

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

NWMO Information Sessions Final Summary Report

**Monday, November 1st and Tuesday, November 2nd, 2004
Memorial Park
Clarington, Ontario**

1.0 PARTICIPANTS

Three information sessions were held in Clarington over two days; there were six participants at the sessions.

The NWMO representative was Sean Russell, and the assessment team member was John Neate. Jim Micak and Christina Bruce were present from DPRA Canada.

The following is a summary of the comments from the Clarington 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

A participant felt that reactor communities have a greater familiarity with nuclear fuel; thus the perception of risk in those communities may be lower than in non-reactor communities.

2.1.2 Limitations

Participants at the information session suggested the following limitations:

- Current reactor sites were not built to serve as long-term storage facilities, thus they should not be automatically considered as an acceptable site.
- The reactors are currently located in populated areas. There would be less risk to people if the used fuel storage facility was located in a less populated area.

2.1.3 Other Comments

Participants at the information sessions asked the following questions regarding storage at reactor sites:

- Have the current sites been built for long-term storage purposes?
- How would the used fuel be handled at dry storage sites?

2.2 *Deep Geological Disposal*

2.2.1 Strengths

A participant believed that there is less risk associated with transporting the used fuel to a remote location than there would be leaving the used fuel in a populated area.

2.2.2 Limitations

Participants at the information session suggested the following limitations:

- Using the word 'disposal' indicated that there could be an assumption that there would be no future value in the used fuel.
- The notion of disposal was not socially acceptable to some participants because it meant that the used fuel would not be re-used or re-cycled, simply disposed.
- A significant limitation for both centralized storage and deep geological disposal is the need to transport the used nuclear fuel. While the risk associated with transportation may be acceptable, the real issue of concern is public perception of the transportation risk. Even with a voluntary host community, communities along transportation corridors may be concerned and may, as a result, oppose any proposal.

2.2.3 Other Comments on Deep Geological Disposal

- A participant stated that deep geological disposal was also a centralized storage method because of the similarities of having to find a central location.
- A participant felt that rail transport may lessen public anxiety but may result in a greater risk due to possible infrastructure sabotage.
- Another participant felt that transportation of the used fuel was not an issue. The participant felt that transportation would be monitored and properly managed. There is currently hazardous waste transported and there have been few accidents or spills that have affected human health. The participant remarked that the NWMO would have to provide reassurance that communities along the transport route are not at risk.

2.3 *Centralized Storage*

2.3.1 Strengths

- Prior to watching the video, a participant felt that deep geological disposal was the best option. After the video, the participant felt that centralized storage was a better option because the used fuel would be retrievable and accessible if technology was to improve or if the option to re-use the used fuel was considered in the future.
- A participant believed that there is less risk in transporting the used fuel than leaving the used fuel in a populated area.

2.3.2 Limitations

A participant suggested that a significant limitation for both centralized storage and deep geological disposal is the need to transport the used nuclear fuel. While the risk associated with transportation may be acceptable, the real issue of concern is public perception of the

transportation risk, even with a voluntary community, communities along transportation corridors may be concerned and may as a result oppose the proposal.

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 expressed fear of terrorists acquiring the used fuel.
- A participant asked how the assessment team went about weighting the different objectives.
- After reviewing the discussion document, a participant felt that there should be a 'risk assessment' indicating the relative risk to the host community and communities along the proposed transportation corridors. The participant also suggested rating each method on a scale of ten, presenting a relative risk assessment of each of the three methods.
- A participant suggested that risk perception is not consistent between informed and average citizens. The participant indicated that what the public perceives the risks to be are different than what the experts might perceive. The public has to be more aware.

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 for clarity on the NWMO process, the participant was wondering if the proposed plan would go through the Federal Cabinet for implementation or if it would be directly implemented through legislation?
- A participant indicated that they understood that there would be additional consultations with citizens living in a host community. The participant asked if these consultations had occurred or when they might take place?
- A participant felt that if different transportation methods were being considered, the option to transport by train would be safer than transport by truck. When transporting by rail, there would be less involvement with other vehicles, more direct and better security along rail corridors. Transportation by water would not be a preferred option. There would be too much concern for the environment and safety of drinking water if an accident were to occur.

5.0 Additional Comments on Discussion Document 2

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

- A participant asked if peer review funding was available for the reactor communities that are reviewing the documents.
- The participant asked how the funding was being allocated; does the funding need to be requested or is NWMO providing communities with funding without a formal application? Is NWMO providing a 'lump sum' of money to the nuclear host communities?
- Referring to the tight timeframe, a participant asked how NWMO planned on proceeding with the process? The participant also asked what dialogues were currently taking place and what groups were being engaged?

- A participant asked how the findings of the Aboriginal consultations compared to the findings of the other dialogues.
- A participant asked about the status of the NWMO studies on transportation; and enquired about when the studies will be available for review.

6.0 Other Comments

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

Public Engagement

- A participant was wondering about the turnout at the sessions. It was suggested that citizens were not interested because they feel that it is an issue that does not directly affect them. Citizens may show more interest if it was a final decision that was being presented. The participant was not sure how to encourage more participation.
- A participant asked how the NWMO process was going? How different the views are that are being expressed? How are the sensitivities for the Aboriginal communities being handled? What is the NWMO doing to engage citizens?
- A participant indicated that she was disappointed with the turnout at the public meetings, but not surprised. The participant believed that if it was actually being proposed that the material remain on-site in Clarington, there would be a much higher turn-out.
- A participant suggested having an engagement process for the discussion session that would involve inviting numerous interest groups from across the region.
- Concern was expressed over the low public attendance at the NWMO Information Session; the participant felt that since reactor community dialogue did not occur and since community turn-out is low and given the timing of the NWMO process an opportunity for community engagement in Clarington may be lost.
- A participant suggested that energy policy was not an interest for the average citizen.

Nuclear Energy

- A participant asked if the used nuclear fuel could be used for anything else? The participant asked if the option to reprocess the used fuel was being considered and how would the used fuel be used?

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