

For Immediate Release
July 12, 2023

Public Interest Groups Call for Public Debate on Radioactive Waste Management Strategy

Ottawa - Civil society organizations are calling on Natural Resources Minister Jonathon Wilkinson to honour commitments made by his predecessor Seamus O'Regan to engage with Canadians on appropriate strategies for the management of radioactive waste rather than simply rubber stamping the nuclear industry's recommended approach.

On July 4th the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) [announced](#) that it had submitted its "[recommendations](#)" for an Integrated Strategy for Radioactive Waste to Minister Wilkinson. There have been no communications from the federal government on next steps, including public engagement. The NWMO is a consortium of nuclear power operators, led by Ontario Power Generation.

In 2020 the NWMO was tasked by the federal government with the development of recommendations for an integrated radioactive waste strategy by (then) Minister of Natural Resources Seamus O'Regan. In his assigning the task to the NWMO, O'Regan was clear that the product of the NWMO's exercise was to be provided for [review and consideration by the Government](#).

Civil society organizations have previously expressed strong concern and disagreement with NRCan's decision to ask the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) to lead the development of an "integrated strategy for radioactive waste", saying they understand and accept the nuclear industry having input into Canada's radioactive waste management strategy but fully reject any notion that industry determines the strategy. Concern has increased with the July 4th announcement by the NWMO that they had submitted their recommendations being followed by silence from the federal government on how Canadians and Indigenous people will be engaged in the promised review.

"For a government that ran on a platform of restoring the trust of Canadians in decision-making it has been extraordinary to watch key decisions being handed over to the nuclear industry" observed Brennain Lloyd from the northern Ontario environmental group Northwatch.

In a letter sent today, a large range and number of civil society organizations called on Minister Wilkinson and Prime Minister Trudeau to fully engage in a review of the industry recommendations.

The letter also expressed profound disappointment in [Canada's Policy for Radioactive Waste and Decommissioning](#) (the Policy) released on March 31st saying Canada's [new policy](#) leaves the nuclear industry in charge and the public and the environment at risk.

"Key priorities were omitted, including the establishment of a national waste management agency independent of the industry, a ban on the extraction of plutonium from nuclear fuel waste, a long-term strategy for the 230 million tonnes of radioactive wastes from uranium mining, and a commitment to keep all radioactive waste isolated from the biosphere in perpetuity", commented Gordon Edwards, President of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility.

For more information, contact:

Gordon Edwards, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility
Tel 514 839 7214, email ccnr@web.ca

Brennain Lloyd, Northwatch
Tel 705 497 0373, email brennain@northwatch.org

Susan O'Donnell, Coalition for Responsible Energy Development in New Brunswick
Tel 506-261-1727, email info@crednb.ca