in their communities, were convened in each of eight locations across the four nuclear provinces (New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan) in order to learn and explore what might be the perspective of citizens at this early stage of work. Panelists reviewed the NWMO's corporate brochure and other communication materials, and discussed the strategic objectives and their expectations of how the NWMO might best translate these objectives into an Implementation Plan. Reports from these meetings are published on the NWMO website.

### Website

The NWMO published its 'concept paper', described above, with an invitation to comment on this preliminary presentation of NWMO's strategic objectives. Website visitors were encouraged to share their thoughts through making a submission or through completing a web survey. NWMO received a small number of comments through these means.

### Multi-party dialogues

The NWMO had planned to hold multi-party dialogues in February in each of the four nuclear provinces, to further explore people's expectations for implementation planning. However, during the course of preparing for the dialogues, many invitees indicated they were unavailable to participate at this time. This led to the decision to defer dialogues until the Fall, at which time the NWMO would have advanced its thinking and be able to share more detailed plans. For invitees who had expressed interest in meeting in February, we extended the offer to meet bilaterally with NWMO and, in the Spring, review and provide input on the draft Implementation Plan which will be mailed out for comment.

## WHAT WE HEARD

Over the course of these activities, we heard a clear message of confidence in the organization and its processes. The NWMO was advised to 'stay the course' in terms of its values and commitment to engagement, openness and transparency, although with some enhancements, such as ensuring that our messages are clearly understood by multiple perspectives. We were also advised to increase the involvement of youth in our work.

There was a consistent message to continue our work and to move to the next phase of engagement. Many organizations expressed interest in working with the NWMO, with some expressing interest in developing protocol agreements to formalize collaboration and communications.

Finally, while there was considerable discussion of the changing energy landscape, including new nuclear build, most suggested to us that NWMO proceed to incorporate implications of new build into our plans for implementing APM. We report out on what we heard in the discussion which follows.

## Direction Received

Engagement to date has identified the following direction, questions and challenges for work going forward.

1. The NWMO received much recognition and support for its engagement processes to date. The NWMO is encouraged to stay the course in terms of its values and commitment to engagement, openness and transparency. There is a considerable expectation that the NWMO will proceed with plans and collaborative processes appropriate for each stage of implementation.
2. The NWMO is encouraged to continue to increase awareness of the plans for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel.
3. The NWMO must involve citizens, Aboriginal peoples, youth and communities early, and sustain this engagement over time.
4. The NWMO must engage young people and must plan for inter-generational transfer of knowledge over the decades of implementation.
5. The NWMO was warned of stakeholder engagement fatigue; stakeholders are tracking many issues with competing demands for time and resources.
6. Capacity-building is important. The NWMO was reminded of the significant time, financial resources and expert support that will be required for capacity-building of potentially affected individuals, organizations and communities.
7. The NWMO was reminded of the need to support municipal councils in ensuring that communities have the information required to support their participation and decision-making in future stages of the project.
8. Engagement with Aboriginal peoples is unique in terms of the legal requirements, their access to resources and cultural sensitivities. Aboriginal peoples continue to remind the NWMO that dialogue

does not constitute formal consultation. Aboriginal peoples want to design and implement their own process, independent of the NWMO. There is interest in developing protocols with some groups.

9. Aboriginal peoples continue to raise the need to interweave Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge with western science in ongoing work.
10. People question the special attention devoted to Aboriginal peoples during the NWMO's engagement program. The questions include "Are Aboriginal peoples being targeted as potential hosts?" and "Is this tokenism?"
11. Government agencies/departments which have regulatory and oversight responsibilities want regular briefings on planned activities in each phase of work in order to keep abreast of NWMO's activities.
12. People question the independence of the NWMO from the nuclear waste owners.
13. Strong regulatory oversight and governance continue to be important. Many recommend implementation of independent peer/third party reviews of NWMO activities.
14. The NWMO was cautioned that the public dialogue to design the site-selection process may be misinterpreted as the start of siting.
15. There is great interest in the siting criteria, especially among nuclear communities and their political representatives.
16. The NWMO should provide a description of the socio-economic effects of the project and its potential to support sustained economic and social enhancements early in the process. Northern communities are interested in the potential for 'economic development,' and job creation, while Aboriginal peoples use the term 'resource sharing' in discussing this issue.
17. The NWMO needs to address the impact of changing nuclear energy policies on the implementation of Adaptive Phased Management, specifically issues such as potential nuclear expansion.
18. The NWMO should provide a clear, concise description of the project. A fundamental question is "Why is such a long time required for implementation?"
19. Many identified the issue of transportation, including the potential impacts to communities along the route, as a key issue.
20. The NWMO needs to communicate its scientific and technical research program and its role in guiding implementation. The work was regarded as very important and needs to be profiled. International collaboration is considered critical in ensuring that the NWMO adopts international best practices and learning.
21. There continues to be great interest in the adequacy of funding/financing of Adaptive Phased Management.
22. There were recommendations to include "security", "environmental stewardship" and "accountability" in the Strategic Objectives.

