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Western Indian Treaty Alliance

"Dedicated To Protecting Our Treaties"

In Manitoba

Grand chief Andrew Kirkness
ICFN (MANITOBA)
P.O. Box 10299
Opaskwayak, MB. R0B 2J0
Tel: (204) 623-7227/627-0345
Fax: (204) 623-4041

In Alberta

President Doris Ronnenberg
NCC (ALBERTA)
P.O. Box 14-10426 124th St.
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1R6
Tel: (780) 482-6738
Fax: (780) 482-6738
E-mail: ncc@wita.ca

In Saskatchewan

President Jim Sinclair
CAP (SASKATCHEWAN)
35 Thora Crescent
Regina, Saskatchewan S4N 4H9
Tel: (306) 569-2296
Fax: (306) 751-1977

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INITIAL COMMENTARY ON THE NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION DISCUSSION DOCUMENT "UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICES"

YOURS TRULY,

DORIS RONNENBERG
DIRECTOR-WITA

PART I

ANALYSIS OF NWMO DISCUSSION DOCUMENT
OF AUGUST, 2004- "UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICES"

THE NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION (NWMO) DISCUSSION DOCUMENT "UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICES", AFTER A SHORT "FOREWORD" FROM THE NWMO PRESIDENT, BEGINS WITH A 9 PAGE "EXECUTIVE SUMMARY". THIS IS FOLLOWED BY A MORE EXTENSIVE (3) PARTS ENTITLED:

- 1.) FOUNDATIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT
- 2.) A PRELIMINARY COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT
- 3.) TOWARDS A MANAGEMENT APPROACH

"FIGURES AND TABLES", AND (5) APPENDICES. ROUND OFF THIS 110 PAGE DISCUSSION PAPER.

AS WE ARE TALKING ABOUT CANADA HERE, THIS NWMO PAPER BEGINS WITH AN EXAMINATION OF THE VALUES AND PRIORITIES OF CANADIANS. AS WELL, HOW NWMO HAS USED THIS UNDERSTANDING TO BUILD AN ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK; AND ALSO TO COMPARE NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT APPROACHES.

IN PART I OF "UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICES", NWMO REPORTS BACK ON THE DIRECTION IT HAS RECEIVED FROM ITS' ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES TO DATE

THE NWMO APPROACH TO CANADIAN VALUES AND PRIORITIES IS REFLECTED IN ITS' (3) THREE "CORE AND PARALLEL ACTIVITIES". THAT IS,

- 1.) LAUNCHING OF A NATIONAL CITIZENS DIALOGUE, WORKING WITH THE CANADIAN POLICY RESEARCH NETWORK (CPRN), AND 462 UNAFFILIATED CANADIANS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE;
- 2.) WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ON PLANNING FOR A VERY LONG TIMEFRAME, INVOLVING THE PRINCIPLES INHERENT IN ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE;
- 3.) CREATING A NWMO "ROUNDTABLE ON ETHICS" TO HELP DEVELOP NWMO ACTIVITIES WITHIN AN "ETHICAL AND SOCIAL FRAMEWORK". THIS ROUNDTABLE HELPS DIRECT NWMO ACTIVITIES, ASSESS MANAGEMENT APPROACHES, AND PROVIDES A CONSTANT REMINDER OF THE ETHICAL IMPERATIVE. SUCH AN ETHICAL IMPERATIVE IS ESSENTIAL, AS THE NWMO DISCUSSION DOCUMENT INDICATES:

"THROUGHOUT THE DIALOGUE WE HAVE HEARD AN EMERGING SENSE THAT THE ASSESSMENT OF MANAGEMENT APPROACHES WILL NECESSARILY INVOLVE DIFFICULT DECISIONS ABOUT PRIORITIES.

(2)

AND THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH TRADE-OFFS AMONG OBJECTIVES WOULD BE APPROPRIATE

TENSIONS DO, AND WILL CONTINUE, TO EXIST.

NWMO HAS BEEN TOLD TO CONSIDER SIX(6) ISSUES:

- 1.) A MORE PRECISE DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURE OF THE HAZARD POSED BY USED NUCLEAR FUEL TO HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT;
- 2.) A MORE PRECISE ACCOUNT OF THE NATURE OF THE RISK POSED BY TRANSPORTATION OF USED NUCLEAR FUEL;
- 3.) CLARIFICATION OF WHAT "SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY" OR "PUBLIC CONFIDENCE" WILL ENTAIL;
- 4.) HOW THE ASSESSMENT IS AFFECTED BY THE VOLUME OF USED NUCLEAR FUEL, WHICH ULTIMATELY NEEDS TO BE MANAGED;
- 5.) OPPORTUNITIES TO REUSE OR RECYCLE NUCLEAR FUEL;
- 6.) OPPORTUNITIES TO SITE A DEEP DISPOSAL REPOSITORY IN GEOLOGIC MEDIA OTHER THAN THAT NOTED IN THE "NUCLEAR FUEL WASTE ACT";

IN PART II OF "UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICES", NWMO PROVIDES FULLER DESCRIPTIONS OF THE APPROACHES ON WHICH NWMO WILL FOCUS ITS STUDY. THIS INVOLVES HOW THE FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS THE APPROACHES HAS EVOLVED SINCE AN EARLIER NWMO DOCUMENT "ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS". FINALLY, NWMO PRESENTS A PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE FRAMEWORK THROUGH A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT APPROACHES.

