

Minister
of Natural Resources



Ministre
des Ressources naturelles

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E4

November 13, 2020

Ms. Laurie Swami
President and Chief Executive Officer
Nuclear Waste Management Organization
22 St. Clair Avenue East, 6th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M4T 2S3 Via: lswami@nwmco.ca

Dear Ms. Swami:

Safeguarding the health and safety of Canadians and protecting our environment are always the top priorities for the Government of Canada. With regard to nuclear energy that includes ensuring that all radioactive waste in Canada is managed safely, and that solutions are being implemented to ensure the safe, long-term management of all of Canada's radioactive waste for generations to come. That is why over the coming months the Government of Canada will be taking steps to review and modernize Canada's approach to how we manage radioactive waste. I see this initiative as having two elements.

The first element will be to undertake a comprehensive review of Canada's existing Radioactive Waste Policy Framework. Our goal will be to ensure that Canada has a modern policy framework in place that is consistent with international standards and best practices, and takes into account the values that matter most to Canadians. It is critical that all Canadians have the opportunity to participate in the process. That is why as part of the process we will be engaging stakeholders and Canadians, including Indigenous Peoples, to ensure that all their voices are heard.

The second element will be to ensure that Canada has an Integrated Strategy in place for the safe management of all our radioactive wastes. As part of the process, it will be important to take stock of the radioactive waste management challenges we are facing in Canada, and to identify solutions for the long-term management of both existing waste, particularly those for which long-term proposals have not yet been developed, as well as any future waste streams from new nuclear technologies. Specifically, we need a Strategy that position Canada as world leader, and aligns our waste management practices with international standards and best practices.

Our current approach puts the onus on waste producers and owners to develop plans for the safe management of their wastes, including over the long term. Waste producers and owners have taken up this challenge and are pursuing a variety of initiatives and solutions. While the Strategy must be defined by waste producers and owners who have the best understanding

Canada

of their wastes and their priorities, it too must be informed by dialogue with stakeholders and Canadians.

That is why I am requesting the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) to lead this dialogue, and to develop Canada's Integrated Strategy for radioactive waste for my review and consideration. I believe that the NWMO is uniquely positioned to lead this work as a leader in used nuclear fuel management and in public engagement. The Integrated Strategy should build on the plan developed by NWMO for the long-term management of Canada's nuclear fuel waste. It should include:

- A description of the current waste management situation in Canada in terms of current and future volumes, taking into account potential small modular reactor waste, characteristics, locations, and ownership of the waste;
- An update on current plans and progress in advancing long-term management and disposal solutions for Canada's wastes as well as the gaps that must be addressed;
- Conceptual approaches for dealing with our current and future radioactive waste inventory, including technical options for long-term management or disposal of the various waste types and options for the number of long-term waste management facilities in Canada; and
- Considerations regarding the staging, integration, establishment and operation of long-term waste management facilities.

It will be important to ensure that the NWMO carries out this important task in a manner that is open, transparent, and inclusive, and that is built on a solid foundation of trust, integrity and respect for all Canadians. The dialogue should not detract from the NWMO's current mandate to implement Canada's plan for the safe, long-term management of used nuclear fuel, known as Adaptive Phased Management. That mandate is clear, and your progress to date is commendable. This work needs to continue to progress in an effective and efficient manner. I would also emphasize that this dialogue and the resulting Integrated Strategy are not intended to replace other projects currently in progress.

As your work progress, it will also be important to ensure that the Strategy takes into account any new direction set out by the Government of Canada's radioactive waste policy review.

I appreciate your anticipated willingness to take on this initiative, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seamus O'Regan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, P.C., M.P.