

# Nuclear notes

Newsletter on Nuclear Waste in Northern Ontario - Issue One, Volume Three - November 2004

## Nuclear Waste Management Organization Heading for Northern Ontario

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization is gearing up for its third and final year before submitting recommendations to the federal government on the long term management of nuclear fuel waste.

A flurry of reports have been released since late August, including a report from "citizens dialogues" organized by the Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) on behalf of NWMO, a second "discussion document" issued by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), and a report by a "multi-disciplinary Assessment Team of 9 individuals" selected by the NWMO to do a preliminary review of nuclear waste management options, and provide advice on how a more rigorous review could be conducted. The NWMO has also announced a 35 community tour for this autumn, including sessions in Sudbury, Timmins, Rouyn and Thunder Bay.

The NWMO was mandated by legislation passed by the federal government in 2002 to spend three years looking at three "options" for the long term management of nuclear fuel waste: continued storage of present and future stock piles of nuclear fuel waste at the nuclear reactor sites where the waste is generated and is currently stored; movement to a centralized storage site, either above or below ground; or movement to an underground "geological repository" in the Canadian Shield, a long time favourite of both the nuclear industry and the nuclear boosters in the federal government.

### Citizens' Dialogue Rejects Nuclear Waste Burial

The Canadian Policy Research Network's report on their National Citizens Dialogue, released in late August, contains some timely messages: the Dialogue participants don't trust government, they don't want to see the nuclear waste buried and forgotten, and they want to see an independent monitoring body consisting of experts and citizens overseeing government and industry decision-making and actions around nuclear waste. That conclusion is an echo of recommendations made in the late 1990's by an environmental assessment review panel which had spent ten years reviewing a proposal by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to bury nuclear waste in the Canadian Shield of northern Ontario. That EA panel's recommendation that an independent agency be created to oversee research and further evaluation of long term management options was rejected by the federal government, who opted instead to create the Nuclear Waste Management Organization, which is wholly funded and operated by the utilities who operate nuclear reactors in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

News coverage following the Citizens' Dialogue report's release characterized the "overwhelming public rejection of geological disposal deep in the Canadian Shield" as "a striking rebuff for the federal government which has been pushing that approach for more than 30 years and financed costly studies at an underground lab in Manitoba". This is the same federal government that created a Nuclear Waste Management Organization that is run by the nuclear industry to do the job the public clearly sees as needing to be handled beyond the clutches of the nuclear industry.

The report was greeted with some satisfaction among nuclear waste watchers in environmental and public interest groups, who have been concerned by the selective approach being taken by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization to public consultation, and the carry-over of that approach into the Citizens' Dialogues managed by the Canadian Policy Research Networks. To participate in a session, members of the public had to be unaffiliated with any group who has an interest in nuclear waste and its management, which could potentially exclude any affiliated with women's organizations, environmental groups, First Nations, trade unions, or churches, all of whom have expressed strong concerns about nuclear waste in the past.

### Second Discussion Document Released

The NWMO's second discussion document "Understanding the Choices", proposes a way of assessing the options for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel. Described by the NWMO as being "rooted in values and ethical considerations identified by Canadians, and the advice of technical experts", the 112 page document includes a summary of what the NWMO has heard from the focus groups and "experts" they have assembled, describes what the various management options being studied might look like, ie on-site storage, centralized storage or burial in the Canadian Shield, outlines how the framework to assess them has evolved and, and presents a preliminary assessment of the approaches for public discussion. This second discussion document will be the focus of the NWMO's consultations and activities over the next several months, including the 35 city tour. *... continued inside*

The NWMO was created by the nuclear industry based on the requirements of the Nuclear Waste Act which came into effect on November 15, 2002. The NWMO has three years to examine three options for nuclear fuel waste management: storage at current locations, a centralized storage facility, or burial in the Canadian Shield.



