

## Minister's Statement on the 2003 NWMO Annual Report

On March 26, 2004, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) submitted its second annual report to me under the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act (NFW Act)*.

The report outlines the considerable progress made by the NWMO in 2003:

- implemented innovative approaches, such as focus groups, to consult with the general public, nuclear site communities, and aboriginal groups
- held workshops and roundtables with several communities, and over 250 consultations with individuals
- developed a newsletter and an interactive website
- released the discussion document "Asking the Right Questions? The Future Management of Canada's Nuclear Fuel"
- conducted a nationwide survey of 1,900 Canadians
- obtained advice from 25 scientists and 35 legal experts
- commissioned 40 background papers
- began consultations with aboriginal and nuclear communities
- consulted with 43 aboriginal participants from the Seaborn Panel Process
- contacted 173 organizations and the Scientific Review Group who participated in the Seaborn Panel Process
- established communications with international nuclear organizations
- confirmed deposit of payments by utilities and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) into the trust funds which now total \$660M
- released financial statement as of December 31, 2003

NWMO President Elizabeth Dowdeswell has given high priority to public involvement in the dialogue process. The first discussion document "Asking the Right Questions? The Future Management of Used Nuclear Fuel" was released December, 2003 and laid out the framework by which the study will proceed. The NWMO is now at the stage of engaging in dialogue with Canadians and has provided the public with numerous avenues for input to get their views and concerns.

The Annual Report clearly outlines the approach that the NWMO is taking to develop management options that will be assessed within an ethical and social framework, as required by the *NFW Act*. The NWMO has begun transparent and open consultations with the public.

An Advisory Council was established in late 2002 by the NWMO under the *NFW Act* to provide it with independent advice on its work. In a March 2004 letter to me, the Advisory Council has indicated that it is impressed with the efforts of the NWMO to engage the public in a dialogue on the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste.

The NWMO report confirms that AECL and the nuclear energy corporations have deposited the amounts required for the year 2003 by the *NFW Act* into their trust funds.

These funds now total \$660M indicating the strong commitment of the nuclear industry to meet the financial responsibilities for the long term management of Canada's nuclear fuel waste.

The Annual Report clearly shows that the dialogue is underway with Canadians on the next steps in the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste. I encourage Canadians to become involved in the decision-making process and to state their views to the NWMO.

The Government of Canada places high priority on the safe and environmentally sound management of nuclear fuel waste in Canada. With the assistance of the officials in my department, I will follow the progress towards achieving a solution for the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste which has the confidence of the Canadian public.

— John Efford, Minister of Natural Resources

Natural Resources Canada  
June 21, 2004