

**ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE NWMO**  
c/o NWMO, 22 St. Clair Avenue East, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M4T 2S3

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson  
Minister, Natural Resources Canada  
580 Booth Street, 21<sup>st</sup> Floor, Room: C7-1  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0E4

April 2022

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

On behalf of the Advisory Council to the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), I am pleased to provide you with an update on our work in 2021, as well as to offer you some brief reflections for your consideration.

The Advisory Council is an independent and arm's-length body, comprising individuals knowledgeable in the management of used nuclear fuel and in working with people and communities on difficult public policy issues. Our role is to ensure that the views of the public and communities of interest are considered and reflected in a thoughtful, balanced way in the proposed approaches and reports of the NWMO. We also assist the NWMO in ensuring that its processes are open, transparent, thorough and sound.

**The year 2021 in review**

Throughout 2021, the Advisory Council received updates from the NWMO on its progress implementing Canada's plan for the safe, long-term management of used nuclear fuel. We closely followed the organization's efforts to continue navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, which we acknowledge caused difficulties for those who work at the NWMO, for the communities in the site selection process, and of course, for Canada as a whole. We offered guidance on planning and on the NWMO's recovery plans related to pandemic delays.

We are happy to observe that despite these challenges, Canada's plan remains on track. We were pleased to see that while the NWMO had to adapt some timelines for its work plans, it has retained its overall goals of selecting a site in late 2023 and obtaining a licence to construct in 2032. It was able to maintain its extensive public engagement activities, whether online or in person, in accordance with public health guidelines, and continued its dialogue with communities in and around the siting areas. We also saw substantial progress on the NWMO's site investigation work.

In 2021, the Advisory Council continued to monitor and provide advice on the NWMO's site selection process. Throughout the year, the NWMO provided ongoing updates on work towards selecting a site in late 2023, including partnership development and hosting agreements, community willingness and siting engagement activities. We offered advice to the NWMO in all these areas.

The Advisory Council continued to focus on safety – in particular, safety from a broad social perspective and safety with respect to the protection of water. We advised the NWMO to

explore how people in the potential host communities or with an interest in transportation define such safety concerns, and how these concerns can be addressed.

We believe that the NWMO's work in this area is progressing well and recommended that it should be given a higher profile in the NWMO's communications efforts. The Advisory Council also noted that it would like to see an increased pace in the NWMO's work to build public awareness of the project, with more breadth across Canada.

In March 2021, the Advisory Council met with Shawn Tupper, NRCan's Assistant Deputy Minister at the time, to discuss the work of the NWMO to date, and review public and government engagement activities related to the NWMO's work. We also discussed small modular reactors and NRCan's work to modernize the waste management policy framework.

The Advisory Council met with the NWMO's Geoscientific Review Group to gain international opinions and to review their interactions, observations and recommendations related to the NWMO's site assessment activities. We also had an initial meeting with the Site Selection Review Group, and we supported the NWMO's work on transportation and the publishing of the *Preliminary transportation plan*. We have stressed the importance of continued work on transportation planning and engagement.

### **Reflections on the work ahead**

This year, the Advisory Council began hearing from the NWMO about plans for the future beyond site selection, such as mobilization to the siting area and preparations for the regulatory decision-making process. Due to the evolving regulatory environment, the Council views it as increasingly important that the NWMO prepare as early and as thoroughly as possible for the regulatory decision-making process.

The Advisory Council believes that the NWMO remains on track to select a safe site in 2023 for Canada's used nuclear fuel repository, in an area with informed, willing hosts. With 2023 drawing near, the NWMO is reaching an important turning point in its work. Once a site is selected, the NWMO will begin participating in the regulatory decision-making process and become subject to Canada's new *Impact Assessment Act*. Given that the organization is approaching this critical juncture, we would like to offer some reflections for the consideration of your Government.

As we stressed in our *Report of the Advisory Council 2017 to 2019*, the successful progress of this important national environmental infrastructure project relies on the continuing and steadfast commitment of the Government of Canada to its selection of Adaptive Phased Management (APM) as the preferred, responsible approach for managing Canada's used nuclear fuel.

Since that report was published, this issue appears to be increasingly urgent as the project gains visibility and as debates emerge over the role of nuclear energy in Canada's climate ambitions. Against this backdrop, we suggest it would be timely for the Government to reaffirm its commitment to APM.

We wish also to observe that, as the NWMO prepares for the regulatory decision-making process, the organization would benefit from increased clarity and coherence from the

Government and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada about regulatory and policy expectations.

It is our view that with this support, the NWMO is well positioned to continue carrying out its mandate to safely manage Canada's used nuclear fuel in a collaborative and responsible manner. In fact, as we have stated previously, our assessment is that the NWMO is an innovative and high-performing organization.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our thinking with you and look forward to continuing our work into 2022 and beyond.

Sincerely, on behalf of the members of the Advisory Council,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Cameron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "David" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and "Cameron" follows in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

David R. Cameron  
Chair, Advisory Council to the NWMO

cc: Mr. Donald Obonsawin, Vice-Chair  
Mr. Joseph Cavallancia      Dr. Monica Gattinger      Ms. Sue Hartwig  
Dr. Dean Jacobs              Ms. Diane M. Kelly        Dr. Derek Lister  
Dr. Dougal McCreath        Dr. Stella Swanson        Ms. Linda Thompson