

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

NWMO Information Session Final Summary Report

**Tuesday, December 7 and Wednesday, December 8, 2004
Discovery Lodge
Iqaluit, Nunavut**

1.0 PARTICIPANTS

Two information sessions were held in Iqaluit over two days; there were six participants at the information sessions.

The NWMO representatives were Mike Krizanc and Ron Doering. Christel von Engelbrechten and Subashna Moktan were present from DPRA Canada.

The following is a summary of the comments from the Iqaluit 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

There were no comments made regarding the strengths of storage at reactor sites.

2.1.2 Limitations

There were no comments made regarding the limitation of storage at reactor sites

2.1.3 Other comments on storage at reactor sites

There were no other comments provided regarding storage at reactor sites.

2.2 Deep Geological Disposal

2.2.1 Strengths

There were no comments made regarding the strengths of deep geological disposal.

2.2.2 Limitations

- There was concern in regard to the occurrence of an earthquake and the potential for radioactive leakage.
- There was fear that it might not be possible to extinguish a fire that starts underground within the repository.
- One participant felt that by burying the nuclear waste underground, it was like “sweeping it under a rug”.

2.2.3 Other comments on deep geological disposal

- A participant questioned what would happen if a deep geological disposal system was constructed on a geological fault.
- Participants asked what might happen if there was an accident underground, for example, while depositing the nuclear waste containers.
- A question was asked in regard to the most favourable location for deep geological disposal.
- Only temporary storage of the nuclear waste using the deep geological disposal method was suggested.

2.3 Centralized Storage

2.3.1 Strengths

- If there are problems in the future, all the waste would be in one place.

2.3.2 Limitations

There were no comments made regarding the limitations of deep geologic disposal.

2.3.3 Other comments on centralized storage

- A question was asked in regard to how deep centralized storage would be below ground.

3.0 ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

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

No comments were provided.

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?

No comments were provided.

5.0 Additional Comments on Discussion Document 2

With respect to the document, “Understanding the Choices”, the following comments were made:

No comments were provided.

6.0 Other Comments

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

Transportation

- Participants enquired about the steps that would be taken to clean up an accident, if one occurred during transportation of nuclear waste.

International

- It was recommended to look at lessons learned and research done by other countries.
- A participant asked whether other countries use nuclear fuel bundles.
- It was suggested that Canada should research how other countries deal with various nuclear waste disposal issues.
- Participants asked if other countries share their knowledge on nuclear waste management with Canada.
- There was concern in regard to Canada exporting uranium to foreign countries, which is then used to make nuclear weapons.

Location

- There was a suggestion that all nuclear waste should be kept in Ontario, so that if there are problems in the future, the waste is in one place.
- There was concern that the North might be a possible siting location for storing nuclear waste. Participants asked about the likelihood of the North being a site location for nuclear waste storage.
- A participant asked whether NWMO was looking at the vicinity of the nuclear reactor sites as possible siting places.
- A participant asked, “If the waste is not going to be brought up here, then why are you holding consultations in the North? I wouldn’t go the South to ask about waste disposal in the North”. The participant asked what NWMO is doing to reassure people that nuclear waste is not going to be located in the North.

Safety

- If there was a nuclear waste “spill”, it was asked what the effects would be on humans and other life forms.
- There was a question in regard to the probability of a fuel bundle exploding in storage.
- Participants asked about the ecological consequences of storing nuclear waste.
- Participants asked whether or not the water table would be affected by stored waste.
- It was asked if there have been any accidents with nuclear fuel rods.
- There were safety, terrorism and security concerns expressed.

General

- A participant commented that the best option would be to shoot the nuclear waste into space.

- It was felt that it is important to keep the used nuclear fuel as far away from people as possible.
- A number of questions were raised about the process, NWMO and timelines.
- A participant asked what the difference is between uranium and nuclear.
- A participant asked what the various uses of uranium are in the civilian sector. There was a question in regard to the use of depleted uranium in medical devices.
- It was stated that cruise missile testing took place in Nunavut. It was also stated that depleted uranium above ground could not be cleaned up.
- Comments were made about the lack of public attendance at the information sessions.
- A participant asked, “How concerned are you about getting a good slice of public opinion if people aren’t showing up? How can you get a good representation in Iqaluit of this proposal if no one shows up?”
- A question was raised in regard to how much impact Canadians will have on the Government’s decision on nuclear waste management.
- Recycling or reprocessing nuclear waste was suggested. Participants asked whether or not nuclear waste could be reused.
- Participants asked how hot fuel bundles become in dry storage.
- If a decision is made and implementation goes ahead, a participant asked that if a better method is found during this time, whether this method would be considered as an option instead.
- There was a suggestion to put the waste deep into volcanoes.
- A participant asked what the value of transmutation is and if it is worth pursuing.
- A participant asked whether future alternative energy sources would affect the NWMO study.
- It was asked what materials are used to make the containers that transport nuclear waste.
- A participant asked why NWMO is going across the country for this dialogue.
- How will feedback from various Inuit organizations be incorporated or used to make a decision on nuclear waste management?
- It was asked when NWMO has to provide recommendations to the Government.
- Participants asked about issues raised in other public consultations.
- There was a question in regard to the location and amount of nuclear waste present.
- It was asked why options for disposal were not considered when nuclear fuel activity was developed.
- A question in regard to the cost of the consultation process was raised.
- It was asked whether or not the nuclear industry is expanding in Canada.
- In terms of the consultation process, a participant felt that it was an opportunity for the Inuit to participate in the process of long term management of nuclear waste. The participant stated that they look forward to participating further in the future.

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