In beginning to reflect upon this direction, we come to a deeper appreciation of some of the challenges ahead. These include:

**Citizen Engagement:** We note from this direction that although the NWMO has been encouraged to stay the course in terms of its values and commitment to engagement, inherent in this are important challenges going forward. For instance, effective engagement requires both awareness of NWMO and its activities and inclusion of a broad diversity of perspectives, areas in which we were told more work is required. Our Citizen Panelists underlined the unavoidable challenges they see facing the NWMO to build awareness and increase involvement of citizens, including those active in their community, in the early stages of NWMO's work. APM itself, we were told, poses its own challenges of comprehension for citizens, specifically: why the long time frame; and, why the optional storage step.

While NWMO has committed to seek input to the development of important business planning documents, such as its Implementation Plan, the desire of many to proceed more quickly to critical milestones, such as the design of the siting process, and to focus major engagement initiatives on these, will need to be taken into account.

**Trust and Credibility:** We note the importance of NWMO earning the confidence of citizens as an implementing organization whose activities are designed to protect the public interest, in order for APM to proceed successfully. Many, including some Citizen Panelists, suggested this will continue to be challenging for the NWMO given its governance structure.

**Adaptability:** Finally, while APM is an approach that is explicitly designed to be able to adapt to changes in technology and social circumstances which may be encountered during the long course of implementation, we note that there are a range of views about what this adaptability ought to entail. With the prospect of new nuclear build recently introduced into the policy environment, some people we spoke with advocated that the implementation of APM only include the volume and type of used nuclear fuel identified during the study. Most, however, said they expect that APM would adapt to include new used fuel scenarios. We note from this early discussion that ensuring that APM adapts to changing circumstances in a way which continues to enjoy public support, will be challenging and further underlines the need for ongoing dialogue and collaboration through the implementation process to address these differences of perspective.

## **Citizen Panelist Discussion of the Challenges Ahead**

Similar to others we spoke with during this phase of work, Citizen Panelists were very supportive of the values based approach the NWMO has taken to its work, as well as its approach to dialogue and collaboration. During the Panelists' discussions, they shared their thoughts on the challenges facing the NWMO in its work ahead and the effort NWMO will need to make to continue to be responsive to citizens. We highlight some of the discussion below, for broader consideration. Please visit the NWMO website to view complete reports of their discussions.

### **a) The Challenge of Informing Citizens**

Panelists felt that it would be difficult to fully engage citizens if they were not adequately informed. Although there is some feeling that citizens have some responsibility to inform themselves, there is a greater responsibility on the NWMO to distribute information such that citizens can inform themselves. This is especially the case given the sense among Panelists that the topic of nuclear fuel waste

management is a complex one. Panelists tended to feel that, despite NWMO efforts, it will be difficult to interest citizens on this issue in advance of siting.

Panelists identified three different audiences for information: a broad public audience characterized by a low level of interest, a more informed public audience, of which Panelists would be an example, that would thoughtfully approach the issue and inform themselves over time and, finally, experts and technical professionals, inside and outside of the NWMO who have opinions informed by education and experience greater than that of the average citizen.

Panelists asked themselves the question of just how much information, and what depth of understanding, they need. Throughout discussions, Panelists invested a great deal of time trying to identify the point at which they would feel they had enough information to grant consent for the NWMO to proceed with implementation. An example from one Panelist in Montreal, which was representative of the opinion of many Panelists, was his relationship with his heart surgeon. He indicated that he clearly understood the degree of informed opinion required to give consent to his heart surgeon, but beyond the binary decision to proceed, he could not give informed consent or direction beyond this point, as he was not technically capable of doing so.

The Citizen Panelists' reaction to NWMO's new corporate brochure, which attempts to provide information about the NWMO and APM in an accessible and user friendly manner, underlines the complexity of communication on these issues. Panelists encouraged the NWMO to make information accessible to ordinary citizens, however cautioned that the tone and presentation of the information not become promotional.

