

Understanding the Choices – The Future Management of Canada’s Used Nuclear Fuel.

NWMO Information Sessions Draft Summary Report

**October 27th and 28th, 2004
Lord Beaverbrook Hotel
Fredericton, New Brunswick**

1.0 PARTICIPANTS

Three information sessions were held over two days in Fredericton, New Brunswick; seven participants attended the sessions.

The NWMO representative was Sean Russell, the assessment team member was Michael Ben-Eli. Present from DPRA Canada were Constance Ramacière and Rachelle Laurin-Borg.

The following is a summary of comments from the Fredericton information sessions.

2.0 MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

What are the Strengths and Limitations of each Management Approach?

2.1 Storage at Reactor Sites

2.1.1 Strengths

There were no comments regarding the strengths of storage at reactor sites.

2.1.2 Limitations

There were no comments regarding the limitations of storage at reactor sites.

2.1.3 Other Comments

One participant felt that reactor site storage would be the least expensive management approach.

2.2 Deep Geological Disposal

2.2.1 Strengths

There were no comments on the strengths of deep geological disposal.

2.2.2 Limitations

Participants at the information session suggested the following limitations of deep geological disposal:

- It has been said that the deep geologic disposal concept is irretrievable or very difficult to retrieve. The waste needs to be retrievable; we should not deprive future generations of having choices about retrieval.
- Seismic implications are never mentioned in the material.

2.2.3 Other comments on deep geological disposal

- A participant felt that the term “forever” had to be clearly defined.
- A participant expressed the opinion that “just because money is spent on theoretical concepts like fusion; it doesn’t mean it will produce anything useful.”
- A participant explained that it was their impression that a deep geologic repository had been ruled out as a management option based on an article they read in the New Brunswick Telegraph stating that “DGD has been rejected.”

2.3 Centralized Storage

2.3.1 Strengths

There were no comments regarding the strengths of centralized storage.

2.3.2 Limitations

There were no comments regarding the limitations of centralized storage.

2.3.3 Other comments on centralized storage

There were no other comments about centralized storage.

The following comments were made about Management Approaches in general:

- The requirements of the design (method) need to be defined more clearly (i.e., if the requirement is that the used nuclear fuel is easily retrievable, this should be stated).
- Members of the public are influenced politically; people want to please their politicians.
- A participant asked for an explanation about why retrievability is an issue? The participant agreed that future generations should be able to retrieve the waste.
- A participant expressed concerns about voluntary siting processes, particularly with respect to fairness. An example was raised about the possibility of the host community being exploited because they were poor and lacking education.
- A participant felt that people are too easily influenced by politicians; people will want to follow their politicians as a result a community might accept the storage of the used nuclear fuel without fully understanding the consequences.

3.0 ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Is the assessment framework comprehensive and balanced? Are there gaps, and if so, what do we need to add?

- A participant asked for an explanation on the assessment team's role in the decision making process.
- Other questions asked at the information session included:
 - How are people reacting to your approach of talking to Canadians as opposed to consulting experts?
 - What are the real concerns and how do you weigh the concerns? How do you give them comfort?
- A participant felt that the issues shouldn't be based on nuclear versus no nuclear production. A presentation on energy policy should be addressed in the assessment framework.

4.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Are there specific elements that you feel must be built into an implementation plan? What are your thoughts on what a phased approach must include?

- A participant asked what is the driving force behind the timeframe for implementation. Was the main force political or technical?

5.0 Additional Comments on Discussion Document 2

With respect to the document, "Understanding the Choices?" the following comments were made:

No general comments were made on Discussion Document 2.

6.0 Other Comments

Other comments that were received by participants at the information session in Fredericton, which were not directly related to Discussion Document 2, have been grouped under thematic headings and are summarized below.

Regional Issues/Comments (New Brunswick)

- A participant asked if people would feel differently about the used nuclear fuel in two hypothetical situations: if the Pt Lepreau reactor was shut down versus being open (and thus generating more waste) for another 30 years?
- The refurbishment of Point Lepreau was discussed and participants mentioned that more people are taking decommissioning versus continued use into consideration.
- Another participant expressed concern that the decision is more about whether or not the Pt Lepreau facility will be refurbished or not. The participant felt that the refurbishing decision is a more current concern than the 20-50 year NWMO plan.
- Participants discussed Point Lepreau, and one mentioned that it is still a pretty volatile subject. There is a new coalition against the refurbishment of the facility.
- A participant expressed that in 1997, Pt. Lepreau had poor performance (at 60% capacity) and people were not happy about spending more money (\$10 million) to fix it; instead, they wanted it shut down. Now, expressed the participant, "there is going to be billions spent to refurbish it, and according to a survey performed by NB Hydro, 97% of the province approves of the proposed refurbishment."

- Participants noted that other people don't know the impact of Lepreau on the regional economy; the plant employs 700 people.

NWMO Process

- A resident asked whether the draft report being submitted is the first recommendation since 1978.
- Comments on the DVD presentation:
 - Could not read the advisory committee names.
 - The woman handling a fuel bundle- should be stated that the bundle is empty or it shouldn't be handled so easily, without appropriate gear.
 - The statistics regarding provincial use of nuclear power (presented in percentages) are misleading, should add kilowatt hours.
 - The amount of energy left in the bundles after they are used in reactors should also be noted.

International

- A couple of participants asked whether there was information on what other countries are doing with their nuclear waste and whether or not any decisions in other nations had been made yet.

Other comments

- A participant noted the linkages between energy policy and waste management. The participant felt that the issues are related and shouldn't be separated, hence without a final decision on energy policy, the participant felt unable to make a decision about waste management.
- Comments were made about looking at "the bigger picture" in terms of greenhouse gas reductions and meeting increased energy demand. The cost of starting up a new plant was also raised.
- A participant asked if the scientific community had been asked to come up with a treatment method for the used nuclear fuel. The participant was disappointed that reprocessing was not an option.
- A participant asked how long the Canadian uranium resources are expected to last.

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