

Deep Geological Repository (DGR) for Canada's Used Nuclear Fuel Project
Comments on Section 10.1 Draft Integrated Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines
“Transportation of used nuclear fuel”

Quote #1

Both CNSC and Transport Canada jointly regulate the transport and packaging of nuclear substances in Canada. The CNSC’s Packaging and Transport of Nuclear Substances Regulations, and Transport Canada’s Transport of Dangerous Goods Regulations ensure that the packaging and transport of nuclear substances are done safely and securely. NWMO will be required to meet these regulations to ensure that the package design meets the stringent regulatory requirements, and all other requirements, for the safe transport of used nuclear fuel.

Comment #1

The present assessment process is the proverbial “cart before the horse.” A more appropriate final sentence(s) would read something akin to the following:

“Before proceeding with an Impact Assessment of the whole proposed project for the centralized, long-term storage of Canada’s high level nuclear waste, the NWMO will be required to meet these regulations to ensure that the package design meets stringent regulatory requirements, and all other requirements, for the safe transport of used nuclear fuel along Canada’s highways and railway corridors. Subsequent to this, then this present exercise can resume and will include further review of this matter through the Impact Assessment Process.”

Quote #2

Although the transportation of used nuclear fuel would not occur until the operational phase of the project, currently anticipated to begin in the 2040s, and recognizing that the proponent is in the early stages of planning these activities and that certain aspects of transportation will be prescribed through regulatory requirements, the proponent must submit an update to their Preliminary Transportation Plan. The Preliminary Transportation Plan for used nuclear fuel includes information related to a series of processes and measures that the NWMO would apply anywhere that their transportation activities are carried out. The update should build on the foundational information presented in the preliminary plan and provide information reasonably available at this stage of project planning. More detailed transportation planning will occur as the project advances toward the operational phase (i.e., the phase when transportation of used nuclear fuel would be required) and as the proponent seeks the necessary licences from the CNSC.

Comment #2

This is an improvement over what was in the NWMO’s Initial Project Description.

Comment #3

Again, the “cart is before the horse” when the draft guidelines state “More detailed transportation planning will occur as the project advances toward the operational phase (i.e., the phase when transportation of used nuclear fuel would be required) and as the proponent seeks the necessary licences from the CNSC.” After so many years, the “more detailed transportation planning” should have already occurred, that is, it is reasonable that such work would have already been done “at this stage of project planning.” The fact that it is not done should preclude at this time any assessment through the IAAC of what is proposed at the final destination for these materials.

Quote #3

The impact assessment is a planning tool and as such, plans on how used nuclear fuel will be moved to the project site as well as an emergency response plan will be required. These plans are general and therefore would apply everywhere that transportation may occur but do not specifically refer to any geographic extent.

Comment #4

Building on my previous comments, specifically Comment #3, this is not enough. There should be an absolutely thorough assessment of the complete transportation routes mapping out all challenges, including those seasonal in nature, and specific measures required for each challenge. Excellence needs to be demanded of the NWMO. Excellence needs to be demanded of every institution engaged and impacted by this proposed project. Generalities allow for mediocrity. These are serious matters requiring a serious response. If the IAAC wants the public to engage this process with any confidence, then a higher standard needs to be required of the project proponent on this (and other) aspects of this proposal.

Quote #4

The Impact Statement must:

- provide an update to the 2021 Preliminary Transportation Plan for used nuclear fuel ... including information related to ... the long-term plan for continuing to engage and educate the public and Indigenous Nations and communities on the transportation of used nuclear fuel, including future updates to this plan leading up to obtaining the appropriate licensing, and then subsequently during project operations.

Comment #5

This wording assumes there is consent from communities and their institutions (eg. municipal governments) and Indigenous Nations along the foreseen transportation routes. Is the IAAC proceeding as if this consent exists now or will be given in the future? Is this present process foreclosing on a decision to proceed without this free, prior and informed consent? A “long-term plan for continuing to engage and educate” is a pretty low requirement, especially given how long the NWMO has been in existence. Again, excellence is required, excellence needs to be demanded.

Concluding Comment

The wording of Section 10.1 of the draft guidelines is an acknowledgement that the NWMO has not yet done this basic, fundamental and essential work. The IAAC proceeding as proposed, and put this work off to “another day” and another process by other government agencies, is to reward and approve of the obvious mediocrity of the proponent. The IAAC needs to demand excellence both of itself and the NWMO now. Put the “horse before the cart”; pause this present process until the detailed work I call for above is done. Then let it be scrutinized and then only proceed further if merited.

Respectfully submitted by

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