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A Submission from the United Church of Canada
To the Nuclear Waste Management Organization
on
Concern Arising from a Recent Speech
By the Minister of Natural Resources Canada
Dealing with the Future of the Canadian Nuclear Energy Industry

The submissions by the United Church of Canada to the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) have included concerns about the future of nuclear power generation in Canada, in the context of the present nuclear waste management decision-making process (Submissions Library at www.nwmo.ca). The NWMO assessments and dialogues have been premised on a finite waste stream from existing nuclear power plants as detailed in the NWMO discussion documents. We have stated that any use of the recommendation to promote nuclear power, including international sales, would be an abuse of the NWMO process and of the public who participated, and a misuse of the recommendation.

Recently, the Minister of Natural Resources Canada expressed the level of his commitment and the commitment of the Government of Canada in support of the growth of the Canadian nuclear energy industry domestically and internationally. Attached is a copy of "Notes for a Speech by *The Honourable John Efford, PC, MP*, Minister of Natural Resources Canada to the *Canadian Nuclear Association Annual Seminar*, Ottawa, Ontario March 9, 2005," available at <http://www.nrcan-mcan.gc.ca/media/speeches/2005/200519_e.htm>

The Minister's position, as clearly indicated in this speech to Canadian Nuclear Association, undermines the integrity of the NWMO process.

The position of the Government is highlighted in the following excerpts from the notes for the speech by Minister Efford to the Canadian Nuclear Association:

“The Government of Canada wants Canada's nuclear energy industry to be part of the new age.”

“The Government of Canada is pleased to have provided financial support to the development of the Advanced CANDU Reactor, and there is more to come. We have every intention of continuing our very successful partnership with AECL. Let there be no doubt about that.”

“Our support for AECL's R&D program and the next-generation nuclear systems have helped bring the industry to the brink of a new age. Please be assured that we will continue to support the industry so that it continues to grow and remain competitive and viable for the long term.”

“So we have the demand, we have the resource base and we have the capacity. The final crucial condition for the new age is public support. This has always been a challenge and is one that you must continue to address.”

“In summary - we have the right conditions. With the injection of creative thought and attention to the challenges, we can talk with confidence - and there again is a key word - about a real nuclear renaissance in Canada.

In closing, I would like to assure you that nuclear energy remains an important option for meeting Canada's future energy needs as well as our air quality and climate change objectives. Our vision for the future includes Canadian nuclear technology. We are committed.

We are committed to working with you to ensure sustainable Canadian nuclear energy in the new age.”

The position of the Minister himself is highlighted in the following excerpt from notes for that speech:

“As long as I am in this office - as long as I am your Minister - you have no doubt in your mind that at every opportunity that I have as Minister of Natural Resources to speak to the Canadian public - whether it be in a setting like this or whether it be around the community tables or in the communities with my constituents - I will always continue to display the confidence that you've shown me.

Nuclear energy must be a part of the Canadian energy process, and you as responsible people will ensure that every mechanism is put in place to ensure that safety comes first, that we are part of the energy mix, that we are respectful of climate change, and that everything we will do will be not only in our own personal interests, but will be in Canada's interests.”

The staff of NWMO has represented to Canadians its independence from nuclear industry interests and from broader energy policy discussions, but the following excerpt indicates that the Minister expects to use the NWMO process to facilitate a nuclear expansion:

“Dealing effectively with issues such as nuclear fuel waste will go a long way toward dispelling outdated perceptions that impede public acceptance of nuclear energy as a viable option. And we must continue to do everything to continue to get the public of Canada onside in every manner and everything that we do.

There are always the critics, there are always the cynics, but we move forward in every way possible publicly and talk about it and give confidence to the Canadian people in what we are doing in every manner to protect their safety, but at the same time ensuring that nuclear is part of the energy mix of Canada.

With regard to fuel waste, a milestone will be reached this year. As required under the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization is developing - through public dialogue and consultations - long-term waste options to support future government decisions, and I'm looking forward to the organization's report, which is due this fall.”

Trust in the present process toward a decision on long-term management of nuclear fuel waste has been limited in part because of the composition of the Board of NWMO, being representatives of the major owners of nuclear fuel waste, and because of the involvement of Natural Resources Canada in the nuclear energy industry. There is no impartial decision-maker in the present process.

