

Minister  
of Natural Resources



Ministre  
des Ressources naturelles

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E4

July 16, 2020

Grand Chief Verna Polson  
Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Counsel  
[sgreen@kebaowek.ca](mailto:sgreen@kebaowek.ca)

Chief Lance Haymond  
Kebaowek First Nation  
[sgreen@kebaowek.ca](mailto:sgreen@kebaowek.ca)

Dear Grand Chief Polson and Chief Haymond:

I hope you, your families, and the members of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation and the Kebaowek First Nation are well during these unprecedented times.

The Prime Minister's Office has forwarded to me a copy of your correspondence of May 14, 2020, regarding the proposed Near-Surface Disposal Facility, Nuclear Power Demonstration Closure project and Global First Power's Micro Modular Reactor Project. I also understand that a response to your correspondence will be coming on behalf of my colleague, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

No relationship is more important to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples. We remain committed to a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership.

The Government of Canada is also dedicated to ensuring that safe solutions are in place for managing radioactive waste. Canada's Radioactive Waste Policy Framework, in its current form, provides a set of principles to govern the institutional and financial arrangements for the long-term management of radioactive waste, including a clear assignment of the roles and responsibilities of both the federal government and waste owners. Decisions with respect to radioactive waste in Canada will be made based on science, facts, evidence, traditional knowledge, and cultural values, under this existing policy. This policy will guide decisions until we can consult on and develop an updated approach.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), Canada's independent nuclear regulator, regulates the use of nuclear energy and materials in Canada across the full life cycle to ensure the protection of health, safety, security, and the environment. In line with its regulatory mandate, the CNSC is conducting the environmental assessment for Canadian Nuclear Laboratories' Near Surface Disposal Facility and Nuclear Power Demonstration proposals, as well as Global First Power's Micro Modular Reactor Project based on the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* 2012 requirements. As an agent of the Crown, the CNSC is committed to upholding the honour of the Crown and meeting its legal duty to consult and accommodate.

Canada

On February 27, 2020, the Government of Canada announced that it will modernize Canada's radioactive waste policy framework. In the coming months, federal officials from Natural Resources Canada will be working with stakeholders, Indigenous groups, and talking to Canadians to ensure that Canada continues to have a strong policy framework and a clear path for the safe long-term management of all our nuclear waste. Your views will be an important part of that conversation. I encourage the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Counsel and the Kebaowek First Nation to participate when we launch our engagement process on the enhancement of the policy and national plan for the management of nuclear waste in Canada. Given the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, this will likely be in the fall. I have asked my department to ensure that you are included at every stage of this process.

The Impact Assessment Act outlines a process for assessing the impacts of major projects. Ongoing projects with environmental assessments initiated under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA 2012) and led by the CNSC, will continue under their current processes. The IAA contains provisions to enable these projects to advance in this way.

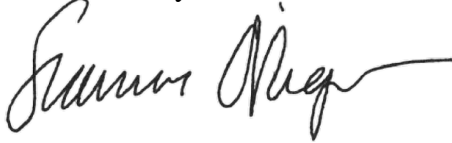
I also want to acknowledge the concerns you noted regarding small modular reactors (SMRs). We understand that, although some may consider SMR technologies or potential projects to be at an early stage, it is not any less important for First Nations and Indigenous Peoples to be meaningfully engaged on SMRs early and often. I wish to ensure that the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Counsel and the Kebaowek First Nation have every opportunity to be engaged on the topic of SMRs and for your concerns to be heard. Please let me know if this may be of interest to you, and we will work with you to arrange an opportunity to share information and discuss in the manner of your choosing.

I take the concerns you have relayed about engagement very seriously, and have conveyed your comments directly to the CNSC.

We have all been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and, moving forward, we will also take into consideration physical distancing requirements of each jurisdiction for our engagement activities and the potential use of virtual tools for assistance. Nevertheless, our engagement initiatives remain a priority, and we are committed to hearing from Canadians. The federal government recognizes the importance of committing to collaborative approaches to policy development and implementation. Policy for radioactive waste and demonstration of new nuclear technologies is no exception, and I understand that these issues are of great importance to Indigenous communities across the country. I look forward to working with you in shaping the future of nuclear waste management and the development of SMRs in Canada.

Thank you for writing on this important matter, and I trust that you remain healthy and safe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seamus O'Regan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, P.C, M.P.

c.c.: The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M.P.  
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