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Nuclear Renaissance Possible in Canada; Hurdles Remain: C.D. Howe Institute

Toronto, June 9 – Nuclear energy has an important role to play in Canada’s electricity generation mix, based on cost and environmental grounds. Several hurdles remain to be cleared, however, according to a study released today by the C.D. Howe Institute. In *Canada’s Nuclear Crossroads: Steps to a Viable Nuclear Energy Industry*, authors Bruce Doern and Robert Morrison examine three key policy questions facing the nuclear industry – cost, privatization of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL), and regulation. They recommend steps to building a viable nuclear industry in Canada.

Canada is at an energy and environmental crossroad, note the authors. Fossil fuels cause environmental damage, and the growth potential of large-scale hydroelectricity is limited. As policymakers reconsider the merits of nuclear power as a low-carbon emitting and low-cost base load electricity source, they must resolve issues surrounding costs, waste disposal, and licensing and regulation.

The authors conclude that nuclear power appears cost competitive with fossil fuels, once the cost of greenhouse gas emissions associated with the full production cycle are accounted for. On the organizational side, Doern and Morrison recommend that AECL, a crown corporation, be partially privatized to bring stable funding, new international partnerships, and market capacity and discipline. However, they note, any privatization deal should include continuing support, public or private, for pure research and development at the Chalk River, Ontario laboratories. Doern and Morrison also recommend that Ottawa review the array of nuclear regulatory regimes with respect to different nuclear risks, from isotope manufacturing to reactor licensing to long-term waste storage. The commercial nuclear reactor licensing process will also need revision if a nuclear electricity renaissance is to occur in Canada.

The future of nuclear power in Canada is positive, say Doern and Morrison, if policy-makers are prepared to make hard choices on these key issues.

Canada's Nuclear Crossroads: Steps to a Viable Nuclear Energy Industry, is available at www.cdhowe.org.

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Canada's Nuclear Crossroads: Steps to a Viable Nuclear Energy Industry, C.D. Howe Institute
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