**Inside this Issue:** Nuclear Waste Debate Heats Up Across Northeastern Ontario H Federal Candidates Oppose Nuclear Waste Burial H Canadians Want Phaseout H NWMO Holds Sessions in Northeast H Citizens Challenge Radioactive Waste Management Plans

**Nuclear Notes is published by Northwatch, a public interest group in Northeastern Ontario concerned about proposals to bury highly radioactive nuclear fuel waste in the Canadian Shield of northern Ontario**  
Box 282 • North Bay • P1B 8H2 • tel 705 497 0373 • fax 705 476 7060 • nukes@onlink.net • www.northwatch.org

*cont. from page 1*

### Assessment Team Opts for Burial

Also released in late summer was the June 2004 report of an "Assessment Team" assembled by the NWMO to develop a methodology for the assessment of the various management approaches being considered by the NWMO and to perform a preliminary assessment on a number of specific options for managing nuclear fuel waste.

The 9 person assessment team's report includes a preliminary description of the strengths and limitations of three management options for used nuclear fuel – extended storage at nuclear reactor sites, centralized storage, and deep geological disposal. Reportedly, the multi-disciplinary group of individuals, who comprised the Assessment Team, did not assess each of the management options on the objectives in precisely the same way, which resulted in a wide range in scores for each of the three options. The assessment found that each of the management options has specific, and quite different, strengths and weaknesses, and no method perfectly addresses all of the values and objectives important to Canadians. However, overall, the assessment found that the deep geological repository option (burial in the Canadian Shield) is "expected to perform significantly better than the other two options, especially in the

light of the long term during which any management option must perform well". The centralized storage option was said to be expected to perform significantly better than the third option of extended storage in the wastes' present location at the nuclear reactor site.

### Nuke Waste Agency Coming to Town

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization is planning to visit 35 communities across Canada this fall, including two in northeastern Ontario - Sudbury and Timmins - and neighboring communities in northwestern Quebec and northwestern Ontario - Rouyn and Thunder Bay. Sessions will be open to the public, with two visits per community. The first will be an "information session", with the NWMO returning two or three weeks later "for a full day of discussion and dialogue". Information sessions will be in Sudbury November 15th and 16th and in Timmins on November 17th and 18th. The "dialogue and discussion" sessions will in Timmins on December 13th and in Sudbury on December 14th .

To request a copy of any of the NWMO reports call the Nuclear Waste Management Organization at 1 800 349-4859 or email [info@nwmoo.ca](mailto:info@nwmoo.ca).

REPRINTED FROM NORTHWATCH NEWS, FALL 2004

## Nuclear Waste Debate Heats Up Across Northern Ontario

Coincident with the federal election campaign, an out-of-nowhere proposal from some Timmins municipal and business leaders to establish a nuclear waste "research facility" in the Timmins area has sparked afresh the debate over schemes to make northern Ontario a dumping ground for high level nuclear waste. Election candidates, northern Mayors, provincial politicians and local and regional citizens groups all joined the fray.

The firestorm was touched off when Timmins City Councillor Gary Scripnick invited the Nuclear Waste Management Organization to town in late May to petition the Nuclear Waste Management Organization to build a nuclear research facility in Timmins. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) was created by the federal government in 2002 to evaluate options for the long term management or nuclear fuel waste, including "geological disposal" or burial in the Canadian Shield, a centralized storage facility, or continued management in current locations at nuclear generating stations.

Scripnick had first distinguished himself when he appeared as a private citizen before the federal environmental assessment review panel in 1997 and declared that "they (Atomic Energy of Canada Limited) have decided that burying it in the ground is probably the safest way of (dealing with nuclear waste), I would like to say, yes, that's true and let's go on to siting".

Presumably on the basis of this enthusiasm, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization put Scripnick on the list for a by-invitation-only regional "dialogue" session in North Bay in March of this year, where Scripnick again sang the praises of the nuclear industry and bemoaned the public's lack of enthusiasm for all things nuclear.

An unadvertised meeting between the Nuclear Waste Management Organization and the Timmins area nuclear booster club was held on May 26. Scripnick and associates seized the opportunity to pitch the idea of a Timmins-based nuclear research facility to the NWMO, and the notion of hundreds of high-paid jobs and a fat federal budget to their townfolk. To their credit, the NWMO spokesperson attending the meeting clarified that the agency was not looking for a research facility, and that "Timmins or any place with an abandoned mine is not a preferred location for a nuclear waste storage facility". To their discredit, the NWMO agreed to a

meeting that was by no means public, and has excluded any mention of it from their calendar of events. Not quite the "transparent and open" process they boast of.

