

Guiding Principles



In conversations with Canadians, it was clear that the siting process needs to be grounded in a set of principles that reflects the values, concerns and priorities of Canadians. The NWMO has identified five fundamental values, described at the beginning of this document (Integrity, Excellence, Engagement, Accountability, Transparency), and an ethical and social framework that informs all its work. The following principles have been identified in dialogue with Canadians and build upon this framework.

FOCUS ON SAFETY. Safety, security and protection of people and the environment are central to the siting process. Any site selected must address scientific and technical site evaluation factors that will acknowledge precaution and ensure protection of present and future generations and the environment for a very long period of time.

MEET OR EXCEED REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS. The outcome of the site selection process, as for all aspects of Adaptive Phased Management, must meet, and if possible exceed, all applicable regulatory standards and requirements for protecting the health, safety and security of humans and the environment, and respect Canada's international commitments on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. These regulatory standards and requirements must be used as a starting point for the siting process and a critical component of the standard to be met throughout.

INFORMED AND WILLING HOST COMMUNITY. The host community, the local geographic community in which the facility is to be located, must be informed and willing to accept the project. The local community must have an understanding of the project and how it is likely to be impacted by the project. As well, the local community must demonstrate that it is willing to accept the project.

FOCUS ON THE NUCLEAR PROVINCES. As identified by Canadians involved in the NWMO study, fairness is best achieved with the site selection process focused within the provinces directly involved in the nuclear fuel cycle.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW. Communities that decide to engage in the process for selecting a site as potential hosts must have the right to end their involvement in the siting process at any point up to and until the final agreement is signed, subject to all regulatory requirements being met and regulatory approval received.

SITING PROCESS LED BY INTERESTED COMMUNITIES. The steps in the siting process must be driven or triggered by communities expressing interest in exploring their potential suitability as host. A community will proceed to the next step only if it chooses to do so. Potentially interested communities may explore their interest in the project in the way they see fit, with the support of the NWMO, and with funding available to seek independent advice and peer review, and to involve residents in the community, at each stage.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS, TREATIES AND LAND CLAIMS. The siting process will respect Aboriginal rights and treaties and will take into account that there may be unresolved claims between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown. The NWMO recognizes the Crown's duty to consult and accommodate if necessary when potential Aboriginal and treaty rights may be adversely affected by proposed Crown conduct when the NWMO selects a site. Prior to that, the NWMO must continue to engage with Aboriginal peoples and encourage potentially interested communities, including Aboriginal communities, to engage with First Nations, Métis and Inuit in the area.

SHARED DECISION-MAKING. The site selection decision will be made in stages and will entail a series of decisions about whether and how to proceed. Each potential host community, and later the selected host community, must be involved in decision-making throughout the process. For example, criteria and procedures to assess the effects of the project on the community must be collaboratively developed and assessed with the NWMO.

INCLUSIVENESS. In addition, the NWMO must respond to, and address where appropriate, the views of others who are most likely to be affected by implementation, including the transportation that would be required of used nuclear fuel. Full opportunity must be provided to surrounding communities, provincial governments, Aboriginal communities and transportation communities as a large group with a shared interest to have their questions and concerns heard and taken into account in decision-making on a preferred site.

SUPPORT CAPACITY BUILDING. The site selection process must assist the potential host community in thinking carefully and thoroughly about the potential benefits and impacts to its community associated with this project when assessing its interest, and ultimately, willingness. The NWMO must provide the forms of assistance communities potentially affected by the implementation of the project need to participate in the process.

INFORMING THE PROCESS. The selection of a site must be informed by the best available knowledge—including science, social science, Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and ethics—relevant to making a decision or formulating a recommendation throughout the process. Consistent with the NWMO's commitment to transparency in its work, the information that is collected and used to assess the potential suitability of a site must be published on the NWMO website for public review and scrutiny and be the subject of third-party review at major milestones.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING. Any community that agrees to host the facility has a right to benefit from doing so. The project must be implemented in a manner that fosters the long-term well-being or quality of life of the community and region in which it is implemented.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENTS. While this national initiative is federally mandated, the NWMO must involve all potentially affected provincial governments in the siting decision.