

Minister's Statement on the 2002 NWMO Annual Report

On March 28, 2003, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) submitted its first annual report to me under the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act* (NFW Act).

The report shows that much effort has been spent in a relatively short period of time since the establishment of the NWMO in October 2002:

- the formation of the NWMO organizational structure (including the creation of the Board of Directors, the appointment of a President and the establishment of a head office in Toronto);
- the establishment of trust funds by the nuclear utilities and Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. (AECL);
- the deposit of first payments into the trust funds to a total of \$550 million;
- the establishment of the NWMO Advisory Council; and,
- the beginning of public consultations (through the NWMO's Web site and informal meetings with a broad range of stakeholders).

President Elizabeth Dowdeswell has made certain that public input is sought at the outset on NWMO activities and proposed plans. In the short time since its establishment, the NWMO has taken an impressive first step toward a comprehensive outreach program.

The Annual Report clearly highlights that high priority will be given to the development of management options that will be assessed within an ethical and social framework, which is central to the Study as required by the *NFW Act*. The NWMO has developed an open approach to public consultations, using three phases of work and the latest innovative tools for effective dialogue. I anticipate productive public consultations in developing long-term management approach options, which will be submitted by the NWMO in November 2005.

In addition to seeking the views of Canadians at large, the NWMO will be seeking independent expert advice throughout its work over the long term. An important source of advice will be the Advisory Council established by the NWMO under the *NFW Act*. I am confident that the Advisory Council reviews will increase the transparency of the work being carried out by the NWMO.

The NWMO's consultation program also involves Aboriginal populations. I look forward to ongoing discussions among NWMO, Natural Resources Canada and Aboriginal populations including national groups.

This report clearly shows that nuclear utilities and AECL have deposited the amounts required by the *NFW Act* into their trust funds. Canadians now have a clear indication that the nuclear industry intends to meet all of its financial responsibilities for the long term.

The Annual Report attests to an impressive beginning of dialogue with all Canadians on the next steps in the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste. This dialogue will be enhanced by using modern tools of communication. To this end, I encourage all Canadians to make their views known by accessing both the NWMO and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) Web sites.

The Government of Canada has placed a high priority on the safe and environmentally sound management of nuclear fuel waste. I can assure Canadians that, with the help of my officials at NRCan, I will ensure that the next steps in long-term management are carried out in a comprehensive, integrated and economically-sound manner, and in the best interests of Canadians. The NWMO Annual Report has emphasized the same goal. I look forward to effective progress toward a solution for the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste, a solution that has the confidence of the Canadian public.

— Herb Dhaliwal, Minister of Natural Resources

Natural Resources Canada
June 25, 2003