In response to the developing controversy, Minister of Northern Development and Mines Rick Barolucci, MPP for Sudbury, declared that Northerners will "raise hell" if the federal government pursues a proposal to bury radioactive nuclear waste in the Canadian Shield.

"My plan for northern prosperity does not include storing Toronto's garbage or storing somebody else's radioactive material in Northern Ontario," Barolucci said. "Northern Ontario is not the radioactive dumping ground for different jurisdictions."

Premier Dalton McGuinty is at least giving tacit support to his northern Minister's position, saying that "we (Ontario) intend to have our say when it comes to the federal government decision on that front."

"Obviously, if you start to transport the stuff out of existing communities, there are dangers connected with transportation and relocation, so we'll make sure we get our say when it comes to that," McGuinty said.

Mayors of the five largest centres in Northern Ontario have been more definite, expressing unanimous opposition to a nuclear waste dump in northern Ontario. At a recent meeting of Timmins City Council Mayor Vic Powers reiterated that position, saying the possibility of a nuclear research facility or storage site in Timmins is a dead issue.

"I think we can lay all your fears to rest. Even if the city wanted this, it's not going to happen," Power told local residents presenting to council.

"The risks are too great and the price tag is too high. There is no deal to strike here", says Councillor Yves Malette. "The nuclear waste project needs to be dumped immediately and forever." Timmins council, however, remains divided. While the Mayor and Councillor Yves Mallette have both spoken out against any projects that would bring nuclear waste to the region, others say they are still undecided or, like Gary Scripnick, support creating a new nuclear waste industry in the area.

REPRINTED FROM NORTHWATCH NEWS, FALL 2004

## Federal Candidates Oppose Nuke Dump

Federal candidates surveyed about nuclear waste expressed strong opposition to any proposal to bury nuclear waste in northern Ontario and responded overwhelmingly in support of a full environmental assessment and parliamentary debate before any decisions are made.

The survey canvassed federal candidates' views on support for a full environmental assessment on each and any option being considered for the long term management of nuclear waste, on phasing out nuclear power to avoid continued waste production; community involvement in any future decisions about transportation routes or siting of waste repositories, and support for a full debate in Parliament prior to the Government of Canada making its final decision on a "preferred" option for the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste. Candidates with the Conservative, Green, Liberal and New Democratic parties in the 6 ridings in northeastern Ontario were canvassed.

Seventeen of the 24 candidates responded, with fifteen candidates completing the survey. Responses were received from all 6 NDP candidates, 5 of the 6 Green candidates, 3 of the 6 Liberal candidates, and only one Conservative candidate. The responses have been summarized and posted at [www.northwatch.org](http://www.northwatch.org).

Of the successful candidates, new NDP members of parliament Charlie Angus of Timmins-James Bay and Tony Martin of Sault Ste. Marie both expressed strong opposition to the use of northern Ontario as a dumping ground for nuclear waste, as did Liberal rookie Anthony Rota, elected to represent Nipissing-Timiskaming and Liberal incumbent Ray Bonin, representing Nickel Belt. Liberal incumbents Diane Marleau, representing Sudbury, and Brent St. Denis, MP for Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing, both refused to respond.

NORTHWATCH NEWS SUMMER 2004

## Nuclear Industry Carries On

The nuclear industry has continued to keep itself busy, with the Joint Waste Owners Group recently releasing "conceptual designs" as well as cost estimates for the 3 options the NWMO is required to consider. The Joint Waste Owners Group consists of Ontario Power Generation, Hydro-Quebec, New Brunswick Power, and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. Reportedly "anticipating their responsibilities under the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act" they got to work back in 2001 - a year before the Act was passed - to develop the conceptual designs and engineering cost estimates.

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization - consisting of all of the same groups in the Joint Waste Owners Group, minus Atomic Energy of Canada Limited - launched a "third party review" of the designs and cost estimates, and released their review on June 4. The two month review was conducted by ADH Technologies Inc., who self-describe as being well known for their work in the nuclear

industry and "experienced in the development and management of major nuclear projects up to the billion dollar range". Not surprisingly, ADH found that their colleagues in the JWO had done a fine job, concluding that "all of the conceptual designs are credible and technically feasible", and that "design details are consistent with the 'conceptual' nature of the work" with "no reason to suspect that an appropriate 'final design' could not be developed for an approach selected from the designs reviewed."

