



For Immediate Release
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Public interest groups release a policy for Canada to manage radioactive waste for the public good

Ottawa - Today a national coalition of public interest groups released "[An Alternative Policy for Canada on Radioactive Waste Management and Decommissioning](#)." The Radioactive Waste Review Group is submitting the alternative policy and a meeting request to Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Natural Resources Canada.

The Alternative Policy mirrors in order and content a [draft policy](#) released in February 2022 by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan). However, the Alternative Policy integrates important changes to bring the policy in line with fundamental principles of transparency, safety and the public good.

Nuclear research and development, and the use of nuclear technologies, produce radioactive waste: gases, liquids, sludges or solids containing a nuclear substance. Radioactive wastes are by-products of nuclear fuel production and nuclear reactor operation.

Recognizing that radioactive waste can remain hazardous for very long periods of time, the Alternative Policy provides principles and guidance to waste producers, and facility owners and operators, to ensure they manage radioactive waste to protect health, safety, security and the environment over the long-term.

The Alternative Policy respects the five principles for radioactive waste management formulated by the Anishinabek/Iroquois Alliance: no abandonment; monitored and retrievable storage; better containment, more packaging; away from major water bodies; and no imports or exports of radioactive wastes.

The national organization [Nuclear Waste Watch](#) convened the Radioactive Waste Review Group in 2019. Their Alternative Policy development process included two years of meetings, information exchanges, consultations and submissions with civil society, public interest and Indigenous groups across Canada.

Quotes:

"Canada must create a publicly-owned agency, independent of the nuclear industry and government agencies that promote nuclear power, to oversee the management of radioactive pollutants and decommissioning of nuclear facilities. The new agency would ensure that waste management target schedules are respected and reports on progress are made available to the public," said Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

"Bearing in mind the danger of radioactive waste, and that future generations will have to assume responsibility in case of containment failure, it is essential that radioactive waste producers, owners, facility operators, governments, Indigenous peoples, scientific experts, civil society groups and other interested Canadians and communities regularly contribute to planning, developing, reviewing and implementing an integrated strategy for radioactive waste management. This is not something that should be left to industry alone," said Brennain Lloyd spokesperson for Northwatch

"Uranium mine and mill tailings represent a very large volume of long-lived radioactive waste in Canada. An adequate and realistic "polluter pays" principle and monitoring must be implemented to ensure polluters provide secure and adequate financing, including a contingency fund for future remediation efforts, while following strict management practices that prevent damage to human health or the environment," said Michael Poellet, representing the Inter-Church Uranium Committee (ICUC) in Saskatchewan

"Radioactive waste must be characterized and classified according to a national standard, with provision made for careful retention of records, knowledge and memory of radioactive waste. Future risks associated with waste storage, handling, packaging, transport and long-term management must be kept to a minimum," said Ginette Charbonneau, Ralliement contre la pollution radioactive

"Our Alternative Policy ensures that detailed plans for disposal of radioactive waste will be prepared at project inception. The industry must not continue its haphazard approach to waste disposal, as we are currently experiencing at the Chalk River site next to the Ottawa River," said Dr. Ole Hendrickson, representing Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area

"Our Alternative Policy forbids reprocessing technology in Canada, which extracts plutonium from high-level nuclear waste. This would end the current plans to reprocess nuclear waste in New Brunswick. There is considerable evidence that reprocessing spent nuclear fuel creates nuclear weapons proliferation risks and international relations concerns," said Dr. Susan O'Donnell, representing the Coalition for Responsible Energy Development in New Brunswick

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