

Minister  
of Natural Resources



Ministre  
des Ressources naturelles

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E4

December 16, 2020

Ms. Patricia Leson  
President  
National Council of Women of Canada  
[presnwc@gmail.com](mailto:presnwc@gmail.com)

Dear Ms. Leson:

The Prime Minister's Office has forwarded to me a copy of your correspondence of September 25, 2020, expressing your concerns about small modular reactors (SMRs). Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts regarding climate change and investments in clean energy.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and our government has made a commitment that Canada will not just exceed its 2030 Paris Agreement targets, but will reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. To meet these ambitious goals, Canada has put a price on carbon pollution. We are phasing out coal-powered electricity and making generational investments in clean energy, new technologies and green infrastructure. For example, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$3 billion since 2017 in clean energy innovation like carbon capture and storage, wind and solar power, alternative fuels, energy storage, smart grids and energy efficiency.

For more than a decade, Natural Resources Canada has taken measures to support increased renewable energy technology deployment and the transition to a low-carbon economy through a series of national programs, such as:

- Natural Resources Canada's Charging the Future Challenge
- Natural Resources Canada's Emerging Renewable Power Program
- Natural Resources Canada's ecoENERGY for Renewable Power program
- Natural Resources Canada's Smart Grid program

Moreover, as outlined in the recent Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada will be continuing to invest in renewable energy and next-generation clean energy technologies, like energy storage, as we seek to recover economically from the COVID-19 pandemic. On the question of SMR funding, as with other clean energy sources like those listed above, provinces and the private sector have made requests for federal support.

Canada

In the enhanced climate plan, released on December 11, 2020, the Government highlighted its commitment to make significant investments to support decarbonization and drive the immediate creation of good-paying, resilient jobs in Canada. This investment will support large emissions reducing and job-creating projects across every region of the country. We are also committed to engaging with provinces, territories and municipalities to build on the strong foundation of climate action already in place, and focus on advancing mutual bilateral and regional priorities.

As you may be aware, nuclear energy is an important part of Canada's current clean energy mix, and it will continue to play a key role in achieving Canada's low-carbon future. Nuclear energy is the second-largest source of non-emitting electricity in Canada after hydro, and currently provides about 15% of national electricity generation. In addition to providing a source of non-emitting electricity, Canada's nuclear sector also provides nuclear isotopes, which are critical in the health care sector where they are used to not only diagnose and treat disease, but also to sterilize medical supplies. Most recently, the nuclear sector has been at the heart of Canada's response to COVID-19, delivering secure, reliable and affordable power—60% of annual electricity in Ontario and up to 65% of electricity in New Brunswick on any particular day—including to homes and hospitals. Ontario Power Generation and Bruce Power are supplying 40% of Cobalt-60 used for sterilization of once-through medical equipment around the world.

The Government of Canada sees SMRs as an innovative new tool to reduce global emissions, provide clean, non-emitting electricity and heat, and as a source of good jobs and economic opportunity. In our effort to fully decarbonize the Canadian economy, SMRs represent a feasible option for northern and remote communities as well as for hard to abate sectors such as heavy industry and oil and gas. In 2018, Natural Resources Canada convened the SMR Roadmap process to engage stakeholders on priorities and challenges related to the possible development and deployment of SMRs in Canada. If you would like to learn more, the report of the stakeholder-led SMR Roadmap can be found on the [website](#).

The Government of Canada looks forward to launching an SMR Action Plan with provincial and territorial governments, industry, Indigenous Peoples, and other partners, which will build on the recommendations of Canada's SMR Roadmap. Natural Resources Canada's work on the SMR Action Plan has included engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations across Canada, and will emphasize our aim to continue to open an ongoing, meaningful two-way dialogue.

Thank you for noting your specific concerns about safety and radioactive waste. The SMR Roadmap found that due to their simpler designs, smaller physical size, and enhanced safety features, SMRs represent a safe technological solution with a smaller environmental footprint than other clean, non-emitting energy technologies. Nuclear activities in Canada are regulated by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Canada's independent nuclear

regulator. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is mandated to safeguard workers, the public and the environment in line with international protocol. To date, all program data, which can be found on the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's website, demonstrates that there have been no emissions from Canada's nuclear power plants, licensed storage sites or uranium mine and mill sites that would result in negative health impacts.

Finding solutions for the long-term management of radioactive waste is critical not only to the safety and environmental integrity of nuclear energy, but also to maintaining public confidence in the industry as a part of Canada's low-carbon future. The Government of Canada is 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 governing 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.

Natural Resources Canada recently launched a review of Canada's Radioactive Waste Policy Framework, and you are encouraged to submit your feedback via the [website](#). Federal officials will be working with stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples and will be 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, including any future waste from SMRs.

Again, thank you for sharing your views.

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.