nwmo

NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

WHO WE ARE


nwmo



Hello.

We are the

NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

(but you can call us the NWMO for short).

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is ensuring used nuclear fuel in Canada – including that created using new or emerging technologies – is managed safely for generations to come.

In 2002, federal legislation made us responsible for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel in Canada.

Ever since, we have been working closely with municipal and Indigenous communities, industry, regulators, and all levels of government to protect people and the environment, both now and in the future.

In short, ***your safety is our purpose***.

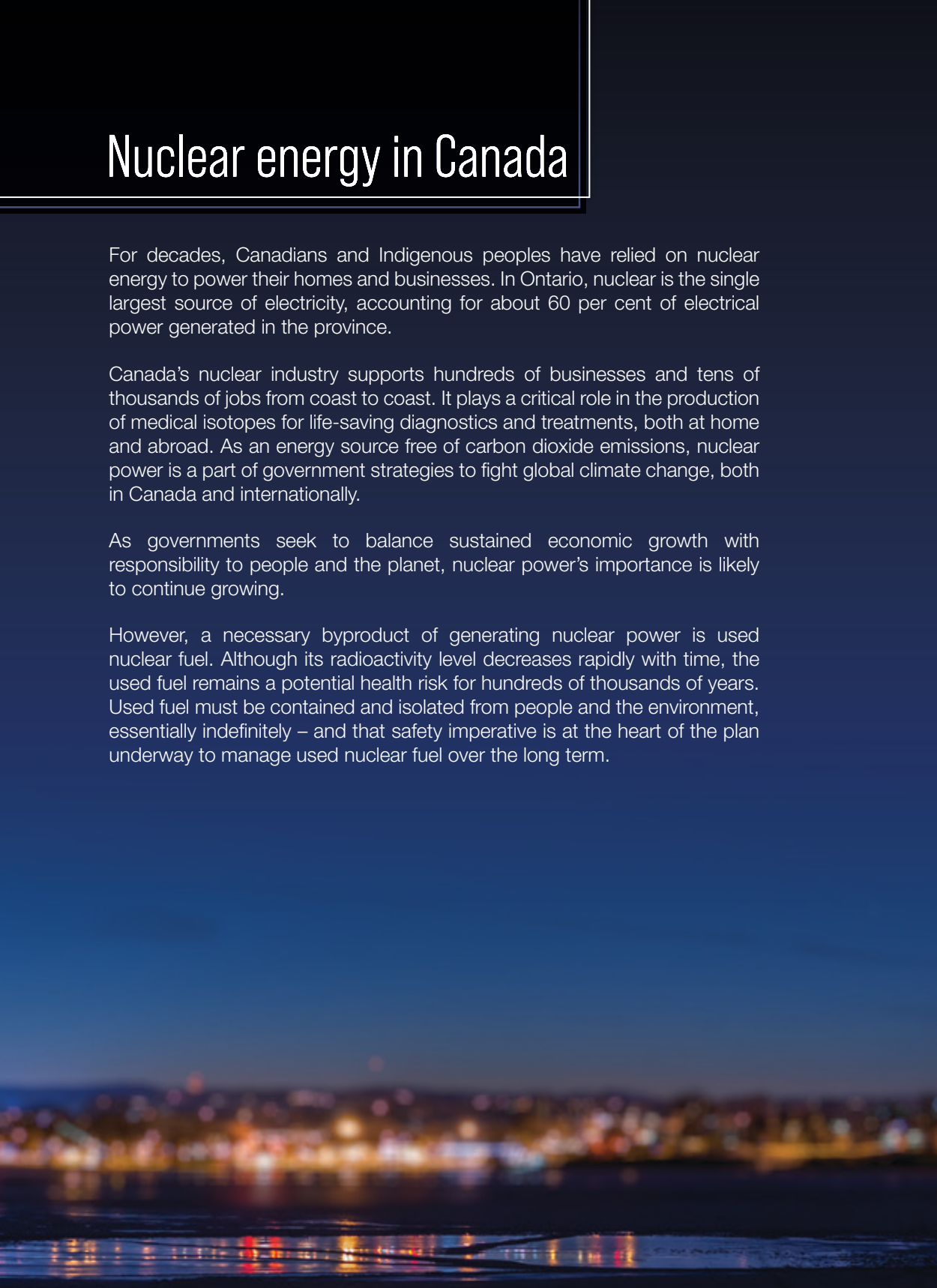
Nuclear energy in Canada

For decades, Canadians and Indigenous peoples have relied on nuclear energy to power their homes and businesses. In Ontario, nuclear is the single largest source of electricity, accounting for about 60 per cent of electrical power generated in the province.

