

Moving Forward Together: Canada's Plan for the Long-Term Management of Used Nuclear Fuel



The NWMO announces date for suspension of expressions of interest from communities wishing to engage in the site selection process for Canada's Used Nuclear Fuel Repository and Centre of Expertise

In May 2010, the NWMO initiated a site selection process for Canada's Used Nuclear Fuel Repository and Centre of Expertise for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel in an informed and willing host community. The nine-step process to select a site will take 10 years or more to complete, and begins with a community expressing interest in learning more about the project, the NWMO and the site selection process. Interested communities are the focus of a progressively more detailed set of scientific, technical and community well-being studies, and phases of learning to assess the suitability of the community for the project. Communities may leave the site selection process at any time up until the signing of a final agreement, which is still many years in the future. An expression of interest by a community triggers a process of broad outreach and discussion of the project with neighbouring communities and potentially affected Aboriginal peoples.

To date, a number of communities have expressed interest in learning more about the project, the NWMO and the site selection process. At this time, 15 communities are actively engaged in the site selection process, including several that have asked the NWMO to begin more detailed preliminary assessment studies (Step 3). As well, a number of other communities have requested information and briefings and are considering participating in the site selection process.

The NWMO is planning to suspend the expressions of interest phase of the site selection process on September 30, 2012. New expressions of interest will not be considered after this date. This will allow the NWMO to focus its efforts on conducting the detailed studies required in communities that have expressed an interest to date, or that express interest on or before the closing date. It will also help the NWMO plan for and fully support the engagement of surrounding communities and potentially affected Aboriginal peoples, which is initiated with the entrance of a new community to the siting process. Expressions of interest by new communities must be supported by a resolution of Council, or equivalent, and may take the following forms: request for an NWMO briefing to learn about the project and the site selection process; or request for an initial screening of the potential suitability of the community for the project.

The suspension of the expressions of interest phase of the site selection process is intended to help ensure that the best knowledge and expertise are brought to each of the studies that are conducted. It is also intended to ensure that the communities involved in the site selection process continue to be fully supported by the NWMO in their exploration of the project and are informed, as early as possible, whether they are among the short list of strong candidates for the project. The suspension of the expressions of interest phase will also help the NWMO plan for and fully support the involvement of surrounding communities. It will be important for the NWMO to engage potentially affected Aboriginal peoples to understand and fully respect their Treaty rights and how Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge can be applied.

The NWMO is optimistic that the studies that have been initiated, or that will be initiated with communities that express interest on or before September 30, 2012, will identify viable options for implementing this project. However, until this work has been completed, the outcome of these studies is uncertain, and it may be necessary to study other communities and sites as potential hosts for this project in the future. The NWMO, therefore, reserves the option of reopening the process to expressions of interest by new communities in the future.

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