

Ontario's Nuclear Emergency Review: Report Card



In 2013, former Minister of Community Safety Madeline Meilleur made several commitments to civil society organizations related to public engagement and addressing gaps in Ontario's offsite nuclear emergency plans. Four years later, the government has released a discussion paper on how it plans to update its nuclear emergency plans in response to the Fukushima accident. The following assesses this position paper against the original commitments made by Minister Meilleur in 2013.

Commitment	Grade	Reasons	Recommendations
<p><i>Consider consequences of Fukushima-type accidents.</i></p>	<p>C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry has acknowledged it doesn't have the independent capacity to model major accidents. • The Ministry has relied on a CNSC study that evaluates accidents much smaller than Fukushima along with a new federal study that hasn't yet been published. • Pathways to Fukushima-scale radiation releases have been identified at the Bruce, Pickering and Darlington nuclear stations. • Germany and Switzerland modelled Fukushima-scale accidents at all of their nuclear stations and found a need to expand emergency measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should publish modelling on the impacts of a Fukushima-scale accident before it provides final approval for its plan to continue operating Pickering in 2018. • The government should develop the capacity to independently model nuclear accidents in order to ensure the ongoing adequacy of offsite plans.
<p><i>Increased Community Awareness</i> – Regional Public Education Committees will be tasked with getting input on their activities from a broader community base.</p>	<p>C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We've seen no evidence this has taken place. • In 2014, OPG distributed brochures to residents near Pickering and Darlington, but this was due to a licence requirement imposed by the federal safety regulator. • There appears to be no active campaign to inform citizens of the availability of potassium iodide pills within the 50 km Secondary Zone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should require provincial and municipal authorities to inform residents and businesses in the 50 km Secondary Zone of the availability of potassium iodide and the desirability of including it in their home or institutional emergency kit. • The government needs to require those authorities to conduct detailed planning to ensure that evacuation can effectively be carried out in the full newly proposed contingency planning zone as well as into the secondary zone, especially for vulnerable communities.

<p>Protect Drinking Water – The Ministry of Energy will be asked to assess and plan for drinking water contamination from a large-scale accident.</p>	<p>Fail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four years later, this has not happened. • A Fukushima-scale accident will lead to significant contamination of the Great Lakes, but Ontario has no plans or strategies on how to address this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should study and publish modelling of drinking water source contamination in the areas around the Bruce, Darlington and Pickering nuclear plants in the event of a major accident, examine appropriate response measures, and develop a plan to ensure that contingency drinking water supplies will be available in the case of such an accident. • The government should use its drinking water protection jurisdiction to ensure that the Great Lakes and other sources of water are protected by requiring contingency plans including contaminated water storage and isolation.
<p>Land Recovery and Evacuee Return</p>	<p>Fail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the event of a major Fukushima-scale accident, the government will need to determine what land is permanently abandoned and what land will be reclaimed. Ontario effectively has no guidance on evacuee return. • The government’s discussion paper makes no recommendations on land recovery and evacuee return. • In its evaluation of Canada’s regulatory framework, the Convention on Nuclear Safety criticized the lack of land recovery guidelines in Canadian nuclear emergency response plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government needs to study and propose guidelines for land recovery and return before 2018, when the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station is due for another federal safety licensing review.
<p>Transparency – Commitment to begin a process of greater public engagement in nuclear-related matters. The Ministry will assess mechanisms and venues for public engagement</p>	<p>C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the current public consultation is a good step forward, it is occurring almost four years after the original commitment and six years after Fukushima. The Ministry has continued its practice of consulting with industry behind closed doors without public oversight. • The Ministry has systematically refused to respond to Freedom of Information requests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should ensure all meetings and consultations with industry on nuclear emergency matters can be scrutinized by the public. • A revised nuclear emergency plan should make public consultation and pro-active disclosure mandatory on a rigorous and regular schedule, with updated information including population density and land use.