

MEDIA RELEASE

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From: **We the Nuclear Free North**

Nuclear industry seeks to omit nuclear waste transportation from Impact Assessment of Deep Geological Repository Project: public and groups urged to act

THUNDER BAY – We the Nuclear Free North (WTNFN) has issued an urgent request to individuals, groups and organizations to make their voices heard, to ensure the proposed 50 years of long-distance transportation of nuclear fuel waste to the proposed deep geological repository (DGR) in northwestern Ontario is examined during the upcoming federal Impact Assessment of the repository project.

During recent in-person and online events, representatives of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), a nuclear-industry operated corporation, have stated that transportation of over 30,000 road shipments of highly radioactive used nuclear fuel bundles from their sources at power reactors to the proposed repository will be omitted from examination during an upcoming federal Impact Assessment process. The average distance is over 1,800 km per trip, mostly over two-lane highways.

A paramount purpose of the Impact Assessment is to ensure that adverse effects of major projects are assessed to protect the environment and Indigenous rights. By siting the proposed DGR thousands of kilometres away from the reactors, the NWMO plan risks exposing conveyers, first responders, and the public to toxic radioactive waste during transportation, with potentially catastrophic consequences in the event of an accidental release. Including all aspects of the project in the Impact Assessment will ensure fuller transparency and accountability, as well as opportunities for public input.

"NWMO has pronounced that the transportation of radioactive waste will not be part of the impact assessment process. It's a weak argument – for 20 years the NWMO has been describing transportation as part of their project, the regulators have acknowledged that, and the Impact Assessment Act requires activities that are integral or – in the language of the Act - 'incidental' to the project be included in the assessment," commented Brennain Lloyd, Project Coordinator for Northwatch. "There's no nuclear waste burial project if there's no nuclear waste to bury, and there's no nuclear waste in northern Ontario unless the NWMO transports it in from reactors in other regions."

"The nuclear industry's proposed repository project affects hundreds of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and potentially millions of individuals, along the routes the nuclear waste would travel for at least 50 years," said Elysia Petrone-Reitberger of Niniibawtamin Anishinaabe Aki. "The NWMO has always presented the transportation component as a part of the project, and it must be retained as part of the Impact Assessment. The industry's categorical statement that transportation will be omitted from examination is strategic – they don't want transportation scrutinized, as it's a very weak spot in their safety case."

“The NWMO proposes to move more than 6 million used nuclear fuel bundles 1,650 to 2,540 kms over Canada’s roads for over 50 years, by road and possibly by rail,” said Dodie LeGassick, Nuclear Lead for Environment North. “This project to move high-level, deadly radioactive waste is unprecedented in scale. The transportation of the waste is absolutely integral to the repository project itself – nothing like it has been done before, despite what NWMO representatives tell the public. Transportation of this waste must be examined alongside the safety of the repository itself and its on-site surface operations.”

“Residents of northwestern Ontario have long advocated the proximity principle - the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste close to its points of production - to avoid exposing millions of people to the dangers associated with transporting all of Canada’s accumulated nuclear fuel waste thousands of kilometres,” said Mary Veltri, an Environment North board member. “We strongly believe that the Impact Assessment must require the NWMO to address the public concerns about the safety of transportation containers, adequacy of highways and railroads, the qualification of the carriers, the health impacts of routine radioactive exposure and the emergency response training and planning. For this Impact Assessment to have any legitimacy, it must be comprehensive and not narrowly scoped in a manner that avoids these integral aspects of the proposal.”

We the Nuclear Free North has urged groups and individuals to send an email to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada at nuclearwaste-dechetsnucleaires@iaac-aeic.gc.ca to ask to be added to their contact list regarding their review of the Deep Geological Repository for Canada’s Used Nuclear Fuel Project, Ref. No. 88774. Those on the list will receive email communications regarding the review, including announcements and deadlines for public comment periods.

More information and additional action tools are available at WTNNF’s webpage:

www.wethenuclearfreenorth.ca/impacts/

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