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86/02

Statement by the Right
Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs,
concerning the U.S.
Nuclear Waste Repository
Program

OTTAWA

January 16, 1986.

The United States Department of Energy has released a draft Area Recommendation Report as part of its program to locate a site for its second nuclear waste repository.

The draft report identified 20 areas for further study (12 will be actively studied; 8 will be held in reserve, if needed) from a list of 235 rock bodies located within the United States. The US Department of Energy has stated that it will receive comments on these 20 areas before the final report is issued in mid-1986. The areas on the final list will then be subject to field investigations, leading to a further narrowing, in 1991, to 3 sites for even more intensive study. A final selection of one site will be made in 1998.

I am pleased to see that none of the potential areas listed in the draft report is within 25 miles of the border. However, one in Maine, known as the Bottle Lake complex, is just beyond this minimum distance from New Brunswick and may be at least partially in the St. Croix River watershed. Other areas of potential concern to Canada, because they are in drainage basins that eventually flow into Canada, are in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The four potential areas of concern in Minnesota are in the Red River basin. Two areas in Wisconsin are at least partially in the Great Lakes basin.

The Government of Canada is examining the detailed US Government information on these areas. The Canadian Government and adjacent provinces will assess this information for indications of potential effects to the health and property of this and future generations of Canadians. Canadian officials will also review the data available on all 20 areas to ascertain if any of them could pose any concern to Canadians due to the movement of groundwater or other factors.

The Government of Canada and the governments of the concerned provinces expect to present their concerns to United States representatives at an early meeting of the Canada/USA consultative group on this issue which will take place once the information available in the draft report has been fully assessed. These concerns will also be registered with the US Administration at the Cabinet level at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

I and several of my Cabinet colleagues have made it clear to our US counterparts that this Government opposes any development that could present a transboundary threat to the welfare of Canadians or the integrity of the Canadian environment.

During consultations, the US agreed that no area would be selected if field work or sampling in Canada would be required or if it was adjacent to the border. One site in Maine, adjacent to the Quebec border near Lac Megantic, has been dropped specifically for those reasons.

The United States has also assured Canada that the 15-year screening process which it is conducting to select a site is intended to ensure that no site will be selected which will have harmful effects on either side of the border. The Government will monitor the US process carefully to ensure that the interests of this and future generations of Canadians are protected.

The Government will continue its consultations with the provinces and the citizen groups concerned with this issue.