



NUCLEAR WASTE SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION  
MANAGEMENT DES DÉCHETS  
ORGANIZATION NUCLÉAIRES

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL SUITABILITY: PHASE 2

# Resources to Support Engagement of Neighbouring Communities in the NWMO Site Selection Process



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## I. Introduction

In May 2010, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) launched a process to identify a safe site in an informed and willing community to host facilities for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel. The principles and decision-making framework to guide the selection of a site were developed collaboratively through a two-year dialogue involving a broad cross-section of Canadians and Aboriginal peoples.

Canada's plan for the long-term care of used nuclear fuel is called Adaptive Phased Management (APM). The ultimate goal of APM is to safely contain and isolate the used fuel in a single deep geological repository (DGR) in a suitable rock formation. The objective of the site selection process is to arrive at a single location for the DGR and associated Centre of Expertise through several phases of progressively more detailed technical, scientific and socio-economic assessment.

The process is advancing through a multi-year series of steps to ensure that, above all, the site selected is safe and secure, and meets the highest scientific, professional and ethical standards. Since launching the process, the NWMO has been working collaboratively with communities interested in learning to begin exploring their potential to meet site selection requirements. Upon the completion of Phase 1 assessments, a smaller list of communities is identified as warranting further study by advancing to Phase 2.

The second phase of preliminary assessment work involves more intensive community learning and engagement. Work will take on a broader focus to include First Nation and Métis peoples, and surrounding communities. Preliminary fieldwork will begin, including airborne surveys, and at a later date, limited borehole drilling, to further assess geology and site suitability against technical safety requirements.

Engagement activities in the second phase of preliminary assessment are designed to be implemented through a partnership involving interested communities, First Nation and Métis peoples, surrounding communities, and the NWMO in a process based on trust, fairness and mutual understanding.

The NWMO is committed to the active and meaningful participation of interested communities, Aboriginal communities and surrounding communities. From its inception in 2002, the NWMO has sought to develop its processes and plans with the involvement of interested communities and Aboriginal peoples, laying a foundation for ongoing engagement and partnership.

Throughout the site selection process, the NWMO seeks to define the suitability of sites through engagement of the community and those in the surrounding area, and through interweaving scientific and Indigenous Knowledge. Ultimately, the project will only proceed with the involvement of the interested community, First Nation and Métis communities in the area, and neighbouring communities working in partnership to implement it.

## II. Moving Towards Partnership

Building the relationships that would be required to support implementation of the APM Project will necessarily involve many steps over an extended period of time. The NWMO understands that early on, trust and understanding needs to be established to achieve mutual learning. As work advances, envisioning the project together and planning for its implementation is important. Planning for the project's implementation may include discussion about:

- The potential for strategic hiring and strategic procurement;
- Planning and implementation of education and training programs in the area over the extended planning and operation lifespan of the project;
- Business incubation support to assist local businesses to position themselves to participate in the project;
- Investments in infrastructure that may be required to foster well-being beyond what may be required for the project; and
- Business and ownership opportunities associated with the project.

## III. Phase 2 Preliminary Assessments

Preliminary assessments, which take place in Step 3 of the site selection process, are designed to assess in a preliminary way the potential suitability of an interested community and area to host a DGR as part of Canada's plan for the safe, long-term management of used nuclear fuel.

Preliminary assessments are implemented through a two-phased process. Phase 1 focused on exploring the potential for the interested community to meet the robust requirements for the project. Phase 2 focuses on deepening this learning and exploration of potential suitability within the community, and broadening learning and reflection to include First Nation and Métis peoples in the area and surrounding communities. The project will only proceed with the involvement of the interested community, Aboriginal peoples in the area and surrounding communities working in partnership to implement the project.

Over the course of the site selection process, the NWMO will seek to engage neighbouring communities in learning about and reflecting upon the project, and in the conduct of the assessments.