The NWMO's second discussion document, "Understanding the Choices", will be released later this summer. Its release, according to the NWMO, "will be followed by an intensive period of public examination and critique leading to development of draft recommend- ations in early 2005."

NORTHWATCH NEWS SUMMER 2004

## Nuclear Waste Agency Using Web Site and Focus Groups to Hear from Canadians

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization is proceeding along its predictable path, generating positive reports summarizing initial feedback on their first discussion document "Asking the Right Questions", and launching a national advertising campaign of unspecified content.

Much of the NWMO focus continues to be on its web site, deemed by the agency to be its primary tool for "consulting with Canadians". New on-line are two "deliberative surveys", with two more to be available soon..

Also available on the web site is a new report by Navigator, a consulting firm used by the NWMO in its start up phase to solicit from Canadians expressions of their lack of knowledge

about nuclear waste and preference that such matters be handled by "experts". The most recent Navigator product is a good news story for the NWMO: given two hours to read the 88 page document and respond in a discussion group, Canadians "from among the general population" had a positive response to the NWMO Discussion Document and the approach being taken by the NWMO and felt that the NWMO Framework reflects their values. Navigator also reported that "knowledge and intensity on the issue of managing nuclear waste continues to be low" but that "some cynicism about waste management continues". No surprises there.

NORTHWATCH NEWS, SPRING 2004

*Over the years, spokesmen for the nuclear industry have frequently stated in public that "nuclear waste is not a technical problem, it is a public relations problem." These statements highlight a very significant fact: as the creator of high-level radioactive waste, the nuclear industry has a built-in conflict of interest. It can be expected to advise Government to adopt a policy which solves its own PR problem. But this is not good science, and it is certainly not good public policy.*

*A large number of Canadians believe that the further*

*Presentation to the Workshop on High Level Radioactive Waste by M. Michel Fugère (Ottawa, September 15 2003)*

*production of this highly toxic material should be phased out: reduction of risk at the source should be the number one priority. This is simple common sense. In Quebec, when the dangers of PCB's became evident, a political decision was taken to stop the production and use of this material so that society could focus its efforts on safely containing or destroying the PCB's that had already been produced. In this way, we avoid making the problem worse. In a similar way, many citizens believe that nuclear power ... should be phased out ...*



## Nuclear Waste Agency Releases Discussion Paper, Holds Sessions in Northeast

Canada's newest nuclear agency, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization, is taking its message to communities in Northern Ontario, as well as across the country. Determining what exactly the message is requires something of a judgement call. If the NWMO's November 2003 Discussion Document bold face titles are to be taken at face value, the message is "tell us what you think". But the counter message that runs through the report and various other NWMO efforts reads more as one of "but don't think too much".

Created under the federal Nuclear Fuel Waste Act, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization is a creature of the nuclear industry, charged with a 3 year task of examining and then recommending one of three options for the long term management of nuclear fuel waste. The options are: the same tired concept touted by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited for the last 30 years of burying the waste in the Canadian Shield; a centralized storage facility, either above or below ground; and what many consider the default option of leaving the waste at the reactor sites where it is now kept and continues to be generated.

Launched in November 2002, almost five years after a federal environmental assessment of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited's "geological concept" concluded with recommendations that an agency be created independent of the nuclear industry, the NWMO has the waste producers as its board of directors, including Ontario Power Generation's Richard Dicerri as chair, and OPG (formerly Ontario Hydro) bat boy for geological disposal Ken Nash as vice chair, with New Brunswick Power and Hydro Quebec also filling seats at the table.

