

## **Understanding the Choices – The Future Management of Canada's Used Nuclear Fuel**

### **NWMO Information Sessions Final Summary Report**

**October 6 and 7, 2004  
The Holiday Inn Select Halifax Centre  
Halifax, Nova Scotia**

#### **1.0 PARTICIPANTS**

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There were two participants at the information sessions.

The NWMO representative was Pat Patton, the assessment team member was Michael Ben-Eli and Amanda Kennedy and Sarita Swamy were present from DPRA Canada.

The following is a summary of comments from the Halifax Information Sessions.

#### **2.0 MANAGEMENT APPROACHES**

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What are the strengths and limitations of each Management Approach?

##### *2.1 Storage at Reactor Sites*

###### **2.1.1 Strengths**

A participant commented that storage of nuclear waste at reactor sites is neutralized and a safe form of storage. Attention was drawn to the importance of dealing with the waste during the present time versus the distant future.

###### **2.1.2 Limitations**

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

###### **2.1.3 General Comments**

A question was raised regarding the status of Whiteshell as a potential storage site, was it being considered as a storage site?

Remarks were made by participants regarding the uncertainty of human behaviour 10,000 years from now, and present and future security issues. In particular, how to safeguard nuclear waste from human abuse was raised, and the inability to predict changes in political structures.

During a discussion on the options for storage at reactor sites, a participant made the comparison to a New Mexico experiment regarding uranium shafts related to nuclear explosion

testing. The participant was familiar with this experiment and described it as a fantastic design, the storage casing was encapsulated in granite and prevented water penetration.

## *2.2 Deep Geological Disposal*

No comments were made regarding deep geological disposal at the information sessions

## *2.3 Centralized Storage*

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

## **3.0 ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK**

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

General comments about the framework included the following:

- People will only take an interest [in this issue] when they are faced with economic hardship. It was felt that charging the public more for electricity would force them to look at the issue from all dimensions.
- There may be too much emphasis placed on public opinion and public consultation. The sentiment expressed was that this could delay progress and implementation of a proposed technical method.
- Legislation should be in place to support implementation rather than creating delays.
- The example of Nova Scotia's mining experience was highlighted, whereby it was felt that the legislation in place made it difficult for mining companies to operate there.

## **4.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

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**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?**

No comments were made concerning an implementation plan and a phased approach.

## **5.0 Additional Comments on Discussion Document 2**

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

## **6.0 Other Comments**

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

### Nuclear Energy

- A question was raised about the progress to date regarding the management of Canada's used nuclear fuel.
- A question of whether the process is at the delivery stage was raised.
- A suggestion about initiating a competition whereby an organization accepts nominations from communities willing to accept nuclear waste was raised.
- While issues of security were of concern to participants, it was felt that the public would have to learn to accept the risks associated with the transportation of used nuclear fuel. A remark was made that the public is unaware of the amount of risk they are currently

exposed to, and that the risk associated with the transportation and management of nuclear waste is minimal compared to everyday risks the public is exposed to.

#### Regional Issues

- A question about the NWMO engagement process in New Brunswick was raised. A participant remarked that the timing is interesting given that some nuclear companies are looking into refurbishing some nuclear plants.

#### Engagement/Canadian Involvement

- A participant made the comment that the public may be convinced of a particular method over time; however, it's usually when the chosen technical method is implemented that public will take a greater interest in the issue.

#### International Experiences

- It was felt that the EPA's regulations in the US are commendable. Drawing upon the U.S' mining experience, the EPA's zero tolerance policy was viewed as a good example of what Canada should be moving towards. A comment was made on the inadequacy of Environment Canada's regulations based on guidelines. Following up on this sentiment, was that Canada has too many programs, but not a concrete plan for implementation, resulting in poor environmental protection.
- It was noted that politicians in Canada make it nearly impossible to get ahead in solving any problems including nuclear waste management decisions.
- What other storage techniques have been used in other countries?

#### Nuclear Waste Management Organization

- Who does the NWMO report to?

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