

FLASH SHEET #11 NUCLEAR ENERGY FUTURE-
Gracia Janes Environment Convener

The issue of our nuclear (or not) future is so important that I felt you should all know what our new updated policy is. We will be needing good, well documented, policy to argue strongly against any expansion of the use of nuclear, and for the phase out of nuclear in the future in provinces such as Ontario. This province is one of the most heavily nuclear- dependent jurisdictions in the world and recent electricity shortages have pushed the government to set up a new agency to ensure a reliable supply. Critics are rightly very worried that a move towards more nuclear power by this new body, which determines the kind of power to be used, will not only be dangerous to Ontarians and citizens in nearby jurisdictions and enormously expensive, but will, as the Ontario Clean Air Alliance stated recently fail to “make room for aggressive energy conservation programs, renewable power and new high-efficiency gas generation.”

I have included the background in the flash sheet, so you can see the kind of issues that arise when decisions to expand or phase out nuclear are considered and responded to by NCWC

**Policy Update - Nuclear/ Energy/ Future -Gracia Janes Environment Convener
NCWC**

Whereas: 1997 NCWC Policy urged the Government of Canada to :

- a) reject as unsafe the Atomic Energy of Canada (AECL) “concept” for the burial of high-level nuclear wastes in the Precambrian shield, and
- b) initiate a public policy debate, with broad public consultation , on the energy future of Canada, with a specific focus on the nuclear issue, and
- c) expend research monies on a search for safe technology to treat nuclear wastes: upgrading current nuclear site safety; and developing alternative sources of energy; and,
- d) bring Canadian radiation standards into conformity with those adopted by the International Radiation Protection Association of 1991, while encouraging the association to improve these standards even further to reflect gender and age differences of women and children, and
- e) do all in its power to prevent an expansion of the nuclear industry. and,

Whereas: the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act of 2002, dictates that the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO):

- a) find a solution to the long term disposal of high level radioactive nuclear wastes, and in doing so, to explore. burial in the Precambrian shield, storage at nuclear reactor sites, and centralized storage, either above or below ground as options, as well as other options

- b) involve the public in discussions about these options
- c) make its recommendations to the Government of Canada by 2005, and

Whereas: the NWMO is an industry controlled organization which strongly supports the burial of nuclear waste, and, this puts in doubt the independence of the NWMO recommendations to government, and

Whereas: the many technical flaws in the original AECL proposal to bury radioactive waste in the Precambrian shield have yet to be remedied, leaving above ground storage at the safest site/s the best option, until either the burial is proven safe, or new technologies for treatment are developed,

Whereas: there has still been no broad public consultation regarding the development of a long term energy policy for Canada, which would promote and fund alternatives to nuclear; energy efficient technologies, or energy conservation; the Government of Canada continues to actively promote nuclear power; and new nuclear plants are being advanced as the solution to Ontario's energy crisis, by nuclear proponents, and

Whereas: there has been no further investment in finding treatments for nuclear waste, and, while Canada has adopted the 1991 International Radiation Standards of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) , these are still set for a "standard" young adult male and do not reflect differences in gender, age, and the impacts on those in ill health, the impacts of low level long term exposures on workers , the general public, and the environment, and

Whereas: given the importance of this issue to all Canadians, only a full joint federal/provincial environmental assessment hearing , on the full range of nuclear waste management options, with intervener funding; and then a full parliamentary debate, with a free vote on the recommendations of NWMO and the Assessment Panel, will ensure protection of public health and the environment in the very long term, and

Whereas: there is still concern amongst Canadians that the federal Government will allow the importation of high level radioactive waste, or further importation of fresh reactor fuel, and Canada will become the world centre for this nuclear activity.

Therefore be it resolved, that

1) The National Council of Women of Canada adopt as policy support of :

a) rejection of the AECL 'concept ' for burial of nuclear waste, and

b) a broad based public policy debate on the energy future of Canada, with a specific focus on the need for alternative sources of energy, energy efficiency, and energy conservation as opposed to nuclear power, and,

c) significant government expenditures on the search for safe technology to treat nuclear waste; upgrading current nuclear site and storage safety; and the development of alternative sources of energy, energy efficient technologies and energy conservation and

d) improvements in International Radiation Standards to reflect gender, age, health, long term, low- level radiation worker and general public exposure, and environmental impacts eg. air, water and soil, and

e) a Federal/Provincial Environmental Assessment of the NWMO recommendations, with allowance for intervener funding ; and a full parliamentary debate, with a free vote on the NWMO and Environmental Assessment recommendations, and

f) a prevention of the expansion of the nuclear industry in Canada; a phase out of nuclear plants at the end of their life cycle. and. a ban on the importation of high level radioactive waste for any purpose.

