

Summary of the Government of Canada Response to the Recommendations of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management and Disposal Concept Environmental Assessment Panel

The 1996 Policy Framework for Radioactive Waste outlined the principles governing the institutional and financial arrangements for the disposal of radioactive waste by waste producers and owners. It clearly recognized that arrangements may be different for nuclear fuel waste, low-level radioactive waste and uranium mine and mill tailings.

For nuclear fuel waste, the Government of Canada expects that:

- C The producers and owners of nuclear fuel waste in Canada will establish a waste management organization, incorporated as a separate legal entity, with a mandate to manage and coordinate the full range of activities relating to the long-term management, including disposal, of nuclear fuel waste. The waste management organization will:
 - ! have a Board of Directors, representative of producers and owners of nuclear fuel waste;
 - ! have an advisory council; and
 - ! be comprehensive, i.e., allow for the participation of all producers and owners of nuclear fuel waste.

- C The producers and owners of nuclear fuel waste in Canada will establish a fund to fully finance all activities and operations of the waste management organization including the costs for developing and comparing waste management options, for designing and siting the preferred approach for the long-term management, including disposal, of nuclear fuel waste, for implementation, and ultimately for decommissioning waste management facilities.

- C The waste management organization will report to the Government of Canada setting out its preferred approach for the long-term management, including disposal, of nuclear fuel waste, with justification, as well as:
 - ! a comprehensive public participation plan;
 - ! an ethical and social assessment framework;
 - ! an Aboriginal participation process;
 - ! practicable long-term waste management options for Canada, including the following: a modified AECL concept for deep geological disposal; storage at reactor sites; and centralized storage, either above or below ground;
 - ! a comparison of risks, costs and benefits of the options along with proposed siting territories; and
 - ! future steps.

The Government of Canada will determine whether it accepts the report and the preferred approach proposed by the waste management organization, and future steps.

Recognizing that there is a need to ensure that the preferred approach for the long-term management, including disposal, of nuclear fuel waste is carried out in a comprehensive, cost-effective and integrated manner, it is the intent of Natural Resources Canada to initiate, as soon as possible, a consultative process with appropriate federal departments, the Atomic Energy Control Board, producers and owners of nuclear fuel waste, the provinces, and other stakeholders to develop options, including legislative options, to meet three key objectives: (1) require that a dedicated fund be established, to which only the producers and owners would contribute, to fully finance long-term management, including disposal, of nuclear fuel waste; (2) establish a reporting relationship between the federal government and the waste management organization, and the producers and owners, to review progress on a regular basis; and (3) establish a federal review and approval mechanism to provide oversight and access to funds.

The Minister of Natural Resources will return to Cabinet within 12 months with the preferred option to ensure key federal objectives will be met.

NRCan's news release, the Government of Canada response to recommendations of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management and Disposal Concept Environmental Assessment Panel and a question on options for federal oversight are also available on the Internet at: <http://nuclear.nrcan.gc.ca/>