

Assembly of First Nations

Nuclear Fuel Waste Dialogue



Phase II Progress Report

Submitted to:

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January 31, 2005



Background

In September 2003 the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) entered into a 3 year contribution agreement with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) for the purpose of delivering a dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management with First Nations across Canada. This agreement builds on the long-standing involvement of the AFN with nuclear waste issues. The AFN participated in the Seaborn Panel review of the AECL concept in the 1980s and 1990s and later made submissions to the *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources* and the *Standing Senate Committee on Energy, The Environment and Natural Resources* in November 2001 and May 2002 respectively.

The objectives of the AFN dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management are as follows:

1. Raise awareness within First Nations communities about nuclear fuel waste management and the potential impacts on their communities;
2. Build First Nations' capacity to engage in discussions and decision making on the issue of nuclear fuel waste management;
3. Promote dialogue within First Nations and between First Nations and NRCan regarding long-term management of nuclear fuel waste;
4. Facilitate First Nations engagement on the issue of nuclear fuel waste management within the broader Canadian society.

The AFN does not view the dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management as a consultation. The goal is to share information about nuclear fuel waste management in Canada, promote discussion, and build First Nations capacity to engage regarding nuclear fuel waste management.

Information from the dialogue process will be summarized and submitted in a final report to the Minister of Natural Resources, prior to November 15, 2005 for his consideration in accepting a recommended approach for the long term management of used nuclear fuel waste.

NWMO funding agreement

In June 2004, a funding agreement was finalized between the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) and the AFN to enhance the dialogue process designed with funding from NRCan. As part of this agreement the AFN agreed to deliver a wide range of activities related to the implementation of a dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management.

The purpose of this report is to summarize activities carried out using funds from NWMO for the period June 2004 to January 31, 2005.



ACTIVITIES TO DATE

First Nations Nuclear Waste Working Group

A small group of First Nations representatives has met to review and comment on the NWMO's Discussion Documents 1 and 2. The first meeting occurred on July 15, 2004 and the second on October 27, 2004. Both reports have been submitted to the NWMO and posted on the AFN website and should be referred to for specific commentary on the NWMO process.

The second Working Group report contained a series of recommendations with regard to the NWMO process and requested that a response to each of the issues be provided to the AFN. The Working Group has contributed greatly to the AFN dialogue, by providing detailed comments and recommendations on the NWMO process. Working Group reports also provide First Nations with a useful reference tool for their own evaluation of the NWMO process, by highlighting specific issues and potential ways to address those issues.

The third meeting of the Working Group will occur after the release of the NWMO's draft Discussion Document 3 in the spring, or early summer of 2005.

Regional Chiefs Panel on the Environment

The first meeting of the Regional Chiefs Panel on the Environment, co-chaired by the AFN Environmental Stewardship's Regional Chiefs, took place from September 8-9, 2005. This meeting brought together regional First Nations representatives who provided the AFN with valuable direction and regional perspectives on the nuclear dialogue.

The second meeting of the Regional Chiefs Panel on the Environment is scheduled for the spring or early summer of 2005. This meeting will be held after the release of the NWMO's Discussion Document 3, allowing for focused regional discussions based on the preliminary recommendation by the NWMO.

Background Report

A background report on environmental issues facing First Nations was submitted to the NWMO on November 30, 2004. This document provides important context for the nuclear waste issue for First Nations. First Nations are facing a wide range of often pressing environmental issues (e.g., climate change, contaminants in water and traditional foods, species at risk, etc). Characterizing the relative "importance" of nuclear waste management is an important step in the nuclear dialogue and will serve towards building environmental strategies for First Nations.



First Nations Youth Art Contest

To promote the involvement of First Nations youth, and to allow for an artistic means of expression on the nuclear fuel waste debate, a First Nations Youth Art Contest has been designed as part of the NWMO funding agreement. It is anticipated that this contest will stimulate significant discussion amongst youth, and between youth and their parents.

The contest flyer has been distributed at numerous First Nations gatherings, has been posted in the AFN Echo which is sent to all First Nations communities and has been advertised in numerous First Nations newspapers. The contest flyer is also available on the AFN website and has been distributed by Regional Coordinators during their travels and discussions with First Nations communities.

The contest closes on February 28, 2004. Contest winners will be announced March 2005.

First Nations video on nuclear fuel waste management

A First Nations video on nuclear fuel waste management is now complete. This video will provide a stimulating conversation piece for First Nations to begin discussing nuclear fuel waste management. The video provides the viewer with basic information necessary for discussion on the topic and a variety of contrasting view points to stimulate discussion. The video will be distributed widely by AFN Nuclear Dialogue Regional Coordinators and may be shown on the Aboriginal People's Television Network.

Regional Forums

The first round of Regional Forums on Nuclear Fuel Waste Management were held in November 2004 at the following locations: Toronto, ON (November 18), Wauzhushk Onigum First Nation (November 23) and Prince Albert, SK (November 30). A summary report for each of these meetings was prepared and submitted to the NWMO on December 17, 2004. A Regional Forum summary report, which consolidates the issues heard during the Regional Forums, is being submitted simultaneously with this report.

Funds for the Quebec and Atlantic Regional Forum were transferred to the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs to support their work in developing a regional dialogue process.

A second round of Regional Forums is planned for the spring/early summer of 2005 following the release of Document 3 by the NWMO. This round of Regional Forums will focus on the draft recommendation by the NWMO.



SUMMARY

The activities described above have contributed to the AFN dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management, by helping to engage First Nations and providing forums for discussion. Reports have been produced, which will serve to document many of the concerns that First Nations have over the current process being led by the NWMO. These reports will be useful to the NWMO in their work and will also help First Nations in their own preliminary deliberations on the issue.

It is the position of the AFN that the work described above does not constitute consultation, on the part of the AFN or any First Nations who participated in these events. Furthermore, any discussion about management options that has taken place as part of these activities must not be considered as an evaluation of the management options. First Nations have not had the required time or resources to make informed comments or recommendations on the management options being studied by the NWMO.