To retain the level of trust that the NWMO staff has earned, NWMO should acknowledge the position of the Liberal Government and the Minister of Natural Resources Canada as one of strong support for the growth of the nuclear energy industry in Canada, and in up-coming discussions with Canadians and in its recommendation, the staff of NWMO should be clear that use of the process or the recommendation to promote nuclear energy is not acceptable.

The United Church submissions to the NWMO have been mandated and endorsed by the Justice, Peace and Creation Advisory Group of the Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit within the General Council of the United Church of Canada. The principal writers of the material are Shirley Farlinger, Rev. Bob K. Fillier, Lisa Gue, Dr. David Hallman and Dr. Mary Lou Harley.

The following article is available at

<http://www.nrcan-mcan.gc.ca/media/speeches/2005/200519_e.htm>

2005/19

Notes for a Speech by

The Honourable John Efford, PC, MP

Minister of Natural Resources Canada

to the

Canadian Nuclear Association Annual Seminar

Ottawa, Ontario

March 9, 2005

Check against delivery

Thank you very much, Richard, for that introduction.

It's good to be back here again. I was here just shortly after I got appointed Minister of Natural Resources Canada. I think that was probably one of the first speeches that I gave, and since that time, we've done a lot of things.

I normally speak off the cuff, but I do want to read what's scripted here because it gets to every one of the points that I want to make. And I don't want to miss any of the points because I think it's important to you people here this evening, that you're taking the time to be part of this group and listening to me.

I'm not going to be too long because I know you have a lot of food and you have a lot of intermingling among each other and some wine to drink. Hopefully I can do that afterwards as well.

I'm going to begin the normal way. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, it's a great pleasure to be here again at the Canadian Nuclear Association annual meeting. As I said earlier, when I spoke here last year, I talked about working closely with you and gaining an in-depth understanding of your industry. Since that time I've learned a great deal - and I don't say that in any manner but to be absolutely dead-on - that I've learned a great deal. I've met a number of you to discuss the issues that are of most importance to you.

And what I've learned has made me very excited. We are on the threshold of a new age for nuclear energy. The theme of your seminar, "The Nuclear Renaissance," could not be more fitting. We've seen signs in North America. There have been significant improvements in the operating performance of nuclear reactors. Many countries are making a real commitment to refurbishing reactors, while others are making commitments to new builds.

For example, the United States has well-funded programs to stimulate new reactor construction. Both France and Finland are building new nuclear reactors - the first reactors to be built in western Europe in 15 years. And we're seeing countries like China aggressively expanding their nuclear program to ensure continued economic growth.

And I must say for the week that I was in China in September - I was on the road for 27 days - I tell you, it was an exciting time to be there with people in my department and people representing Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL), and to be able to have high-level meetings in that country and promote Canada's position in the nuclear industry. And then to be able to visit the nuclear reactors that we were prominent, through AECL, in building in China.

The Government of Canada wants Canada's nuclear energy industry to be part of the new age. The conditions are in place to support the growth of the industry, and I'll talk more about these in just a moment. But what we need to focus on here at this conference is the other components that are essential to ensuring a successful industry - to create a spirit and a vision to spark scientific innovation.

I'm proud of the role that Atomic Energy of Canada Limited has played in sparking research and development in Canada.

The Government of Canada is pleased to have provided financial support to the development of the Advanced CANDU Reactor, and there is more to come. We have every intention of continuing our very successful partnership with AECL. Let there be no doubt about that.

And Canada is among the first five countries to sign the International Generation IV Nuclear R&D Agreement. Gen IV will help us ensure that we'll have new scientists and engineers in place for the future of our nuclear program.

Our support for AECL's R&D program and the next-generation nuclear systems have helped bring the industry to the brink of a new age. Please be assured that we will continue to support the industry so that it continues to grow and remain competitive and viable for the long term.

All the conditions are right for this growth. One of the basic conditions, of course, is the demand. Energy is the lifeblood of our modern society, and all forecasts point to an increasing demand for energy.

As we've seen from domestic and international studies, we cannot meet this demand without nuclear energy. As a non-emitting energy source, nuclear energy can also help Canada meet its major commitments to addressing climate change - which is the topic of discussion just about everywhere you go in this country.

We have a responsibility to meet our demands on climate change. Why? Because we want to be leaders in the world. We want to grow the economy of this country. But we also want to show leadership in the world - that we are as much concerned about providing a stable sustainable environment as we are about a sustainable economy. One cannot be done without the other.

And we could not be in a better position to respond to the increased demand.