Canada's nuclear industry supports hundreds of businesses and tens of thousands of jobs from coast to coast. It plays a critical role in the production of medical isotopes for life-saving diagnostics and treatments, both at home and abroad. As an energy source free of carbon dioxide emissions, nuclear power is a part of government strategies to fight global climate change, both in Canada and internationally.

As governments seek to balance sustained economic growth with responsibility to people and the planet, nuclear power's importance is likely to continue growing.

However, a necessary byproduct of generating nuclear power is used nuclear fuel. Although its radioactivity level decreases rapidly with time, the used fuel remains a potential health risk for hundreds of thousands of years. Used fuel must be contained and isolated from people and the environment, essentially indefinitely – and that safety imperative is at the heart of the plan underway to manage used nuclear fuel over the long term.



Taking care of business

Unlike depictions in comic books and movies, used nuclear fuel in Canada is not a liquid or a gas. It is a stable solid – actually a ceramic – sealed into a specially designed container and then bound in a "bundle." Each bundle weighs about 53 pounds (24 kilograms) and is roughly the size and shape of a fireplace log.

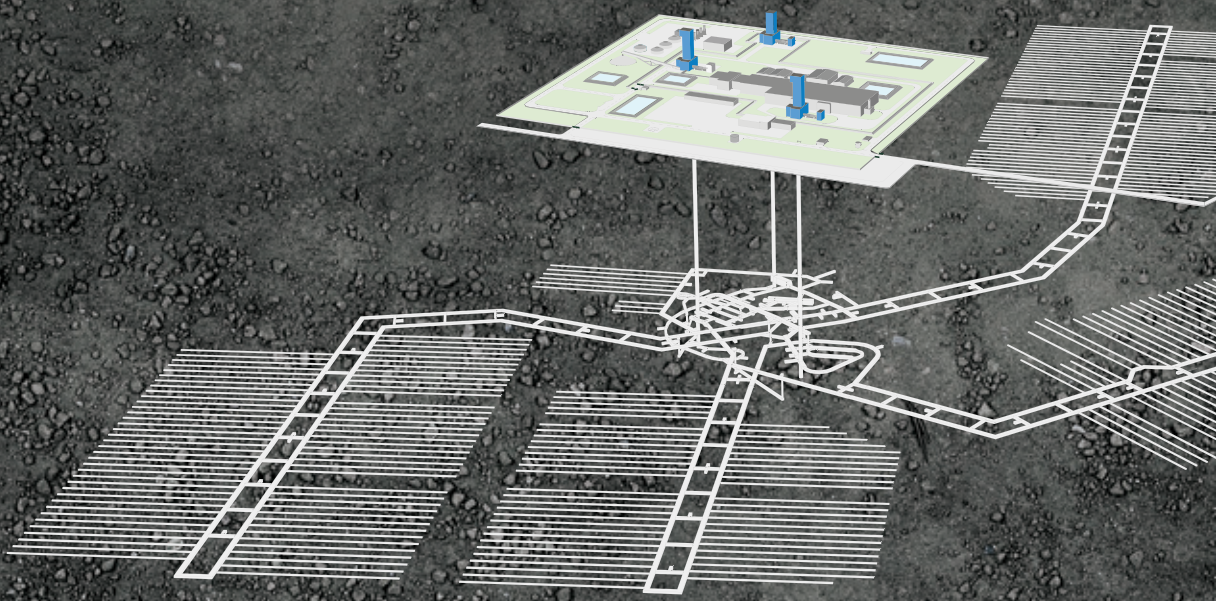
When removed from a nuclear reactor, the bundle looks the same as when it went in – but it is highly radioactive and will remain that way for a long time.

Once a used nuclear fuel bundle is removed from a reactor, it is placed in a water-filled pool where its heat and radioactivity decrease over time. After seven to 10 years, the bundle is placed in a dry storage container, a method that has been in use worldwide since the 1980s.

This approach is perfectly safe, but temporary. Because it will take hundreds of thousands of years for radioactivity in used nuclear fuel to subside, ***we need a long-term approach***.

That is why Canada has a plan for its used nuclear fuel. According to this plan, waste owners pay for its implementation, with funding in place for its entire life cycle.

Canadians and Indigenous peoples agree that we simply cannot leave the management of used nuclear fuel for future generations – we must act now.