NWMO, IN EARLY 2004, ASSEMBLED AN "ASSESSMENT TEAM". A MULTI-DISCIPLINED GROUP OF PEOPLE WHOSE PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ARE SET OUT IN THE NWMO DISCUSSION DOCUMENT. THESE FINDINGS INCLUDE THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE THREE METHODS OF STORAGE SET OUT IN THE "NUCLEAR FUEL WASTE ACT". THAT IS:

- 1.) AT REACTOR STORAGE
- 2.) CENTRALIZED STORAGE (EITHER ABOVE-GROUND OR SHALLOW BELOW GROUND);
- 3.) DEEP GEOLOGICAL REPOSITORY;

IN PART III OF "UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICES" NWMO TAKES STOCK OF WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED TO DATE, AND IDENTIFY A PATH FORWARD

(3)

FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF THE NWMO STUDY.

THE PATH FORWARD- "WHAT NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED? THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK IS SET OUT IN TABLE E-2 OF THE NWMO DISCUSSION PAPER (ON PAGE 10). THE ORIGINAL 10 QUESTIONS FROM EARLIER NWMO WORK, HAVE BEEN SYNTHESIZED INTO (8) OBJECTIVES, AND ASSOCIATED GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND INFLUENCES-THIS CONSTITUTES THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK.

NWMO NOW, WITH A NOVEMBER 15,2005 DEADLINE TO PRESENT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES, IS ENGAGING CANADIANS ON THE MANY ELEMENTS OF THE ASSESSMENT OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS. THIS INCLUDES THE PUBLIC, RESIDENTS OF NUCLEAR SITE COMMUNITIES, ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, AND INTERESTED ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS.

PART II

INITIAL COMMENTARY ON NWMO DISCUSSION DOCUMENT
"UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICES" OF AUGUST, 2004 - 10 QUESTIONS
COMMENTED UPON BY A WESTERN ABORIGINAL LEADER

-DORIS RONNENBERG – PRESIDENT NCC (ALBERTA)

QUESTION #1

WHERE SHOULD NUCLEAR WASTE BE STORED IN CANADA?

COMMENTARY:

IF THIS IS TO HAPPEN, IT SHOULD BE STORED IN AN AREA WHICH HAS NOT HAD EARTHQUAKES. IT SHOULD ALSO BE AWAY FROM THE UNDERGROUND WATER TABLE, AND NOT CLOSE TO THE MAJOR WATER TRIBUTORIES IN CANADA. IT SHOULD ALSO BE STORED IN THE MOST SECURE FASHION IRRESPECTIVE OF THE COST-AS THE COST WOULD BE PROHIBITIVE IF HARM CAME TO HUMANS, PLANTS, AND OTHER SENTIENT LIFE

QUESTION #2

WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE SAFETY FOR HUMAN HEALTH, AND THE ENVIRONMENT, INsofar AS NUCLEAR WASTE?

COMMENTARY:

I NEED FURTHER EXPLANATION AS TO WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PROPOSING.

(2)

QUESTION #3:

NWMO'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IS COMMENDABLE. HOWEVER, WHAT IS NWMO PREPARED TO LISTEN TO, AND ADD TO THE FINAL REPORT?

COMMENTARY:

THE TERM "TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE" ENCOMPASSES A WAY OF LIFE AND A WAY OF VIEWING THE UNIVERSE. THE BELIEF IS THAT ALL LIFE IS "SACRED". AIR, WATER, AND LAND ARE NEEDED TO SUSTAIN LIFE. WE LIVE ON EARTH FOR A CERTAIN PERIOD OF TIME, AND DURING THAT TIME IT IS OUR DUTY NOT TO HARM THE LAND, AIR AND WATER FOR THE FUTURE GENERATIONS-THOSE BORN AND THOSE YET TO BE BORN. UNDERSTANDING AND ACKNOWLEDGING ARE TWO (2) DIFFERENT THINGS.
THE TWO WORDS SHOULD NOT BE INTERCHANGED.

QUESTION #4

WHAT STEPS AND METHODS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO ENSURE SAFE TRANSPORTATION OF NUCLEAR WASTE?

COMMENTARY:

TRANSPARANCY IS NEEDED AS TO WHAT IS BEING TRANSPORTED AND WHEN, AND WHAT ROUTES ARE BEING USED. IF A SPILL HAPPENS, (ACCIDENTS DO HAPPEN), IT IS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST THAT THIS BE REPORTED TO THE MEDIA-SO THAT PEOPLE ARE AWARE.

