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NWMO Hosts the Fourth International Conference on Geological Repositories

The International Conference on Geological Repositories (ICGR) brings together senior-level decision-makers from countries advancing programs for the safe, long-term management of long-lived high-level radioactive waste in deep geological repositories. This year's conference, held in Toronto from September 30 to October 3, 2012, was hosted by the NWMO, in co-operation with Natural Resources Canada, the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/NEA), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the European Commission, and the International Association for Environmentally Safe Disposal of Radioactive Materials (EDRAM).

The NWMO's involvement in forums like the ICGR is part of its commitment to keep abreast of the latest developments in nuclear waste management.

"The fact that there are now more than a dozen countries involved in developing their own repositories means there are new opportunities to learn from and build on one another's experience," said Ken Nash, president and CEO of the NWMO.

The theme of this year's conference, *National Commitment – Local and Regional Involvement*, highlighted the importance of responding to societal expectations in planning and developing deep geological repositories, and ensuring that repositories are developed by implementing organizations working co-operatively with host communities and regions, and overseen by national regulatory agencies.

Mr. Nash stressed in his remarks the importance of community initiative in Canada's own site selection process. "Open-minded, forward-thinking community leaders are willing to engage their communities in a dialogue to learn about a used fuel repository," he said. He added that it is because of this kind of dialogue that the NWMO is making progress toward identifying an informed and willing community to host the facility.

More than 200 people, representing 15 countries, attended the conference. Participants included leaders from international organizations, representatives from Canadian communities involved in the site selection process, representatives from the municipal associations involved in the NWMO's Municipal Forum, Aboriginal peoples, officials from national regulatory agencies, and the heads of several national nuclear waste management organizations. The format, with its mix of presentations, panel discussions, and audience participation, was designed to maximize the exchange of ideas and to help participants learn from one another's experiences in advancing national programs for deep geological repositories for radioactive waste.

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Jacob Spangenberg, Mayor of the Swedish municipality of Östhammar, answers a question from the audience during the session *The Experience of Local Communities and Regions*. Also shown (from left to right) are Larry Kraemer, Mayor of the Ontario municipality of Kincardine, and Jean-Louis Canova, Mayor of the French commune of Ancerville.

Representatives of the communities participating in Canada's site selection process had the opportunity to meet with one another and their counterparts from other countries. The conference program included a panel discussion with local representatives from several communities in other countries that have agreed to host nuclear waste management facilities, including John Heaton, a former New Mexico legislator who is working to have that state's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant considered as a possible site for used nuclear fuel, and Jacob Spangenberg, the mayor of the municipality (Östhammar) that has been selected as the site for Sweden's deep geological repository.

Paul Austin, NWMO Relationship Manager for Southern Ontario, was especially struck by the high level of community participation. "I think all the community leaders really enjoyed being able to talk one-on-one with regulators," he said. "And there were a lot of opportunities for them [the community leaders] to find out about how communities in other countries participated in similar siting processes."

The proceedings can be viewed online at www.icgr2012.org/conference-proceedings.php.



A question from the audience during the session *Perspectives of International Organisations*. The panellists (from left to right) are Alexander Bychkov of the IAEA; Luis Echávarri of the OECD/NEA; Marie-Claude Dupuis of France's National Radioactive Waste Management Agency – Andra; Ute Blohm-Hieber of the European Commission; and Bruce McKirdy of the UK's Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Community Liaison Committees: Planning Activities to Help the Community Learn About the Project

Many communities in Step 3 of the site selection process have established community liaison committees (CLCs) to help residents learn about the project and become involved in the process. This includes planning open houses, keeping residents informed about ongoing studies and new information as it becomes available, making sure that residents' concerns are addressed, and tailoring information sessions to meet local needs and involve the entire community in learning about the project.

Communities choosing to move into Step 3 may request funding from the NWMO to cover the administrative expenses of a CLC, along with the salary for a halftime administrative assistant. Funding is also available for a range of other activities. Each committee's mandate is set by the community's Council, and members are selected by the Council. Committees typically meet at least once a month, and all meetings are open to the public.

Newsletters and websites are two of the ways the CLCs are keeping their communities informed about the site selection process. Residents wishing to learn more can do so by posting questions to their CLC's website, attending its meetings or dropping by the local office.

To learn more about the different CLCs, please visit www.clcinfo.ca.

At the beginning of 2013, there were community liaison committees in the following Step 3 communities: English River First Nation, Pinehouse, Creighton, Ignace, Ear Falls, Hornepayne, Wawa and Schreiber.



Meeting of the Wawa CLC

Where the Site Selection Process Is Now

On September 30, 2012, the NWMO suspended accepting new expressions of interest from potential host communities. Since that time, it has been working closely with the Ontario and Saskatchewan communities already engaged in learning more about the project.

One of the hallmarks of the site selection process is that it allows communities to progress at a pace that suits their needs. Because of this, some communities are currently in Step 2 of the nine-step process, while others are in Step 3.

Step 2 starts with a community contacting the NWMO and formally requesting a briefing. The NWMO conducts an initial screening designed to see whether there are any obvious reasons to exclude the community from further consideration. At the request of individual communities, the NWMO initiated several such screenings over the course of the fall and early winter. In communities where these were completed, staff then presented the results to Councils in their meetings and to residents through local open houses and outreach to different groups in the community.

The communities in **Step 3** have successfully completed initial screenings and then formally requested a preliminary assessment to explore whether there is the potential to meet the project's detailed technical requirements. Preliminary assessments also include working with the community to understand how it defines its well-being and to explore whether the project can contribute to it.

