

Community Sustainability Visioning

If a community is interested in potentially becoming a host community for the deep geological repository for containing and isolating used nuclear fuel in Canada and associated facilities, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) is prepared to provide financial support to assist the community to undertake a community sustainability visioning process. Participation in this process is entirely voluntary and in no way obligates a community to commit to participating in subsequent steps of the siting process. By undertaking the community sustainability visioning, a community has given initial consideration to the possibility of hosting the deep geological repository and associated facilities, but has the option of removing its community as a potential candidate for the facilities at any point in the site investigation process.



What is a community sustainability vision, and what is involved in a visioning process?
This document outlines a possible framework for community sustainability visioning as a starting point for discussion with communities interested in considering the Adaptive Phased Management project.

Background

The Government of Canada selected Canada's plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel in June 2007. The plan, called Adaptive Phased Management, involves the development of a large infrastructure project in an informed and willing host community. The NWMO is federally mandated to implement this project and is leading a multi-year process for selecting an informed and willing community to host this national facility.

The plan calls for the construction of a deep geological repository to safely and securely contain and isolate Canada's used nuclear fuel. This multi-billion-dollar project will also involve the creation of a centre of expertise for technical, environmental and community studies. It will become a hub for national and international scientific collaboration.

The NWMO provides support to interested communities to learn more about Canada's plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel and to think through their interest in the project. Early in the site selection process, communities may wish to consider this project in the context of their long-term interests. Such a broad approach would help highlight the resources (social, economic, environmental) of the community and pave the way for thinking about how the project may affect the community on a variety of dimensions. Ultimately, the vision for the community and the extent to which the project contributes to this vision in an acceptable way is a matter for the community to discuss and assess. Should initial screening suggest the community has potential to be suitable for the project, the community – as represented by accountable authorities – may request and receive resources from the

NWMO to develop and/or augment an existing long-term vision for community sustainability as part of a process of considering and assessing interest in the project.

What is a community sustainability vision?

For over a decade now, municipalities and regional governments have been developing sustainability plans that allow a community to identify a future vision to which they aspire and to establish specific goals and initiatives which will move them towards their “ideal” future state.

Sustainability can be defined in many different ways; however, most definitions recognize it as encompassing the economic, social, cultural and environmental considerations associated with programs, projects and activities. A vision statement supports a community’s desire for the future and provides a foundation upon which short- and longer-term sustainability goals and priorities can be derived.

A community sustainability vision is built on and supports the principles of sustainability (i.e. the integration of environmental, social, cultural and economic perspectives). The process of developing a vision can provide a community the opportunity to identify its desired future, and help to organize the community’s priorities and set out a plan of action for achieving its desired future.

The NWMO supports communities’ efforts to consider their long-term sustainability vision and to assess if hosting the deep geological repository and associated facilities could be consistent with their vision.

Why participate in a community sustainability visioning process?

Visions can help the community’s leadership to understand the needs of their constituents and allow them to strategically plan to address those needs and make informed decisions about proposed initiatives within the community.

The process of developing a community sustainability vision can allow residents and members to learn about the range of interests in their community and to promote an appropriate balance. Once established, residents are able to see the implementation of the community’s vision through the activities, initiatives and policies pursued by the community’s leadership.

Communities that may wish to be considered for hosting the deep geological repository and associated facilities may benefit from the systematic process of defining their vision, priorities and goals. The process and outcome of developing the vision will also allow communities to make an informed decision on whether to proceed further in the siting process.

NWMO support for visioning

The NWMO is prepared to financially support communities that are interested in participating in a visioning process. The decision to move forward with the visioning exercise, the process undertaken to develop the community sustainability vision, and the decision whether or not to proceed with hosting the NWMO project rests solely with the community and is without prejudice. Community sustainability visioning is an initiative that will be driven and informed by the community and its leadership.

In addition to providing financial support, the NWMO has also prepared – and can make available upon request – guidance on how a community might wish to approach the development of a community sustainability vision to support the consideration of the project.

What might community sustainability visioning involve?

Ultimately, the approach to developing a community sustainability vision needs to be responsive to the specific needs of, and processes used by, the community. The following framework is offered as illustrative of the components of a community sustainability visioning process.

Principles

Principles tend to be used to guide a visioning process. The following principles are suggested as a starting point for discussion.

1. The commitment to the community sustainability visioning exercise is done without prejudice and does not imply that the community is committed to becoming a willing host in the context of the NWMO siting process.
2. Consistent with the overall siting process approach, the NWMO will be proactively involved in sharing information with the community at all steps of the process, both prior to, during and following the community visioning exercise.
3. The community visioning process must provide sufficient structure for a consistent approach, but be flexible enough to reflect individual community's unique situation.
4. Visioning should be a collaborative undertaking that aims to be inclusive and representative of the views, interests, priorities, goals and perspectives of the community at large.
5. Visioning, while consultative and inclusive, should be carried out in an efficient manner.
6. The visioning exercise will address matters that will eventually allow the community to assess whether the deep geological repository and associated facilities would be consistent with its community sustainability vision.
7. The NWMO will provide fixed financial support to be used by the community to facilitate the development of the community sustainability vision, as outlined in a memorandum of understanding.
8. Visioning should build upon any existing processes and activities that have identified a vision for the community (e.g. integrated community sustainability plans, land use plans, official plans, economic development plans).

Activities

There are many different ways in which community sustainability visioning might be undertaken. Three phases are suggested as a starting point for discussion as described in the graphic below.