QUESTION #5

WHAT SECURITY MEASURES, INCLUDING FACILITATION, MATERIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE, SHOULD BE ADOPTED GOVERNING CANADIAN NUCLEAR WASTE?

(3)

COMMENTARY:

THIS IS A TECHNICAL QUESTION, AND SHOULD BE FURTHER EXPLAINED IN THE WORKSHOP. WHEN PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD, AN ANSWER CAN BE MADE.

QUESTION #6

GIVEN THE LEGAL PROTECTION IN THE CANADIAN CONSTITUTION, UNDER SECTION 35, OF INDIAN TREATIES, WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN NOW TO ENSURE THE PRESERVATION OF A CLEAN LAND, WATER, AND AIR ENVIRONMENT IN CANADA, INSOFAR AS NUCLEAR WASTE?

COMMENTARY:

TREATY INDIANS NOW HAVE A SUPREME COURT PRECEDENT (OLDMAN DAM CASE) WHICH RULED THAT TREATY RIGHTS INCLUDE THE RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR, WATER, AND LAND. THIS COULD BE FURTHER EXPANDED THAT THE MEDICINES INDIAN PEOPLE USE BE FREE OF CONTAMINATION. CONTAMINATED LAND GROWS CONTAMINATED MEDICINE. CARE SHOULD BE GIVEN THAT NUCLEAR WASTE IS NOT USED AS THE "DESEASED BLANKET" OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

QUESTION #7

GIVEN THE LONG HALF-LIFE OF SOME NUCLEAR WASTE, WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE INCORPORATED IN THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK OF NWMO, TO ENSURE A CAPACITY TO ADOPT TO CHANGING KNOWLEDGE AND CONDITIONS, OVER TIME?

(4)

COMMENTARY:

ONGOING RESEARCH IS A MUST. IF RESEARCH BREAKTHROUGHS HAPPEN AS TO THE SECONDARY USES OF THE WASTE., THIS FACT NEEDS TO BE INCORPORATED IN THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK. THE PREMISE BEING THAT THE RESEARCH BE PROVEN.

QUESTION #8:

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD AN INDIAN, METIS, OR INUIT COMMUNITY ASK WHEN OFFERED LARGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY BY POWER PRODUCERS/ GOVERNMENT, TO STORE NUCLEAR WASTE NEAR THEM/

COMMENTARY:

THE QUESTION WOULD BE ARE THESE PEOPLE BEING TALKED TO SECULAR OR TRADITIONAL? JUDAS SOLD OUT FOR 30 PIECES OF SILVER, SO SELLING THE FUTURE HEALTH OF A PEOPLE AT EXHORBITANT PRICES IS UNDERSTANDABLE IN TODAYS' MONIED SOCIETY. AS A SAFETY MARGIN 90% OF THE PEOPLE LIVING IN AND OFF THE COMMUNITY WOULD HAVE TO BE INFORMED, AND TO AGREE BY SOME FORM OF PLEBICITE.

QUESTION #9

GIVEN TODAYS' TERRORISM THREAT, WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO BOMB-GRADE PLUTONIUM-PART OF NUCLEAR WASTE

COMMENTARY:

THIS PART OF NUCLEAR WASTE HAS TO BE VERY SECURE. IN CANADA WE DO NOT KNOW WAR , OR TERRORISM. WE SEE IT ON TV, OR READ ABOUT IT. THE HEAD OF SECURITY FOR CANADA HAS NO BACKGROUND IN EITHER WAR OR TERRORISM. THIS SHOWS OUR NIAVITY AS A COUNTRY AND A PEOPLE. THE BOMB-GRADE PLUTONIUM PART OF NUCLEAR WASTE HAS TO BE TREATED WITH MAXIMUM SECURITY.

QUESTION #10:

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO ENSURE RESPECT FOR LIFE IN ALL ITS' FORMS, INCLUDING MINIMIZATION OF HARM TO HUMAN BEINGS AND OTHER SENTIENT CREATURES, INsofar AS NUCLEAR WASTE, FROM CANADAS' REACTORS?

COMMENTARY:

THIS SUBJECT AFFECTS ALL LIFE ON EARTH, NOT ONLY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE. CARE MUST BE GIVEN NOT TO POLLUTE AND/OR CONTAMINATE THE WATER (i.e.. WATER TABLE, LAKES,RIVERS, CREEKS). IF ANY SEEPAGE HAPPENS FROM THE STORAGE FACILITTY, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW FAST OR HOW SLOW, AND THE DIRECTION, OR DIRECTIONS. ANIMALS WHO EAT THE PLANTS CAN BE HARMED IN THIS WAY. ABORIGINAL PEOPLE STILL HUNT WILD ANIMALS FOR FOOD.