



MEDIA ADVISORY

30 March 2023

## **Civil Society Groups Anticipate Release of Canada's Radioactive Waste Policy**

Ottawa - Civil society groups are anticipating the imminent release of Canada's "modernized" radioactive waste policy. On March 27<sup>th</sup> Natural Resources Canada released a [statement](#) that the policy "will be accessible [online](#) in the coming days."

**A rapid response from civil society groups, convened by a campaign group of Nuclear Waste Watch will be issued shortly after the policy's release.**

In 2019 the International Atomic Energy Agency conducted a [peer review](#) of Canada's nuclear regulatory framework. The IAEA recommended that Canada "enhance" its 3-bullet-point [radioactive waste policy framework](#).

Nuclear Waste Watch [facilitated the engagement](#) of more than a hundred organizations in the policy review process, convening a series of roundtable discussions with Natural Resources Canada, and bilingual national preparatory sessions for each of the Natural Resources Canada's four discussion papers and the draft policy, and preparing and releasing an [Alternative Policy](#) in response to Natural Resources' draft policy, based on the input of the hundreds of participants.

The groups will analyze the government's radioactive waste policy upon its release and share their findings through a posting at [www.nuclearwastewatch.ca](http://www.nuclearwastewatch.ca). An online briefing for members of the media will follow shortly afterwards.

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## MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

In response to a recommendation from the IAEA, the federal government announced in February 2020 that it would "modernize" Canada's radioactive waste policy. Natural Resources Canada launched the policy review on November 16, 2020.

Over 100 civil society participants and organizations joined a series of webinars in both official languages organized by Nuclear Waste Watch, participated in roundtable discussions with Natural Resources Canada, and provided hundreds of written submissions.

Key messages from civil society included:

- Canada needs an independent agency, arms-length from government and industry, to oversee radioactive waste management and decommissioning; the nuclear industry operated Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) is NOT that agency.
- Radioactive waste should NOT be abandoned; policy should direct perpetual care and monitoring. Government and industry must be open and transparent in the management of radioactive waste and its transportation.
- Indigenous peoples and other Canadians have a right to access information, to engage in decision-making, and to know the risks.
- Policy should explicitly prohibit the importing of radioactive waste from other countries.
- Plutonium extraction (by reprocessing or pyro-processing) from radioactive fuel waste must be prohibited, due to environmental, security and proliferation concerns.
- Any proposed new facilities for storage, processing, or disposal of radioactive waste should undergo credible impact assessments.

In February 2022 Natural Resources Canada released a draft of their revised radioactive waste policy and invited feedback during a public comment period of 60 days.

Hundreds of Canadians commented on the draft policy and over 7,000 messages explicitly called a ban on reprocessing to extract plutonium from fuel waste.

Public interest groups released "[An Alternative Policy for Canada on Radioactive Waste Management and Decommissioning](#)". The *Alternative Policy* mirrors in order and content the draft policy released by Natural Resources Canada but integrates important changes to bring the policy in line with fundamental principles of transparency, safety and the public good.

### LINKS

Additional information about the nuclear waste policy review, visit the Nuclear Waste Watch web pages [HERE](#).

The members of Nuclear Waste Watch Radioactive Waste Review Group who prepared [An Alternative Policy for Canada on Radioactive Waste Management and Decommissioning](#) are:

[Review Timeline and Synopsis](#)

[One page review of draft policy](#) (February 2022)

## Nuclear Waste Watch

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