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## Nuclear Waste to be dumped in New Brunswick?

**Energy Minister says NBers shouldn't be alarmed that province named potential site for storage facility**

*Cole Hobson*

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization is seeking public input as they begin the process of trying to find a long-term storage facility site for used nuclear fuel.

Although New Brunswick, a province that uses nuclear energy, has been named as a potential site for the storage facility, Energy Minister Jack Keir says it's too early to pass judgment on the merits of such a facility. He adds that the government believes in the process the organization is undertaking.

"I think we're at the very, very beginning of this process. Certainly we've had discussions with the organization on the process that is going to take place . . . But my view is at this point for me this is a non-issue, I'd rather let the process take place," he says. "My view would be to let the process take place and let's see if New Brunswick is even capable of storing this waste."

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) was established in 2002 by Ontario Power Generation Inc., Hydro-Québec and New Brunswick Power Corporation, under the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act. NWMO is responsible for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel.

Mike Krizanc, spokesperson for NWMO, says they have currently launched a cross-country dialog where they are asking the help of Canadians in developing a fair process for selecting the site of the long-term storage facility. From suggestions, a proposal will be drafted which will again be open to public review. Krizanc says it could be upwards of two years before they begin gauging interest from various communities to host the site.

Also, unlike uranium exploration which popped up around the province against the will of many concerned citizens, Krizanc says if a nuclear waste storage facility landed in New Brunswick, it would be because the community wanted it.

"We're not going to impose this on any community. We'll be seeking an informed and willing community and we will provide the info the communities need so they can make their own decisions based on their own interests," he says.

Keir says speculating on whether or not New Brunswickers would be accepting of such a facility could be a moot point, as the NWMO could end up finding out the province isn't scientifically suitable for the long-term facility. At this point, the Minister doesn't believe it's something New Brunswickers need to worry about.

"If there was a particular community in New Brunswick that stepped forward and wanted to do it we'd certainly sit down with them and see what the opportunities are, but it's way too early in the process," Keir says. "I don't want to alarm anybody, I'd rather let the process take place and see what the end result of their study concludes and we'll move from there."

Along with New Brunswick, the site selection focus will be in Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan, all of which are also nuclear provinces. Krizanc is quick to add that if a community in a different province was willing to play host to the facility, they would also be considered.

While Keir says the issue is not currently something to worry about for New Brunswickers, at least one of

the province's most vocal environmentalist activists isn't convinced.

"Are they out of their minds?," was Christian Theriault's comment about the possibility that a used nuclear fuel storage facility would even be considered for the province.

Theriault, who formed coalition group Citizens against Uranium Mining and traversed the province speaking at anti-uranium information sessions across New Brunswick, says he isn't sure logistically how such a storage facility could work.

"I don't have a clue where they would put something so eternally toxic and not put so many people around here in danger around the province," he says.

Krizanc counters that the current process of storing Canada's nuclear waste presents no immediate danger, but they are seeking a longer-term solution.

"It's safely managed now, there's no urgency to move the material from where it is. We have time and therefore we have no timetable set out for when the repository would be built and the material would move there," he says.

If and when it is determined that New Brunswick is a suitable location for that long-term storage, Keir says the province will perform their due diligence.

"I'm very comfortable with the process and we'd just like to see it continue. When the time comes for New Brunswick's input, we'll certainly give it," he says.

*Members of the public interested in weighing in on the process of selecting a site can participate in an online discussion or complete a survey on the NWMO website, [www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca)*