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Elizabeth May

Member of Parliament / Député(e)
Saanich — Gulf Islands

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The Honourable Seamus O'Regan
Minister of Natural Resources

The Honourable Navdeep Bains
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry

November 9, 2020

Re: Canada Invests \$20 million in Nuclear Power Technology

Dear Ministers,

We are writing today regarding the recent federal investment of \$20 million, which was granted to Terrestrial Energy, a private company in Ontario, to continue developing a molten salt reactor. Canada must respond rapidly to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's call to action to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By choosing to invest in non-commercialized, novel and unproven nuclear technology, the federal government is redirecting funds away from renewable energy alternatives that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions much more effectively. There is a significant opportunity cost in investments that do not move us down a path to sustainability, but rather take us down the wrong road. It has been the case for decades that the Government of Canada, particularly the Department of Natural Resources, starting when it was the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, has had a significant embedded commitment to nuclear energy within the civil service. It is time for the department to redirect its internal culture towards technologies with a proven track record of success and break away from deep loyalties to a failed sector.

Small nuclear reactors (SMRs) have no place in any plan to mitigate climate change when cleaner and cheaper alternatives already exist. The federal government must stop

funding the nuclear industry and instead redirect investments towards smarter solutions. Nuclear fails on many grounds, including on the economics. Nuclear technology is capital intensive. SMRs are more expensive than renewable energy. [A Canadian study](#) found that energy from small nuclear reactors would be up to ten times the cost of renewable energy. As Green MPs, we urge that all energy investments be measured on the same set of metrics. Every investment should be assessed asking three key questions: 1) for every dollar invested, how many tonnes of greenhouse gases are avoided, 2) for every dollar invested, how many jobs are created, and 3) what is the effective timeline from initial funding to achieving results? Using these metrics, nuclear will always finish at the bottom of any hierarchy of energy investments. The winners, every time, will be investments in retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency and investments in renewable energy. This was recently borne out by the study published in the Oxford Review of Economic Policy, with lead authors Sir Nicholas Stern and Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz. Please find this study [here](#).

If the economic case against such investments is not enough to persuade you that investing in nuclear is merely to throw more good public funds after bad, there remains the issue of nuclear waste. The SMRs proposed to be built across Canada will produce radioactive waste. The federal government does not have an effective plan to deal with this waste.

The [2020 World Nuclear Industry Status Report](#) states that the development of nuclear energy is too slow to address the climate crisis. Nuclear power creates fewer jobs than renewable energy, such as solar, wind, district energy, and geothermal. These energy alternatives are cheaper and more readily available and this is where Canada should be making investments.

In the words of critic Fred Knelman, nuclear was a “future technology whose time has passed.” We urge you to stop investing in an industry whose time has passed. There are better energy alternatives for Canada to tackle the climate emergency. The federal government must redirect funding away from nuclear technology and towards renewable energy for the sake of all Canadians, and for future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions or if you would like to discuss this matter in more detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth May". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Elizabeth May, O.C.

Member of Parliament
Saanich-Gulf Islands
Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J. Atwin'.

Jenica Atwin
Member of Parliament
Fredericton

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'P. Manly'.

Paul Manly
Member of Parliament
Nanaimo-Ladysmith

CC Hon. Blaine Higgs, M.L.A., Premier of the Province of New Brunswick