

Government Services Building
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www.curvelakefirstnation.ca

April 1, 2022

Mr. Jim Delaney
Natural Resources Canada
Delivered by Email

Dear Mr. Delaney,

RE: CLFN's Review of the Draft Modernized Policy for Radioactive Waste Management and Decommissioning

On behalf of our Consultation Department at Curve Lake First Nation (CLFN), we are writing to provide a review of the **Draft Modernized Policy for Radioactive Waste Management and Decommissioning**.

Our Consultation Department has emphasized that environmental protection and sustainability is an integral component of the future of the Curve Lake First Nation. Working with Curve Lake to develop project concept, design, planning, assessment, potential and actual impacts, monitoring, etc. are necessary steps in our process. All plans and activities must be viewed through the lens of environmental protection and sustainability. These requirements ensure that Curve Lake First Nation's interests and rights are being protected within our territory; that we are able to protect the ability to exercise our rights as a people – physically, culturally, and spiritually; that we are able to foster sovereignty, cultural identity, and sustainable succession. This is central to all relationships being progressed with various regulators and proponents.

Curve Lake First Nation is the steward and caretaker of the lands and waters within our territory in perpetuity, as we have been for thousands of years, and we have an obligation to continue to steadfastly maintain this responsibility to ensure their health and integrity for generations to come. Protection, conservation, and sustainable collaborative management are priorities for Curve Lake First Nation.

Curve Lake's vision statement must be central to development in the territory: "Upon the foundation of community values and vision that promotes and preserves our relationship with mother earth, which has defined and will continue to define our identity and culture as Anishnaabe People, the Consultation Department will build and secure the framework for our First Nation lands by putting into place ways and laws that will provide both the protection and the freedom for each person, their family, and the whole community to fulfill their potential. Each way and law will be given the consideration to its importance for our next seven generations."

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We have reviewed the “What We Heard” document and we saw a number of Curve Lake First Nation’s feedback and views, directly or indirectly, incorporated into the document. It was valuable to read other perspectives in the document. The document is another information source as we learn more about the nuclear industry. There is so much to learn. The next section of this letter focuses on the Draft Modernized Policy for Radioactive Waste Management and Decommissioning; with a focus on whether the draft policy adequately addresses the protection of future generations.

Referring to Page 2

When CLFN speak’s about nuclear energy, we talk about it as a potentially cleaner energy source relative to other sources. We recognize this to be a temporary or transitional energy source as we progress through innovation towards even cleaner sources of energy.

We view the positive contributions that nuclear energy makes when it comes to reducing air pollution. However, it also means we are transferring the pollution, the risks and burdens to future generations in terms of risks and burdens to water and to land. Nuclear is not totally emissions free in its complete lifecycle. We think the draft document could be improved to clarify the various terms used: net-zero emissions, non-emitting source of energy, zero emissions energy. These are not all entirely true or they are misleading in their implications.

In the balance, the bigger question is with respect to the tradeoff in reducing air pollution today to meet climate targets and achieving a net-zero emissions economy by 2050 and the burdens of radioactive waste for future generations. How can we better emphasize that?

Referring to Page 3

In concept, we understand that the federal government is committed to protecting and safeguarding people and environment for generations to come. That concept is in line with our community’s values. When we speak of environmental and ecological balance, we are also talking about the enablers and support mechanisms in place to achieve this.

The practice and the practical implementation of policies is where opportunities for nation to nation discussion and decision making presents itself. It would be good to reinforce the concept of environmental balance at each step of the process – at a high level and at implementation level.

Modernization could include modernization of structure and process to promote nation to nation relationships and decision making.

Modernization could include emphasizing comprehensive ecological balance and an ecological footprint – not just net zero emissions as we had mentioned earlier.

The bigger question in this area is how can we work together to achieve better Indigenous

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representation and an equal voice to parallel the various Federal Organizations that have various responsibilities in the nuclear energy sector.

It is more challenging for Indigenous peoples inclusion because the existing structure is pre-designed, the structure is already in place, and we are trying to fit inclusion into an already existing structure.

That said, we are optimistic that if we maintain this kind of dialogue, we will find a good way forward.

Referring to Page 4 – Gray Box that summarizes the key areas

The Government of Canada’s vision for radioactive waste management and decommissioning resonates better than the summary of principles themselves.

The vision at least makes specific mention of Indigenous peoples and UNDRIP. We think to strengthen all of our commitment it is important to reflect in the vision, in the policy, in the summary of principles, these key thoughts.

- Inclusion of Indigenous peoples and incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems
- Implementing UNDRIP
- Advancing reconciliation
- Ecological balance and sustainability for generations to come

Using inclusive language should be considered part of the modernization process. When we choose our language carefully, it helps describe what we are trying to achieve and how we are trying to achieve it. It helps elevate the consciousness in all of us.

We do acknowledge that these thoughts are incorporated in the details further in the document. We think they should permeate across all forms of communications.

Referring to Page 5 – Gray Box Key Area #1

This is where nation to nation relationship and decision making fits in. It is also where the idea of ecological balance and ecological footprint fits in, both of which are critically important to our community and to Indigenous Rights holders in general. We can see these ideas present, which is a good starting point, but they could also be more articulated.

Referring to Page 6 – Gray Box Key Area #2

This is where both the Constitution Act and UNDRIP are covered. We are glad to see this incorporated

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directly. Further, we see the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action linked. It would be good to also see in this section Indigenous Knowledge Systems more clearly articulated in line with scientific experts.

Referring to Page 8 – Gray Box Key Area #3

Global excellence can also be achieved with inclusion of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the fabric of how we do things. We think in Canada we are poised to achieve this and we think it could create a new standard in the international community – this is the Canada that we should believe in and hold.

We thank you, your team, and NRCan for working with us to understand and incorporate our comments on this policy. We thank you for including Curve Lake First Nation in your engagement efforts, to discuss these kinds of topics. We also want to specifically thank you for inviting Chief Whetung to the Joint Engagement Table. Our interactions have been mutually beneficial and we look forward to working with NRCan into the future.

We do this work to uphold our responsibilities to care for the earth and waters, for our people, our nation, and for all our relations. Our foundational belief is balance; our values and principles are built upon the respect, care, and nurturing of all life as part of an interconnected whole and necessary for the balance and harmony required for Mino-Bimaadiziwin now and for future generations.

Sincerely,

██████████ on behalf of Curve Lake First Nation Consultation Department
Support to Curve Lake First Nation Consultation Department

cc:

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