

Response to Draft Policy: " Modernizing Canada's Policy For Radioactive Waste Management and Decommissioning"

Continued Failure to Address Fundamental Mindset

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This Draft Policy for radioactive waste management and decommissioning is intended to advance three key federal commitments: health, safety, security and protection of the environment; openness, transparency and public engagement; global excellence in the fields of radioactive waste management and decommissioning.

It cannot succeed in this task with the proposed policy because it has failed to build on a critical assessment of the mindset that underpins the functioning of the industry, the regulators, related organizations and the governmental oversight.

Repeatedly civil society in Canada has raised concerns about nuclear industry influence on the regulatory body and the conflict of interest in the dual role of the department of Nature Resources. The Seaborn Panel reported on these concerns and in its recommendation for a nuclear waste management agency was specific that it be at arms-length from the industry; yet the government established the industry-based Nuclear Waste Management Organization.

The investigation of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant concluded that the mindset of the industry and its regulators were primary factors leading to the disaster¹.

In my comments submitted on the 2011 NPP Report, I noted that the 2011 NPP Report did not acknowledge the mindset of the industry and its regulators which were primary factors leading to the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant². When this issue was raised at the August 14 -15 meeting of the Commission, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission staff gave only general assurance of a different regulatory philosophy in

¹ The National Diet of Japan official report of The Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission, 2012

²Feedback submission at <https://nuclearsafety.gc.ca/eng/acts-and-regulations/regulatory-documents/history/regdoc2-4-1.cfm?pedisable=true>

Canada. What is the mindset that is operative in Canada in the actual function of the industry, the regulators, the related organizations and the government?

The necessity to deeply examine the mindset of the industry, the regulatory regime and the government in Canada in light of the Fukushima disaster is highlighted by a few quotes from the Executive Summary of The National Diet of Japan official report of The Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission, 2012:

- “the mindset that supported the negligence behind the disaster” (p. 9)
- “that the root causes were the organizational and regulatory systems that supported faulty rationales for decisions and actions” (p. 16)
- “an organization-driven mindset that prioritized benefits to the organization at the expense of the public” (p. 21)
- “its risk management mindset - in which the interpretation of issues was often stretched to suit its own agenda” (p. 28)
- “the regulatory bodies lacked an organizational culture that prioritized public safety over their own institutional wellbeing, and the correct mindset necessary for governance and oversight” (p. 44)
- “findings from our previous commission meetings suggest that the regulators completely lacked the mindset to safeguard the residents” (p. 76)
- “Only by grasping this mindset can one understand how Japan’s nuclear industry managed to avoid absorbing the critical lessons from Three Mile Island and Chernobyl; and how it became accepted practice to resist regulatory pressure and cover up small-scale accidents. It was this mindset that led to the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Plant.” (Message from the Chairman, p. 9)

Do the nuclear power industry, the regulatory regime and the Canadian government have a mindset fed by the safety myth; is collusion an issue in Canada; are opportunities to take steps to prevent a disaster being missed?

I urge that the fundamental mindset be critically assessed. I suggest that the following points in the Draft Policy be reviewed for insights on the mindset that is guiding this work:

- failure to establish independent oversight for the nuclear industry and nuclear operations
- failure to direct a national standard for the characterization of radioactive waste and maintenance of a verified inventory
- failure to identify a role for the federal government, Indigenous peoples or civil society with respect to the development and implementation of an “integrated strategy” for radioactive waste, while placing the nuclear industry in charge of developing waste management strategies
- failure to affirm the longstanding policy against reprocessing of nuclear fuel waste in Canada in spite of the environmental, security and proliferation issues
- failure to direct perpetual care and monitoring of highly radioactive wastes