2) That the National Council of Women urge the Government of Canada to :

a) reject the AECL concept for the burial of high level radioactive waste in the Precambrian shield,

b) initiate a broad based public policy debate on the energy future of Canada, with a specific focus on alternative sources of energy, energy efficiency, and energy conservation versus nuclear power

c) make significant government expenditures on the search for a safe technology to treat nuclear waste; the upgrading of current nuclear sites and storage safety; and the development of alternative sources of energy, energy efficiency, and energy conservation and,

d) promote the adoption by the ICRP of standards that reflect gender, age and health , as well as long term exposures of workers and the public to low level radiation , and of the impacts of both high dose and low dose radiation on the environment. eg. air, soil, water .

e) ensure that there will be a full Federal/Provincial Environment Assessment of the NWMO recommendations , with allowance for intervener funding; and a full parliamentary debate, with a free vote, on the NWMO and the Environmental Assessment final recommendations , and

f) do all that is in the government's power to prevent the expansion of the nuclear industry in Canada, encourage the Provinces to phase out the nuclear plants at the end of their life cycle, and

g) ban the importation of high level radioactive waste and further importation of fresh reactor fuel

Background:

1. August 14, 2003. G. Janes, Environment Convener. National Council of Women of Canada Brief to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission re. Its Standards for Managing Radioactive Waste .Federal references 2, 3, 4, 5 . Environmental Assessment and Review Process. Nuclear Fuel Waste Management and Disposal Concept. Report of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management and Disposal Concept Environmental Assessment Panel. February 1998 . The Seaborne Panel noted that the government had **failed to find a way to safely dispose of nuclear waste that the public could trust, and had yet to initiate the promised wide-ranging public consultation on the future of nuclear power as part of Canada's long term energy policy....**The Panel determined that ***“ as it stands, the AECL concept for deep geological disposal has not yet been demonstrated to have broad public support. The concept in its current form does not have the required level of acceptance to be adopted as Canada's approach for managing nuclear fuel wastes.”*** The Panel recommended that in order to achieve this support the Government should among other things, involve the public in a much more inclusive way, particularly the aboriginal community, fix the many flaws in the original waste disposal proposal, and **quickly establish a Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Agency (NFWMA) “ at arms length from the utilities , with the sole purpose of managing and co-ordinating the full range of activities relating to the long term management of nuclear fuel wastes.”**

2. Asking the Right Questions, The Future Management of Canada's Used Nuclear Fuel. NWMO. Document 1. 2004. “The NWMO undertakes this work in fulfillment of its legislated obligations under the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act. In 2002, consistent with the Act, Canada's nuclear energy corporations established the NWMO to engage Canadians in a comprehensive study of approaches to long term management of used nuclear fuel...The NWMO must submit its final study to the Minister of Natural Resources Canada, within three years of the Act coming into effect, that is November 15th, 2005that the study include , at minimum, three specific technical methods . Section 12 (2) of the Act requires that : Each of the following methods must be the sole basis for at least one approach: a) deep geological disposal in the Canadian shield , based on the concept described by AECL in the Environmental Impact Statement on the Concept for the Disposal of Canada's Nuclear Fuel Waste , and taking into account the views of the environmental assessment panel (as above in 1- the Seaborne Panel) February 18, 1998 b) storage at nuclear reactor sites and c) centralized storage either above or below ground..”

3 *ibid* . page 20 “ In recommending an approach for managing Canada's used nuclear fuel, NWMO has not been asked to take a position on the broader policy issue of the future role of nuclear energy in Canada.... the NWMO seeks to recommend a

management approach that is robust enough to be sustained regardless of the path Canadians choose for nuclear energy in the future.”

4. Nuclear Waste Watch Bulletin /Position Statement. Sierra Club. February 2004. 33 group members eg. Energy Probe (ON), Northwatch, Sierra Club of Canada, Sierra Club of Eastern Canada(ON), Conseil de bande des Abenakis de Wolinak, Inter-church Uranium committee (Sask)

“ Neither the safety, nor the acceptability of the deep geological disposal of radioactive waste in perpetuity was established to the satisfaction of the federal environmental assessment panel (the Seaborne Panel) That reviewed the evidence. Any waste management option should, for the foreseeable future , be based on surface, or near surface, monitored and retrievable storage- at least until a nuclear phase out has been achieved , the technical case for an alternative option (or options) has been thoroughly reviewed , and a social consensus has been achieved..... The nuclear industry strongly supports deep geological disposal of radioactive waste , so the ability of the NWMO to make an objective recommendation is questionable.....”

5. Gracia Janes- In participating in the Seaborne Hearings, on behalf of PCWO, I attended three public sessions, read all the transcripts and presented a detailed brief, in which I noted the many flaws to the “burial concept”, which had been pointed out both by the panel and by the Scientific Advisory Committee. My brief is available upon request.

6. Rosalie Bertell, nuclear expert on low level radiation. Seaborne Panel brief. 1996, in noting flaws in the ICRP standards such as . “ trade offs of risk, for what users of radiation consider benefits “ ..and the use of “likely” doses at which these effects occur in the healthy adult doses , which are much too high to prevent harm when applied to children, pregnant women , or those already suffering from impaired health,”