

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

NWMO Information Sessions Final Summary Report

**Monday, November 1 and Tuesday, November 2, 2004
Holiday Inn Hidden Valley Resort
Huntsville, Ontario**

1.0 PARTICIPANTS

Three information sessions were held over two days in Huntsville; in total, thirteen participants attended the sessions.

The NWMO representative was Mike Krizanc and Amanda Kennedy and Sarita Swamy were present from DPRA Canada.

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

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 on the strengths of reactor site storage.

2.1.2 Limitations

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

2.1.3 Other Comments on Storage at Reactor Sites

One participant raised the question as to whether there is any problem associated with storing fuel bundles in water at reactor sites.

2.2 Deep Geological Disposal

2.2.1 Strengths

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

2.2.2 Limitations

There were no comments made regarding limitations of deep geological disposal.

2.2.3 Other Comments on Deep Geological Disposal

- One participant felt that there is uncertainty about how nuclear waste will react with the surrounding rock and water when it is stored underground.
- Another participant asked whether Canada currently has deep geological storage in place.

2.3 Centralized Storage

2.3.1 Strengths

One participant suggested that centralized storage has the advantage of being constructed underground, while still allowing for accessibility to the waste but with some greater effort.

2.3.2 Limitations

There were no comments raised on the limitations of centralized storage.

2.3.3 Other Comments on Centralized Storage

No general comments were given on the issue of centralized storage.

3.0 ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

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

General comments and questions about the framework included the following:

- People are unaware of the issue and do not understand all of the implications involved in storing used nuclear fuel.
- Once people answer the questions that the NWMO is asking, will the NWMO redo its study?
- None of the choices look good; what if the majority of people don't like any of the options?

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?

One participant asked what would be the time requirements to implement a method once selected.

5.0 Additional Comments on Discussion Document 2

No general comments were made on the contents of Discussion Document 2.

6.0 Other Comments

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

International Issues

- A few participants were interested in nuclear waste management developments taking place in other countries. In general, participants asked what other countries were doing and if Canada was visiting these countries to learn about their methods.
- Are there other countries moving out of nuclear energy and moving towards other sources of power, and isn't Canada far behind?

Energy and Alternative Technologies

- On the topic of alternative technologies, two participants asked about the nature of fusion technology utilization and whether transmutation was being considered.
- If the discussion was broadened to include energy policy and the environment, it would bring more people, especially younger people into the process.
- It seems as though there are no limitations put in place for the creation of fuel bundles by AECL or the government. But they know of the consequences, so why don't they put the brakes on nuclear energy development?
- Taxpayers are subsidizing the industry and the costs are horrendous.
- Don't produce nuclear energy anymore because we don't want to produce more nuclear waste.

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization and Public Engagement

- What's happened since Seaborn and since 1973?
- All this is after-the-fact. The information and consequences should have been put to public before a decision to produce nuclear energy
- The DVD should receive exposure on national television.
- What will the format be like for the discussion session?
- It is really good to have this information session in our community.
- How can we make further comments?
- Are there environmentalists on-staff at the NWMO?
- How long is Liz Dowdeswell's term?
- Maybe you can update people by providing information to local libraries.
- Public awareness and intergenerational equity were topics of interest to some participants. A common sentiment raised was the importance of establishing awareness of the used fuel issue amongst the public and dealing with the issue within the present generation.
- Oftentimes it seems that the public is not interested in such a large topic.

Nuclear Energy and Used Nuclear Fuel

- What type of storage do we have right now?
- Where is the nuclear waste now?
- What about medical waste? Is that gamma radiation? How is it stored?
- Today it is more difficult to find out what's going on with nuclear plants; there seems to be secrecy.
- How does the fuel bundle compare to the original uranium ore?
- How dangerous are the bundles and how soon can they be handled by hand?
- Are reactor communities comfortable with it [the waste] in their communities, or do they want it taken away?
- Are there any other known methods to manage used nuclear fuel?

Security

- Terrorism and security are major concerns at nuclear plants
- One of the reasons people are concerned about accessibility and safety is that they hear rumors of army storage containers containing nuclear materials that leaked into aquifers. The participant mentioned that it should be stated in the video that these things have happened and people should be concerned about the hazards of nuclear waste.

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