Over the past year, the NWMO's focus in Step 3 communities has been on working together with each community to help it learn about the project, reach out to neighbouring communities and Aboriginal peoples to involve them in the learning process, and conduct preliminary assessments. As in Step 2, open houses, briefings and discussions with community groups have been an important vehicle for sharing information, in this case about the preliminary assessments that are currently underway. To help in preliminary assessments and to facilitate the flow of ideas and information, several Step 3 communities have established community liaison committees. Similar work, as well as the establishment of community liaison committees, is progressing in communities that have more recently entered Step 3 of the site selection process.

Communities Currently Exploring Their Interest in the Project

- Arran-Elderslie
- Blind River
- Brockton
- Central Huron
- Creighton
- Ear Falls
- Elliot Lake
- English River First Nation
- Hornepayne
- Huron-Kinloss
- Ignace
- Manitouwadge
- Nipigon
- The North Shore
- Pinehouse
- Saugeen Shores
- Schreiber
- South Bruce
- Spanish
- Wawa
- White River



NWMO's Bob Watts Delivers the 2012 Vancouver Human Rights Lecture

Every year, the Vancouver Human Rights Lecture is broadcast on the CBC Radio One program *Ideas*, reaching an audience of some 700,000 listeners. This year's invited speaker was Bob Watts, the NWMO's Director of Aboriginal Community Relations. A member of the Six Nation Reserve, Mr. Watts is of Mohawk and Ojibway ancestry and has been involved in major Indigenous issues in Canada over the past 20 years. His many achievements include leading the process, with support from across Canada and internationally, to establish Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is examining and will make recommendations regarding the Indian Residential School era and its legacy. He also worked with Mediate BC to recommend ways for aboriginal communities to respond to changes in the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

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Mr. Watts chose for his topic, *Rights in a History of Wrongs: What Does a Just Future Look Like for Indigenous Peoples?* After the talk, Mr. Watts spoke about why he is so passionate about protecting and promoting human rights: "One of the things I learned from my studies at the John F. Kennedy School of Government was that the recognition and manifestation of the right of self-determination was the distinguishing factor in why certain Indigenous peoples were thriving from social, cultural and economic perspectives. Fostering respectful relations aimed at enhancing human dignity will release Indigenous peoples and genius from the shackles of numbing poverty, the effects of which will be felt around the world."

The lecture was presented in collaboration with the Laurier Institution, the University of British Columbia (UBC) Continuing Studies, the UBC First Nations House of Learning, the First Nations Studies Program at UBC, and CBC Radio One's *Ideas*. It can be heard in its entirety at www.cbc.ca/ideas/popupaudio.html?clipIds=2302392424.

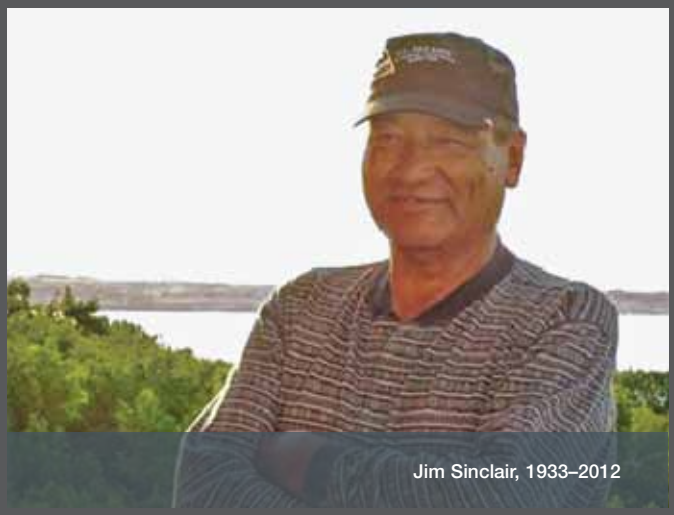
Remembering Jim Sinclair

It was with great sadness that the NWMO learned of the passing of Jim Sinclair, a lifelong champion of Aboriginal rights. He was 79.

Mr. Sinclair's association with the NWMO began in 2003, when he was part of the Traditional Knowledge workshop designed to assist the NWMO in understanding Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and how it could be included in and contribute to the approach the NWMO recommended to the Government of Canada for managing used nuclear fuel.

Mr. Sinclair is perhaps best remembered for successfully leading the campaign to have Canada's Métis people recognized in the Constitution, but he was also instrumental in starting numerous organizations designed to advance Aboriginal rights, including most notably, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (formerly the Native Council of Canada) and the Métis National Council. In his native Saskatchewan, he helped start several organizations that have made a difference in the province's Aboriginal communities. These include the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Saskatchewan Native Economic Development Corporation, the Urban Native Housing Corporations, and the Saskatchewan Native Addictions Centre.

Over the course of his long and distinguished career, Mr. Sinclair had four private meetings with Pope John Paul II, and addressed both the European and Australian Parliaments on the subject of Aboriginal rights. The Canadian Senate is one of several groups to have honoured him with a lifetime achievement award.



Jim Sinclair, 1933–2012

Mr. Sinclair was a member of the NWMO's Elders Forum, where he was a strong advocate for respecting Aboriginal treaty rights. He was also a strong advocate for involving Aboriginal youth in the Forum's work. Speaking in 2010, he noted that "the youth are seen by all members of the Elders Forum as the leaders of tomorrow, and leaders need to know more about this topic."

The NWMO is honoured to have known Jim Sinclair and is deeply grateful for the advice he has offered over the years.

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