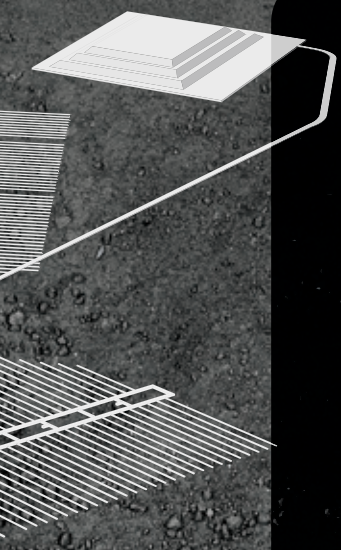


Canada's plan is based on years of input from Canadians and Indigenous peoples, international scientific consensus, Indigenous Knowledge, and decades of research. In fact, most other countries with commercial nuclear programs are pursuing this approach, including Finland, France, Japan, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

However, Canada's plan is much more than a document or regulatory framework. As a national infrastructure project worth billions of dollars over many decades, the repository has potential to be a long-term economic engine in the area where it is located, as well as the broader region.

But economics is just one aspect of the project. We are committed to implementing the plan that fosters well-being as defined by those living in the area, and we are constantly learning from communities about the many factors that are important to them.

Because this multi-generational project will be implemented in phases over a period of about 175 years, we will continually review, strengthen and adjust the plan in the face of new information, direction and guidance.



At or near the repository site, a **Centre of Expertise** will be built to support our work – initially by facilitating safety-oriented testing and assessment, but also by serving as a hub for community interests and innovation.

The design and use of the centre will be developed collaboratively with those living in the area. Should local Indigenous communities desire, it could feature a learning area focused on how Indigenous Knowledge is being applied to the project.

Eventually, the Centre of Expertise could be home to research programs and a technology demonstration program involving experts from a diverse set of disciplines.





Collaboration with communities is at our core

The long-term management of used nuclear fuel will require one of our best and most precious resources: the determination of Canadians and Indigenous peoples to secure a safe, environmentally sound future.

Protecting the environment by implementing Canada's plan necessitates collaborative work that is inclusive of diverse perspectives and sources, including public input, multiple levels of government, Indigenous Knowledge, and the scientific community.

Though the construction of the deep geological repository and transportation of used nuclear fuel are not due to begin until the 2030s and 2040s respectively, we are committed to using the intervening years to meaningfully engage with all Canadians and Indigenous peoples affected by these decisions.

These core values are fundamental to the work we do.

Safety	Integrity	Excellence
Collaboration	Accountability	Transparency



Commitments to Reconciliation and interweaving Indigenous Knowledge

In travelling a path together, we consider different world views and how aspects of the Indigenous Knowledge system can inform all aspects of our work, from decision-making and strategic planning to fieldwork and human resources.

Through respectful knowledge exchange, the NWMO works to create opportunities for Indigenous voices to be acknowledged and heard. Key to our Reconciliation journey is a strong foundation of recognition and respect through ongoing education opportunities.

In 2019, we took an important step in formalizing our Reconciliation Policy. We committed to developing an annual implementation plan to measure and publicly report on our progress, and to build sustainable relationships with Indigenous and municipal communities.

And with strong guidance from a Council of Elders and Youth, Indigenous Knowledge Keepers in siting communities, and the Indigenous Knowledge Policy we adopted in 2016, we continue to intentionally interweave insights from different knowledge systems throughout our work.



Guided by knowledge, grounded in community

Transparency and accountability are not just important to us; they are of critical importance to all the Canadians and Indigenous peoples relying on us to safely implement Canada's plan. It is imperative that people and communities can participate in all aspects of the process that affect them.

That is why our team of world-class technical experts – including experienced scientists and engineers – works in collaboration with municipal and Indigenous communities, the public, all levels of government, national and international regulators, industry, and academia.

Together, we will implement Canada's plan with informed and willing hosts.

Since 2010, we have been engaged in a community-driven process to identify a site where Canada's used nuclear fuel can be safely contained and isolated. This process was the result of a two-year dialogue and has been designed to meet the highest scientific, professional and ethical standards.

We anticipate identifying a single, preferred site by 2023, and the project will only proceed in an area with informed and willing hosts, where the municipality, First Nation and Métis communities, and others in the area are working together to implement it.

Following a multi-step process that includes field investigations, a comprehensive regulatory approval process, and ongoing community and public engagement, the deep geological repository will be constructed over an estimated 10-year period.

As we implement Canada's plan, we will continue serving the communities where we work, including by supporting youth programs, services for community seniors, community sustainability, energy efficiency, economic development, and other initiatives with strong local interest and support.

Learning is a process unto itself, and we anticipate that learning opportunities will continue to emerge as Canada's plan is implemented. Maintaining an adaptable and community-oriented approach will help ensure communities' needs are addressed.





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