In this approach, the process of developing the community sustainability vision begins when the community informs the NWMO of its interest and confirms the terms and conditions on which it will proceed with the visioning with NWMO funds. The community-based activities associated with the development of the vision begin in Phase I. The activities continue through to the end of Phase III.

ACTIVITIES > PHASE I: PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY VISIONING

The intent of Phase I is to ensure that the community is sufficiently prepared to undertake the visioning exercise. This proactive planning phase:

- » Lays the foundation, by gathering necessary background information on the community, for informing interested parties participating in the visioning;
- » Identifies and secures the resources that will be required to effectively and efficiently develop the community sustainability vision;
- » Develops plans, protocols and processes for undertaking the visioning; and
- » Prepares the community at large for the activities associated with the visioning.

This phase helps ensure that: (a) the community has the necessary materials and resources required for developing the sustainability vision, and (b) the residents of the community are aware of the visioning initiative and their opportunity to participate.

This phase is supported by five action items, as well as specific objectives, as depicted in Figure 1.

Sustainability Vision Action Item	Objective/Intent
Community identifies a sustainability visioning "champion"/leader	A clearly identified individual within the community's leadership who will champion the sustainability visioning activity to its conclusion.
Community identifies a facilitator to carry out sustainability visioning	Assessment of community's capacity to undertake vision development. Identification and procurement (as needed) of the services of skilled facilitator to undertake all work required to develop a sustainability vision for the community.
Facilitator develops a communication/engagement plan	Outline the strategy that will be undertaken to ensure all interested parties are appropriately informed in terms of activities related to the sustainability visioning.
Community notice related to the sustainability visioning	Ensure that the community is aware of the intent to undertake sustainability visioning and are provided opportunities for participation.

Figure 1: Phase I – Planning and Preparing for Community Sustainability Visioning

ACTIVITIES > PHASE II: DEVELOPING THE COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY VISION

The purpose of Phase II is to engage the community and develop a detailed understanding of its goals, interests and priorities that will ultimately inform the community's sustainability vision. The process related to the development of a sustainability vision should be informed by the interests, needs and goals of a wide range of community interests.

This phase promotes an informed approach to the development of the vision by providing the community with appropriate information that facilitates insight into the current state of affairs within the community. It also ensures that any plans or priorities on the future direction of the community – and any identified trends – are also shared, since such information may help to inform the community's perspective and input.

Ultimately, this phase ensures that a collaborative process is undertaken to develop a well-informed sustainability vision that is reflective of the community's interests, goals, priorities and needs.

Phase II is supported by four action items. Figure 2 notes possible action items in Phase II and specific objective/intent.

Sustainability Vision Action Item	Objective/Intent
Develop/assemble community-based profile	Assembly of existing community-based documents (e.g. demographic profile, land use plans, environmental scans, etc.) that can provide insight into community priorities, directions and interests.
(If and when requested by community) NWMO provides information about the project	Through discussions with the community, the NWMO provides materials (as appropriate and when requested) that can be used at sustainability visioning activities which help to explain Adaptive Phased Management, siting process, deep geological repository and associated facilities.
Prepare materials to support sustainability vision	Ensure all materials required to support the sustainability visioning sessions (e.g. presentation material, workbooks, checklists, websites, etc.) are developed and ready for public consumption.
Conduct sustainability visioning session(s)	Carry out effective (user-friendly) community/public engagement initiatives that provide insight into the short- and longer-term interests, values, priorities, etc. of the residents in relation to the community.
Develop a draft sustainability vision	Analyze the input and develop a draft sustainability vision.

Figure 2: Phase II – Developing the Community Sustainability Vision

ACTIVITIES > PHASE III: FINALIZING THE COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY VISION

The purpose of Phase III is two-fold: (1) to finalize the community’s sustainability vision, and (2) to determine whether ongoing participation in the siting process for the deep geological repository and associated facilities is consistent with the community’s sustainability vision.

Phase III gives the community an opportunity to confirm that the draft sustainability vision reflects its interests prior to being finalized, and before considering whether the NWMO has the potential to contribute to the community’s vision and further discussions with the NWMO are warranted.

Phase III is supported by four action items. Figure 3 notes possible action items in Phase III and its specific objective/intent.

Sustainability Vision Action Item	Objective/Intent
Community notice to review and provide input on draft sustainability vision	Provide the community with the opportunity to review and provide input on the draft sustainability vision. Ensures that the sustainability vision is reflective of interests.
Review and consider public input	Review and consider all feedback received and incorporate, as appropriate, into a revised sustainability vision.
Develop finalized community sustainability vision	Draft the finalized sustainability vision.
Consider whether the deep geological repository and associated facilities should be considered	Decide whether to engage in further discussions with the NWMO.

Figure 3: Phase III – Finalizing the Community Sustainability Vision

Further information

Sustainability visions are being used to help guide community development across Canada. They are typically prepared to define the future direction of a municipality or region and to assist with priority setting. The process of developing the sustainability vision provides communities with the opportunity to reflect on the direction they are headed and to assess if they are on course for meeting their collective interests. The visioning exercise, in the context of the NWMO's siting process, may provide a useful opportunity for communities to explicitly consider if the NWMO and the deep geological repository and associated facilities may be part of their future.

The visioning exercise may help a community think through whether or not continuing to be considered for a potential deep geological repository and associated facilities could be in the best present and future interests of the community and whether to engage in further discussions with the NWMO to explore the community's interest.

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