

THE DOMESTIC DILEMMAS OF CIVILIAN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY

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The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada explore additional means of both providing more information to Canadians on civilian uses of nuclear technology, and receiving more public input into government policy in this area.

Response

Canada's philosophy and approach to nuclear safety, as well as Canada's legislative and institutional structure, are documented in the first issue of the Canadian National Report of the Convention on Nuclear Safety that has been presented for peer review by signatories to the Convention on Nuclear Safety in April 1999. A copy of this report is available on the AECB website.

There are well-established and readily accessible sources of information on Canada's nuclear program. Principal government departments responsible for Canada's domestic and international nuclear policy — Natural Resources Canada and DFAIT — have ongoing public outreach programs, including websites, to make information broadly and readily available to the public. The Government welcomes public input on the peaceful applications of nuclear energy and encourages the public to visit the nuclear websites created by relevant government departments. Recommendations on how to improve effectiveness of existing public outreach programs would be also welcome.

Canada's Access to Information Act also provides the right to Canadians to obtain information from the federal government departments subject to certain exclusions relating to commercial, national security and other interests.

The AECB conducts its regulatory activities with priority to public involvement and has an ongoing outreach program on its activities and on the regulatory and licensing process. The meetings of the AECB, where licensing applications and renewals are discussed, are open to the public. The new Nuclear Safety and Control Act also explicitly requires the AECB to provide scientific, technical and regulatory information to the public.

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, which is responsible for nuclear research and development and the design, marketing and construction of CANDU reactors, has a public information program in place, including outreach programs with schools on the website.

Most other nuclear activities in Canada, which encompass electricity generation as well as industrial and medical applications of nuclear technology, are carried out by provincial electrical utilities, private sector firms, the medical community and university research facilities. All have their own public information programs.