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization has only recently looked to northeastern Ontario as part of its "consensus building" exercise on the long term management of nuclear fuel waste. In December 2003, NWMO consultants slipped into North Bay for a quiet focus group with a "cross section of ... randomly selected Canadians as identified by independent public attitude research firm". Late February will see a similar effort in Sudbury with a "Citizens Dialogue" of the same "randomly selected Canadians as identified by independent public attitude research firm". And in March, a regional workshop will be held in North Bay - one of four across the country. The "regional dialogues will bring together representatives of organizations which have a record of participation in nuclear and other public policy discussions." A by-invitation-only event, according to the email invitation, "the Ontario dialogue will engage participants representing the environment, youth, science, education, energy, health, labour,

## Citizens Challenge Radioactive Waste Plans

Toronto — Leaders of Nuclear Waste Watch, a national coalition of 34 citizens groups, are meeting in Toronto for 2 days, and will meet with the President of the industry-dominated Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) on March 3rd.

Nuclear Waste Watch opposes the continued production of high-level radioactive waste, which remains deadly for millions of years. The safety and acceptability of the nuclear industry proposal for burial in the Canadian Shield has not been demonstrated. The current 40,000 metric tonnes of high-level radioactive waste in Canada will more than double unless nuclear power is phased out. In 1998, after a ten-year review, a federal environmental panel recommended the creation of an impartial radioactive waste agency. Instead, in 2002 the Chrétien cabinet gave control of the NWMO exclusively to the nuclear industry: Ontario Power Generation, Hydro-Québec, and New Brunswick Power.

"The nuclear industry cannot be trusted to make an objective recommendation on radioactive waste" said David H. Martin, Policy Advisor for the Sierra Club of Canada.

business, as well as aboriginal, consumer, religious, and social/cultural interests. The task of the regional dialogues is to assist the NWMO in defining concerns, gathering knowledge and engaging in discussions on issues related to the NWMO's task, and described in the discussion document: Asking the Right Questions".

Current efforts of the NWMO are geared at getting feedback on their discussion document "Asking the Right Questions?", the first of 3 "milestone documents". A second discussion is expected in late summer. The November 2003 report provides a brief and very general summary of nuclear fuel waste, its source and current management, and is even briefer in recounting various reviews and policy spins that preceded the agency's existence.

While not expected to be a detailed account of all things nuclear, the report is often most disturbing in its simplification: the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended World War II, all of the nuclear fuel waste in Canada will fit in less than five hockey rinks, and a year out of the reactor and the bundles of nuclear fuel waste emanate the heat roughly equivalent to a 60 watt light bulb. And, of course, nuclear power has played an important part of Canada's electricity supply. Missing is any note of the absence of any national energy policy or national debate on the continued use of nuclear power, and notably absent is any acknowledgement that the NWMO itself, as an agency fully in control of the nuclear waste producers, runs directly counter to the recommendations of the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Panel.

The 10 year Federal EA concluded that the AECL concept had not been demonstrated to be safe and acceptable, had numerous serious technical deficiencies, and that an independent agency that is arms length from the nuclear industry should be created to support future examinations of nuclear waste management options. The Nuclear Fuel Waste Act, in contrast, created an industry-only agency to manage the debate in Canada and recommend a "preferred" option after 3 years.

The NWMO report directs readers to 10 "key questions", which have a parallel survey on-line at [www.nwmo.org](http://www.nwmo.org). Also on-line are 5 workshop reports and 35 background papers commissioned by various experts and academics, as well as forums for posting comments on the discussion document. Hard copies can be requested by calling 1 866 249 6966.

REPRINTED FROM NORTHWATCH NEWS, SPRING 2003

Dr. Gordon Edwards of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility stated, "The nuclear industry has been showered with federal subsidies, yet no industry has been less accountable to the Canadian public and their elected representatives."

Brennain Lloyd, Coordinator of Northwatch, a coalition of groups in north-eastern Ontario said, "The nuclear industry spent over \$600 million to make the case for burial of radioactive waste in the Canadian Shield, but citizens are being asked to critique these plans with no resources."

The NWMO is mandated to recommend its preferred option for high-level radioactive waste management to Cabinet by November 2005. Nuclear Waste Watch is calling for a full-scope federal/provincial environmental assessment process, with wide-ranging public hearings, as well as a free vote in the House of Commons on radioactive waste management options and on the NWMO recommendation.

FOR RELEASE MONDAY MARCH 1, 2003