

Saskatchewan; or have nuclear waste disposal research sites on their territory, like Manitoba — have an interest in participating actively in the concept assessment process. The Committee therefore recommends that:

Recommendation 8

The environment department of every province involved in or affected by nuclear production of electrical power should be a member of the Interagency Review Committee (IRC) which will be studying the spent nuclear fuel disposal concept.

Following the example of many of its witnesses, the Committee wishes to stress that it wants to see established, once and for all, the consultation and decision-making processes that will decide on the value of the disposal concept. Of relevance here is another extract from Davod Poch's letter to the Honourable Pat Carney on April 10, 1986:

The [decision-making] process is characterized by uncertainty. We do not know who will make up the "Environmental Assessment Panel", how they will operate, how social and ethical assessment guidelines will be developed, or the extent to which the report of the Interagency Working Group (which the AECB has convened and is a member of) will determine matters before the Panel hears the case.

[...] The recommendations arising from the Public Hearing Process will be submitted to the AECB, who will then issue a statement on the acceptability of the proposed concept and the matter will then fall into the hands of the two governments. The Environmental Assessment Panel appears to have only an advisory role. Thus the AECB could approve a concept about which the Panel has some reservations.⁽⁷²⁾

To eliminate these uncertainties and to provide a clearer understanding of the various phases of the decision-making process connected with the concept assessment, the Committee recommends that:

Recommendation 9

Environment Canada should take over the implementation of the fuel waste disposal concept assessment process. In addition, in collaboration with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Environment Canada should within the next six months produce and publish a detailed plan on the mandate, the resources, the timetable and the powers of the environmental assessment panel that will be responsible for reviewing the results obtained by the concept's promoters.

The Concept's Applicability

According to AECL, the results of the second preliminary assessment of the concept, published in September 1985, showed that no radioactive material at all would reach the surface for tens of thousands of years following the sealing of the vault. In the last analysis, AECL concludes that waste disposal can be carried out both economically and safely. With respect to the financial aspects of the concept, the Committee hopes that everything possible will be done to publish immediately rigorous data on the costs associated with disposal deep in crystalline rock formations. Consequently the Committee recommends that:

⁽⁷²⁾ David Poch (1986), p. 1-2.