

Natural Resources Canada
June 27, 2005

Minister's Statement on the 2004 NWMO Annual Report

On March 29, 2005, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) submitted its third annual report under the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act* (NFW Act).

The report highlights activities carried out in 2004 to fulfill key requirements of the NFW Act, notably those on the process of public engagement and on the establishment of a framework for assessing long-term management options, as presented in its second public discussion document "Understanding the Choices."

The report also highlights the financial contributions made to date by Ontario Power Generation, New Brunswick Power, Hydro-Québec and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. These contributions are to be used to implement the government-approved approach for the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste. Since the NFW Act was passed in 2002, a total of \$770 million has been invested in the trust funds. In the coming years, the monies in these funds will accumulate as required under the NFW Act, increasing confidence that those who own the waste will assume all of their financial responsibilities for its long-term management.

The independent Advisory Council, established by the NWMO under the NFW Act, continues to provide advice to the NWMO, and has released a public statement on how it intends to fulfill its mandate. This includes examining the NWMO's study, commenting on its comprehensiveness, fairness and balance, and the integrity and transparency of the process.

The Nuclear Fuel Waste Bureau, within Natural Resources Canada, continues to oversee the activities of the NWMO. Over the past year, the Bureau met with the organization's senior staff several times, as well as with all the members of the Advisory Council. It has met with national Aboriginal organizations to discuss their perspective of the work being carried by the NWMO, attended a cross-section of the public consultation sessions and reviewed all reports.

The NWMO 2004 Annual Report looks forward to the release of the third and last public discussion document, entitled "Choosing a Way Forward." This document, released on May 24, 2005, proposes recommendations for the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste in Canada. I encourage Canadians to become involved in the decision-making process and to present their views to the NWMO on its intentions. It is important that your views be heard before the NWMO submits its final study, which is due on November 15, 2005.

The NFW Act requires the NWMO to develop a study over a three-year period. This study builds on a large body of research work and expressions of public views in Canada and other countries over the past few decades.

As NWMO President Elizabeth Dowdeswell states, it is clear from the public consultations the organization has carried out to date that Canadians believe that this generation is now ready to assume its responsibility and plan for a responsible approach for the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste.

The Government of Canada will ensure that the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste is carried out in a safe, environmentally sound, comprehensive, cost-effective and integrated manner, as stated in its 1996 Radioactive Waste Policy Framework.

Once I receive the NWMO's study later this year, I will seek assistance from officials in my department and my federal colleagues in reviewing the NWMO's proposed solution to this issue with the confidence of the Canadian public in mind.

— The Honourable R. John Efford, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Natural Resources Canada