

GOVERNMENT RELEASES REPORT OF PANEL STUDYING THE DISPOSAL OF NUCLEAR FUEL WASTE

The Panel considered the steps that must be taken to ensure the safe and acceptable long-term management of nuclear fuel wastes in Canada (in Chapter 6 of thereport). It arrived at the following key recommendations.

Key Panel Recommendations

A number of additional steps are required to develop an approach for managing nuclear fuel wastes in a way that could achieve broad public support. These include:

- ! issuing a policy statement on managing nuclear fuel wastes;
- ! initiating an Aboriginal participation process;
- ! creating a nuclear fuel waste management agency (NFWMA);
- ! conducting a public review of AECB regulatory documents using a more effective consultation process;
- ! developing a comprehensive public participation plan;
- ! developing an ethical and social assessment framework; and
- ! developing and comparing options for managing nuclear fuel wastes.

Taking into account the views of participants in our public hearings and our own analysis, we have developed the following basic recommendations to governments with respect to a management agency:

- ! that an NFWMA as described in Chapter 6 of the report be established quickly, at arm's length from the utilities and AECL, with the sole purpose of managing and co-ordinating the full range of activities relating to the long-term management of nuclear fuel wastes;
- ! that it be fully funded in all its operations from a segregated fund to which only the producers and owners of nuclear fuel wastes would contribute;
- ! that its board of directors, appointed by the federal government, be representative of key stakeholders;
- ! that it have a strong and active advisory council representative of a wide variety of interested parties;
- ! that its purposes, responsibilities and accountability, particularly in relation to the ownership of the wastes, be clearly and explicitly spelled out, preferably in legislation or in its charter of incorporation; and
- ! that it be subject to multiple oversight mechanisms, including federal regulatory control with respect to its scientific-technical work and the adequacy of its financial guarantees; to policy direction from the federal government; and to regular public review, preferably by Parliament.

Until the foregoing steps have been completed and broad public acceptance of a nuclear fuel waste management approach has been achieved, the search for a specific site should not proceed.

If the AECL concept is chosen as the most acceptable option after implementation of the steps recommended above, governments should direct the NFWMA, together with Natural Resources Canada and the AECB or its successor, to undertake the following: review all the social and technical shortcomings identified by the Scientific Review Group and other review participants; establish their priority; and generate a plan to address them. The NFWMA should make this plan publicly available, invite public input, then implement the plan.

Key Panel Conclusions

- ! Broad public support is necessary in Canada to ensure the acceptability of a concept for managing nuclear fuel wastes.
- ! Safety is a key part, but only one part, of acceptability. Safety must be viewed from two complementary perspectives: technical and social.
- ! From a technical perspective, safety of the AECL concept has been on balance adequately demonstrated for a conceptual stage of development, but from a social perspective, it has not.
- ! As it stands, the AECL concept for deep geological disposal has not been demonstrated to have broad public support. The concept in its current form does not have the required level of acceptability to be adopted as Canada's approach for managing nuclear fuel wastes.