

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada

September 19 2017

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

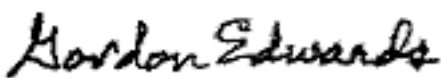
Canada is at the dawn of a new era: the Age of Nuclear Waste. Yet this country has no official policy regarding the long-term management of any radioactive wastes other than irradiated nuclear fuel. A federal policy on radioactive wastes other than irradiated fuel is urgently needed.

The absence of such a policy in effect gives a green light for the approval of three ill-considered projects to abandon long-lived radioactive wastes at sites very close to major bodies of water – wastes that will remain hazardous for hundreds of thousands of years. One is a gigantic multi-story mound, on the surface at Chalk River, one kilometre from the Ottawa River, meant to permanently house up to a million cubic metres of mixed radioactive wastes. The other two projects involve the in-situ abandonment of the long-lived radioactive remains from two defunct nuclear reactors – the NPD reactor at Rolphton on the Ottawa River, and the WR-1 reactor at Pinawa on the Winnipeg River. These projects pose a threat to future generations, and they set a dreadful example for other countries looking to Canada for socially and environmentally acceptable policies and practices.

All three projects involve radioactive wastes that are the sole responsibility of the government of Canada; yet in each case, the projects have been conceived by a private consortium of multinational corporations hired by the previous federal government under a time-limited contract. The previous government also ensured that the approvals process for all three projects is entirely in the hands of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), a body whose independence has been challenged from many quarters. The Commission has never refused to grant a licence for any major nuclear facility.

We urge you, Mr. Prime Minister, to suspend the environmental assessments of these three projects and to initiate the development of a federal government policy on the long-term management of radioactive wastes other than irradiated nuclear fuel. We suggest that such a policy be developed through a series of hearings with First Nations and other Canadians, like those that led up to the ***Nuclear Fuel Waste Act***. The attached resolution (Annex 1) lays out a course of action. Earlier this year, the Anishinabek Nation and the Iroquois Caucus issued a Joint Declaration on Radioactive Waste based on five principles (Annex 2). We recommend that the government consider these principles in any policy that it may adopt.

Yours very truly,



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in solidarity with others signing this letter: see list on page 2

c.c. : see list on page 3

list of signers of the letter to Prime Minister Trudeau re radioactive waste policy

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ANNEX 1

RESOLUTION: FOR A SOCIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE POLICY ON NUCLEAR WASTE

WHEREAS a consortium of five multinational corporations operating under a contract negotiated by the previous federal government is proposing to permanently house up to one million cubic metres of radioactive wastes other than irradiated fuel in a giant multi-story landfill just one kilometre from the Ottawa River, and also to permanently entomb the long-lived radioactive remains of two nuclear reactors right beside the Ottawa and Winnipeg Rivers;

WHEREAS the radioactive wastes in question are the exclusive responsibility of the Government of Canada, and much of it will remain hazardous for hundreds of thousands of years;

WHEREAS the federal government has no policy with clearly articulated principles and guidelines as to how such radioactive waste should be managed over the very long term;

WHEREAS the federal government has not yet conducted meaningful consultations with First Nations or with other members of the Canadian population in order to develop a socially and environmentally acceptable policy regarding the long-term management of radioactive wastes other than irradiated fuel;

WHEREAS the power to approve or not approve the three projects mentioned above for the permanent disposition of radioactive waste has been vested by the previous federal government in the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) , an agency whose objectivity and independence has been challenged from many quarters;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the government of Canada suspend the three current environmental assessments for permanent disposal of radioactive wastes beside the Ottawa and Winnipeg Rivers;
2. That the Government of Canada initiate a broad consultation process with First Nations and the Canadian population to develop a socially and environmentally acceptable policy that will provide firm principles and guidelines governing the long-term management of radioactive wastes other than irradiated fuel, such a consultation process to be overseen and administered by the Department of the Environment and Climate Change;
3. That, on completion of the consultation process described above, and the adoption of a new federal policy, the Government of Canada call for new project proposals for the long-term management of these radioactive wastes that are the responsibility of the federal government, in line with the newly formulated federal government policy and under the authority of the new federal Environmental Assessment process that is currently being developed.

ANNEX 2

EXCERPT FROM THE JOINT DECLARATION BY THE ANISHINABEK NATION AND THE IROQUOIS CAUCUS ON THE TRANSPORT AND ABANDONMENT OF RADIOACTIVE WASTES – MAY 2, 2017

“For the long-term management of radioactive wastes, the five principles that were all agreed upon are:

“1. **No Abandonment:** Radioactive waste materials are damaging to living things. Many of these materials remain dangerous for tens of thousands of years or even longer. They must be kept out of the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the land we live on for many generations to come. The forces of Mother Earth are powerful and unpredictable and no human-made structures can be counted on to resist those forces forever. Such dangerous materials cannot be abandoned and forgotten.

“2. **Monitored and Retrievable Storage:** Continuous guardianship of nuclear waste material is needed. This means long-term monitoring and retrievable storage. Information and resources must be passed on from one generation to the next so that our grandchildren’s grandchildren will be able to detect any signs of leakage of radioactive waste materials and protect themselves. They need to know how to fix such leaks as soon as they happen.

“3. **Better Containment, More Packaging:** Cost and profit must never be the basis for long-term radioactive waste management. Paying a higher price for better containment today will help prevent much greater costs in the future when containment fails. Such failure will include irreparable environmental damage and radiation-induced diseases. The right kinds of packaging should be designed to make it easier to monitor, retrieve, and repackage insecure portions of the waste inventory as needed, for centuries to come.

“4. **Away from Major Water Bodies:** Rivers and lakes are the blood and the lungs of Mother Earth. When we contaminate our waterways, we are poisoning life itself. That is why radioactive waste must not be stored beside major water bodies for the long-term. Yet this is exactly what is being planned at five locations in Canada: Kincardine on Lake Huron, Port Hope near Lake Ontario, Pinawa beside the Winnipeg River, and Chalk River and Rolphton beside the Ottawa River.

“5. **No Imports or Exports:** The import and export of nuclear wastes over public roads and bridges should be forbidden except in truly exceptional cases after full consultation with all whose lands and waters are being put at risk. In particular, the planned shipment of highly radioactive liquid from Chalk River to South Carolina should not be allowed because it can be down-blended and solidified on site at Chalk River. Transport of nuclear waste should be strictly limited and decided on a case-by-case basis with full consultation with all those affected.”

[See http://ccnr.org/Joint_Declaration_2017.pdf].