



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

March 13, 2026

APM-CORR-00650-302969

Chief Jeff Copenace
Ojibways of Onigaming

CC:

Jeff Copenace, Chief <contact information removed>

Finn MacDonald, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (nuclearwaste-dechetsnucleaires@iaac-aeic.gc.ca)

RE: Response to Correspondence Regarding the Deep Geological Repository (DGR) for Canada's Used Nuclear Fuel Project

Dear Chief Copenace,

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) thanks the Ojibways of Onigaming for its submission regarding the Initial Project Description (IPD) for the proposed Deep Geological Repository (DGR) for Canada's used nuclear fuel Project (the Project). We appreciate the opportunity to respond directly.

In this letter, we seek to address the key issues in your submission identifying Project issues and concerns across the broader region.

Scope of Impact Assessment process

On January 5, 2026, the NWMO IPD was posted on the IAAC registry. Submitting the IPD formally initiates the rigorous integrated IA and nuclear licensing regulatory process for the Project. The IPD also supports IAAC in identifying potentially affected Indigenous communities, informing engagement planning, and establishing the scope of the assessment. There will be numerous opportunities for engagement before a decision is made about the Project. As reflected in the IPD, the Project has been assessed at a screening level, and the risk of residual adverse effects is anticipated to be low with effects primarily associated with localized Project activities.

After receiving NWMO's IPD, as required by the Impact Assessment Act (IAA), IAAC prepared the Summary of Issues, which the NWMO received on Monday, February 16, 2026. The Summary of Issues outlines the key issues for the federal integrated IA process raised by the public and Indigenous communities during the 30-day comment period on the IPD.

The integrated process follows strict requirements and will include the identification and assessment of potential pathways of interaction and will consider how the Project as described in the Initial Project Description could affect, among other things, the environment, human health, and Indigenous rights before the Project can be approved. As part of this process, the IAAC and the CNSC will develop the requirements for the integrated assessment, requiring the NWMO to engage with the potentially affected Indigenous communities specified by the IAAC and the CNSC.

Past and Future Engagement

You have asked about the NWMO's engagement activities to date. The NWMO has been engaging with Indigenous communities over the last 20 years, which has informed the development of Adaptive Phased Management and the Project. To help address capacity constraints faced by many communities, the NWMO had established programs that provided funding for communities interested in engaging with NWMO and learning about the Project.

With the submission of the IPD, the Project is now in the integrated impact assessment process, which represents a new phase for the Project. The IPD is the first regulatory submission and does not represent an approval decision. The integrated impact assessment process includes numerous opportunities for potentially affected Indigenous communities to engage on defining issues, pathways of effects, study requirements, mitigation and follow-up measures.

The NWMO remains committed to respectful engagement on Indigenous rights and interests as part of, and to supporting Indigenous engagement in, the integrated impact assessment and associated licensing process.

Transportation of Used Nuclear Fuel

You have also asked a question about transportation of used nuclear fuel. As part of the integrated impact assessment for the Project, the NWMO is assessing potential effects of transportation activities at the Project site, including accidents and malfunctions associated with transportation on the primary and secondary access roads. Transportation of used nuclear fuel beyond the Project site is not part of the Project. Such transportation would rely on existing vehicular infrastructure and is regulated through a separate federal framework administered by the CNSC and Transport Canada, which govern safety, security, emergency preparedness, and compliance of nuclear substances along transportation corridors. Additional information about transportation can be found in our Response to the Summary of Issues, referenced below.

Next Steps

The NWMO appreciates the opportunity to respond to Ojibways of Onigaming's questions, and welcomes the opportunity to meet with the Ojibways of Onigaming to better understand how the Project may potentially affect your community. Please contact Joe Gaboury, Director, Indigenous Engagement, by email at <contact information removed> or by phone at <contact information removed> at your convenience if you are interested in meeting in this regard.

In the meantime, for additional information regarding the Project, we refer you to the NWMO's response to the Summary of Issues provided by IAAC based on the IPD. The NWMO's response is available on the IAAC's registry website for this Project at: <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/88774>.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss next steps at your convenience.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

Jessica Perritt

Director, Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation

<contact information removed>