#### **b) The Challenge of Engaging Citizens early, particularly prior to identification of a site**

Panelists were repeatedly daunted by the difficulty of the subject matter. In thinking of their own lives, Panelists expressed that they knew how difficult it would be to get a friend or family member to engage in a discussion on used nuclear fuel without any prior knowledge or exposure to the information. That being said, most Panelists indicated that after they had engaged someone and shared some of what they had learned with friends and family members as a result of being a member of a Citizen Panel, a curiosity was initiated. A significant number of Panelists seemed to feel that initial contact through a friend or acquaintance of some direct local relevance may be required for wide spread public engagement.

Discussion in all Panels seemed to informally split the notion of citizen engagement between indirect engagement through, for instance, the media, and more direct engagement, whereby discussions would be held with groups of citizens. When it came to indirect engagement, Panelists cited the need for reporting in the media, usually in a longer or more "in-depth" form than is found on an hourly newscast or the front page of a newspaper.

Many Panelists felt that direct engagement with groups would be best executed through community seminars and town hall meetings. However, some panelists felt that there must be some mechanism, possibly a third party, to ensure these consultations are conducted with sincerity and that feedback is used. Many Panelists indicated they thought it would be difficult to generate general public interest. Unless the issue had a more direct bearing on the local audience, Panelists felt that the average citizen would either not be interested or be too intimidated by the subject matter. .

In tackling the issue of how the NWMO might reach out to an audience that might not be interested in the subject matter, or might not make it a priority to inform themselves about it, a significant number of Panelists came back to site selection. A number of Panelists felt that citizens will not be engaged until

the process becomes tangible in their minds. Only then did these Panelists feel that people will become truly engaged in the process.

### **c) The Challenge of Earning Trust**

Many of the Panelists expressed suspicion of, or cynicism concerning, large companies and government. This tends to be carried over to the NWMO.

Panelists wrestled with how to trust an organization that would manage used nuclear fuel on their behalf. When the discussion turned to timelines or other facts that communicated the scope of the NWMO's work, one of the reservations that emerged was the question of whether or not trust is granted all at once to proceed and how, with an ongoing process, the public's trust remains an important aspect of the decision-making process. For instance, some Panelists asked whether or not any incidents involving a threat to public safety, which would presumably occur on a small scale over time on a project as large as APM, would be reported in a transparent way, so that citizens would both be aware of the incident, as well as the NWMO's response and any future change in practice as a result. These Panelists wondered whether or not this could be done without scaring people and if they themselves would want to be informed.

Panelists felt more information about the NWMO was necessary and suggested it is more difficult to trust someone or something they do not know. Panelists also spoke about the need to have third party advocates and/or critics, perhaps as part of an institutionalized process.

### **d) The Challenge of Adaptability**

Panelists tended to be comfortable with an approach that adapts over time, but also wanted to be sure that there would be transparency in the adaptability as well. They suggested all changes would need to be made transparent and be accompanied by some analysis of why they were made and their potential impact on society. The sense of some Panelists was that if the approach changed dramatically, some consent would have to be obtained from the public.

Research and development well into the future is a priority for many Panelists, as they see the future reuse of used nuclear fuel as being likely in the future. Panelists suggested the NWMO must invest in scientific research on an ongoing basis to continue to explore the possibility of rendering used nuclear fuel less harmful or recycling it such that the long-term storage solution might no longer be needed or needed for a shorter period of time.

There was difficulty in grasping the concept of adaptability for some Panelists, including difficulty in understanding why the interim step of shallow storage might be necessary, and why such a long timeline is required.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

Adaptive Phased Management requires sustained dialogue and collaboration for its implementation. The NWMO considers the work completed to date to be only initial steps to reconnect and engage with citizens. NWMO's efforts will continue to build upon these early activities through subsequent work which is expected to include:

- Dialogue to test and confirm a draft Implementation Plan (April – June 2008);
- Dialogue to collaboratively develop the process for selecting a site (2008); and

- Dialogue to discuss and confirm a Siting Process Proposal (2009).

We invite you to review our draft Implementation Plan on the NWMO website (URL) and share your thoughts on the overall direction outlined in the document, and changes or additions which need to be made. Please make a submission, answer our web survey, or participate in the e-forum on this subject which will be opened shortly by Royal Roads University (links on the NWMO website).