- We are a world leader in uranium production, and recent market developments have given a bright outlook for the uranium industry.
- We have excellent industrial capability, with more than 150 firms employing more than 30,000 Canadians, mainly in high-tech jobs. And industry has been mobilizing technical and financial resources to refurbish reactors and return them to service at a high level of performance.

In this regard, I'm very pleased that the three Ontario nuclear reactors brought back to service last year have performed well - resulting in a 20-percent increase in electricity generated by nuclear power. I would like to take this very opportunity to congratulate both Bruce Power and Ontario Power Generation for making this a great success. Let's give them a round of applause.

Also, in fact, I understand that Bruce Power won an award for setting new levels of excellence in safety, security and regulatory standards in its Bruce "A" restart project, and that's something to be proud of. And I hear that the restart of an additional unit at the Pickering "A" station is well under way and that it should be in full operation by the end of this year. My congratulations to you on these achievements also.

But we need to increase our capacity - and we have not as yet seen commitments to build new reactors in Canada. Given the anticipated constraints on generating capacity and the length of time needed to complete a major capital project, decisions need to be made soon.

- In addition to having excellent industrial capability, Canada's nuclear industry is the best mobilized in the world to bring a nuclear project on stream in a timely and cost-effective way.

I saw a good example of this when I visited China last September. I was very impressed by the CANDU project - the largest commercial venture ever undertaken by Canada and China. Atomic Energy of Canada Limited showed

what Canadian firms are capable of - completing this project under budget and ahead of schedule. Let's do more of that here in Canada and around the world and we'll certainly get ahead.

- Finally, you have the necessary know-how - the innovative scientists and engineers - that can develop concepts and turn them into tangible results.

So we have the demand, we have the resource base and we have the capacity. The final crucial condition for the new age is public support. This has always been a challenge and is one that you must continue to address.

Dedicated environmentalists like James Lovelock - who you will hear from tomorrow - are speaking out in favour of nuclear energy. And recent public opinion polls indicate that eight in ten Canadians believe nuclear power will be part of Canada's future energy mix. That's a major plus - key to the public. Come on, let's keep it going.

We've got to be excited, we're doing great things. Let's feel it.

Key to public support is an effective nuclear regulatory regime. I just left a meeting a few minutes ago about smart regulations and this was one of the topics - an effective nuclear regulatory regime - that we must move forward. We have learned that a strong and economically viable industry goes hand-in-hand with a strong safety culture - giving utmost priority to safety, security, public health and environmental protection.

In this regard, I am very pleased with the commitment the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has made to advance the principles of smart regulation. This is in line with the Government of Canada's initiative to improve regulation across the board - to make it more transparent, accountable and adaptable.

I'm sure that the President of the Commission, Linda Keen, will have some interesting insights tomorrow when she speaks to you.

And I was also pleased to learn that the Canadian Standards Association has recently indicated that it will resume publication of its standards for nuclear facilities.

Dealing effectively with issues such as nuclear fuel waste will go a long way toward dispelling outdated perceptions that impede public acceptance of nuclear energy as a viable option. And we must continue to do everything to continue to get the public of Canada onside in every manner and everything that we do.

There are always the critics, there are always the cynics, but we move forward in every way possible publicly and talk about it and give confidence to the Canadian people in what we are doing in every manner to protect their safety, but at the same time ensuring that nuclear is part of the energy mix of Canada.

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And we continue to make good progress on radioactive historic wastes, especially Port Hope. It's encouraging to see the recent cooperative advances of Kincardine and Ontario Power Generation toward a long-term waste management facility.

In summary - we have the right conditions. With the injection of creative thought and attention to the challenges, we can talk with confidence - and there again is a key word - about a real nuclear renaissance in Canada.

In closing, I would like to assure you that nuclear energy remains an important option for meeting Canada's future energy needs as well as our air quality and climate change objectives. Our vision for the future includes Canadian nuclear technology. We are committed.

We are committed to working with you to ensure sustainable Canadian nuclear energy in the new age.

I wish you a very successful conference and leave you with this commitment from myself as Minister of Natural Resources.

As long as I am in this office - as long as I am your Minister - you have no doubt in your mind that at every opportunity that I have as Minister of Natural Resources to speak to the Canadian public - whether it be in a setting like this or whether it be around the community tables or in the communities with my constituents - I will always continue to display the confidence that you've shown me.

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I thank you very much.