## IV. Resource Program Description – Neighbouring Communities

### Purpose

Phase 2 preliminary assessment studies involve more detailed technical and social studies and intensive engagement within the community, with Aboriginal communities in the area, and with neighbouring communities in the immediate vicinity.

This program is designed to provide resources to assist communities in the immediate vicinity of the interested communities that are participating in Phase 2 preliminary assessment studies. Interested communities are communities that expressed interest in learning more about the project. They have successfully completed an initial screening, they have worked with the NWMO to complete Phase 1 preliminary assessment studies, and through these assessments, their area has been identified as having strong potential to meet the robust requirements associated with this project, and they have advanced to Phase 2 studies.

The resources provided to communities in the immediate vicinity of interested communities are intended to assist these communities in building understanding of the project, and to support their participation in discussions with the interested community and the NWMO designed to explore the potential to foster well-being in the area through the project.

### Description

The NWMO will cover the costs incurred by neighbouring communities to learn about the project and become involved in studies, as follows:

- **Visit an interim storage facility.** Community members may be interested in seeing how used nuclear fuel is currently managed on an interim basis. The NWMO will cover travel expenses for a small delegation of community representatives to visit an interim nuclear waste storage facility in Ontario or other nearby facility.
- **Meet with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC).** Community members may be interested in learning about the regulatory framework that governs the NWMO project. The NWMO will cover travel expenses for a small delegation of community representatives to learn more about the regulatory framework governing the long-term management of used nuclear fuel by meeting with the CNSC. The timing and agenda for the meeting is established directly by the CNSC in concert with the delegation, in order to ensure the delegation's areas of interest and questions are addressed.
- **Understanding key topics such as radiation, geoscience studies, environmental protection, and multiple barriers.** The NWMO acknowledges the importance to communities of developing a deep understanding of key topics from NWMO specialists and academics working in the field. The NWMO will organize a series of learning events and workshops which will bring community representatives and these academics and specialists together. Modest participant expenses will be covered by the NWMO for community representatives to participate in these learning events and workshops.

- **Understanding the international perspective.** The NWMO encourages communities to keep abreast of international programs and best practices. The NWMO will facilitate opportunities for community representatives to learn from those involved in the implementation of used fuel management programs in other countries by organizing a series of learning events or workshops which will bring together community representatives and these international leaders. Modest participant expenses will be covered by the NWMO for community representatives to participate in these workshops.
- **Open houses and community discussions.** As Phase 2 preliminary assessment studies proceed, open houses will be planned and organized with the community to seek community involvement and share study findings.
- **Funding for administrative expenses associated with working with the NWMO and the interested community to expand understanding of the project and engage in preliminary assessment studies.** Detailed technical and social studies conducted by the NWMO as part of Phase 2 assessments will require planning, and ongoing discussion and collaboration between the NWMO and the interested community, and also surrounding communities and Aboriginal peoples. Neighbouring communities may incur expenses through participation in NWMO activities related to these studies, and these expenses will be covered at cost. These expenses may include small learning infrastructure improvements such as photocopy or printing costs and meeting equipment. Up to \$100,000 to cover these administrative expenses is available for each 12-month period for the duration of the Phase 2 assessments. An accounting must be kept of activities and money spent suitable for third-party audit and submitted to the NWMO every six months for the duration of participation in this program.

In the latter half of Phase 2 assessments, detailed studies will be conducted on the potential social, economic and cultural effects associated with the project. These studies will be conducted in close collaboration with the communities in the immediate vicinity of interested communities. Communities in the immediate vicinity of interested communities may wish to **enhance or augment an existing long-term vision** for community sustainability, integrated community sustainability plan and/or strategic plan during this process to support their participation in the planning and implementation of the detailed studies with the NWMO. Resources to support strategic planning activities are available (up to \$40,000 for each 12-month period for the duration of the Phase 2 assessments).

The NWMO continues to learn through working with communities. This program will be regularly reviewed and refined to reflect this learning and evolving needs of communities.

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