

NUCLEAR WASTE WATCH

A Network of Organizations Concerned about High Level Radioactive Waste and Nuclear Power in Canada

POSITION STATEMENT

1. The first priority of responsible waste management is reduction at source. High level radioactive waste in Canada can only be reduced at source through a binding commitment to the early phaseout of nuclear power. Early nuclear phaseout means that there would be no new reactors and no major refurbishment of reactors to prolong their current lifespans.
2. Neither the safety nor the acceptability of deep geological disposal of radioactive waste in perpetuity was established to the satisfaction of the federal environmental assessment panel (the Seaborn Panel) that reviewed the evidence. Any waste management option should, for the foreseeable future, be based on surface and/or near-surface monitored and retrievable storage -- at least until a nuclear power phaseout has been achieved, the technical case for an alternative option (or options) has been thoroughly reviewed, and a social consensus has been achieved.
3. The Seaborn Panel called for the creation of a nuclear fuel waste management agency "at arm's length" from the nuclear industry, with its board of directors representative of independent "key stakeholders". In direct opposition to this, the government created the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) with its board comprised solely of nuclear industry representatives. The nuclear industry strongly supports deep geological disposal of radioactive waste, so the ability of the NWMO to make an objective recommendation is questionable.
4. Given the importance of this issue to present and future generations of Canadians, the government should guarantee a joint federal/provincial environmental assessment panel on the full range of radioactive waste management options following the NWMO recommendation in November 2005. The process should be adequately funded by the proponents in order to allow public interest intervenors to retain independent technical expertise. The federal government should also guarantee a full parliamentary debate and free vote on the recommendations of the NWMO and the environmental assessment panel.
5. If the Government of Canada decides on any kind of centralized waste management option (whether above or below ground), there will be risk to communities along the transportation route, as well as to the potential recipient community. In such a case, the potential recipient and transport route communities should all have veto power, and should receive funding from proponents for independent research and community education.
6. The Canadian Government should guarantee that Canada will not import high level radioactive waste.

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