

Final Report for Mawiw Council & NWMO – Dialogue and community information sessions

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And the Mawiw Council

nwmo

NUCLEAR WASTE
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION

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DES DÉCHETS
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FINAL REPORT
FOR
MAWIW COUNCIL
&
NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

DIALOGUE & COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

In:

TOBIQUE

ESGENOOPITITJ

ELSIPOGTOG

From July to November 2009

DECEMBER 7, 2009

Written by: **BRAD SAPIER**

Executive Summary

This report is addressed to Mawiw Executive, NWMO, and all members of Mawiw.

Mawiw conducted this process in order to allow NWMO the venue of which they could use to inform the Mawiw communities about proposed plan for the safe and long term storage of nuclear waste.

From this process, we concluded that this was a great first step. A process that contained useful, well described and explicitly presented information that provided adequate room for input from the listeners.

Our main recommendations, based upon this assessment, are as follows:

- 1) Always include youth even if it means specific processes that involve them.
- 2) Always stay true to what is being said.
- 3) Never substitute safety for economic reasons.
- 4) Remember mother-nature will react if we don't respect the environment.
- 5) Respect our rights, our treaties, & our traditional beliefs at all times and not just when it's convenient.
- 6) Maintain updates on the process changes to all communities affected by the repository (site and transportation routes).
- 7) Further development of NWMO's Aboriginal policy considering our recommendations (as well as other bands) and announcement to First Nations of its completion.

We also suggest the following action steps:

- 1) Favourably consider another action phase plan that allows a continued dialogue process for all Mawiw and other First Nations Communities following this one.
- 2) Continually provide further presentations to NB Chiefs, and Youth forums as requested.

Background

Mawiw council's membership consists of three bands, Tobique, Elsipogtog, & Esgenoopitij First Nations. These three bands combined represent the majority of First Nations members in New Brunswick. Incorporated in 1992, Mawiw has sought to provide more equitable benefits to each of its membership bands. It remains both a political representative in New Brunswick, and a program advisory and administration servicing of programs that are made available to each of the three bands.

Mawiw was contacted by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization to hold a series of meetings <later to become open house sessions> with its member communities. The purpose of the meetings was to allow NWMO to disseminate information to the Mawiw bands about the nuclear waste issue that exists. NWMO has a plan called "Adaptive Phased Management". This process is the vehicle by which NWMO relies on to provide an open and transparent method to ultimately identify a willing community with a suitable site to host a permanent repository for nuclear waste. This multi year plan is what NWMO seeks input on from Mawiw.

Introduction

This report is written as a result of the many dialogues and discussion with NWMO, and Mawiw's focus group. The focus group was formed following the initial NWMO presentation held in July of 2009 in Fredericton. This introductory meeting with NWMO was a presentation to Mawiw's board members, Chiefs, technicians, Mawiw executive, and band councillors. Our task within the focus group was to ensure all information provided by NWMO was properly analysed and discussed as to allow for proper feedback to be included in this final report. Initially the focus group had different opinions on what the expectations of the

group were. Once re-aligned the focus then become on the process itself and answering several questions that will be outlined later in this report.

One of the focus groups recommendations was to develop a strategy to get this information NWMO presented to the grass roots level. The group felt strongly that to enable this plan to be implemented effectively, the leadership in each of the Mawiw communities had to hear the presentations themselves. This would provide some assurance to the members that the information was important for everyone to absorb if the leadership stood behind the process first. This in fact was the case as two communities Tobique & Elsipogtog agreed to hold community open house information sessions along with leadership dialogue with NWMO. Esgenoopitij elected to not hold a community open house session but did host a Chief & Council session with NWMO on November 26, 2009. In all, Mawiw facilitated 9 sessions in total. These sessions included three focus group meetings in Fredericton (September 23, October 16, and December 30th) three Chief & Council sessions, one Mawiw board meeting (which included the Mawiw executive, and a Mawiw Chief on July 31st), and two community open house information sessions (Tobique-November 13th & Elsipogtog- November 27th). In all the sessions, NWMO provided the listeners with great explanation of their mandate and their plan. Pat Patton who is the lead Aboriginal relations Manager for NWMO fielded questions from all sessions and answered with great integrity. All who tried to stump her with a question were greeted with a clear answer and thorough explanations.

To the nuts and bolts

As mentioned earlier, the task at hand was for the NWMO to provide information to Mawiw about the long term plan for nuclear waste and try to gather feedback on the process itself. This would allow Mawiw to recommend changes or additions to its current text within the proposed plan. NWMO came armed with video, power point and handouts all of which was rich with information about Canada's plan for the long term storage for the bi product of nuclear energy. Following presentation, a series of questions were asked.

1. Decision-making steps:

Are the proposed decision-making steps consistent with selecting site and making a fair decision? (Page 19 and detailed description pages 20-24)

- **What are the strengths of the proposed steps?**
- **How could the decision-making steps be improved?**

2. Siting principles:

Do you think that the proposed siting principles are fair and appropriate? (Page 16-18)

- **What are the strengths of the principles?**
- **How could these principles be improved?**

3. Decision-making criteria:

Do the proposed safety-related questions address all the factor that you think are important? (page 26)

- **Are there others that should be added?**

4. Supporting the participation of communities:

Is the proposed approach to considering factors beyond technical safety – community well being and partnership and community support factors- appropriate? (Page 31-35)

- **What are the strengths of the proposed approach?**
- **What improvements might be made?**

5. Other important considerations:

Are there important questions that should be answered by this document but are not?

- What needs to be added? What changes, if any, should be made?

These series of questions are once again proof that the NWMO seeks valuable input from Aboriginals and the general public. Our focus group <following all leadership and community sessions> met in Fredericton on December 30th to analyze the sessions and use them to answer the above questions for NWMO. Once the final focus group meeting had begun, healthy discussion on this subject ensued. Many opinions were expressed and it became affable for the group to engage in NWMO questions and deliberate the pros and cons of the proposed plan. Besides the focus groups “think tank” session, other people who were members such as leadership and community members were also asked these questions. However, due to the expansiveness of the plan and the short time of which it was able to be absorbed by the listener, feedback was non-existent to minimal. With that said, some input was brought forth to some focus group members.

What has also occurred with our focus group members was the development of an insatiable thirst for more involvement. Several requests for another phase of presentations and updates were made for the very near future. It was agreed that due to this phase of examining the proposed plan, many recommendations would follow not just from an Aboriginal perspective but also from the general public of all provinces engaged. The focus group was eager to scrutinize those results once they were captured by NWMO and implemented into the new plan.

Mawiw Recommendations and input

Following is Mawiw focus group answers to the five questions.

Question 1. Collectively Mawiw felt that the decision-making steps were consistent with selecting a site and making a fair decision. The strengths were that each step had noticeably thorough criteria for a host community and adequate procedures for information dissemination for all participants.

A recommendation from the group discussion was to always include youth involvement at any stage of the process. Create processes that purposely target youth participation.

Another recommendation from the group was to include an emergency measure plan for the site and have it part of the dialogue or make it a separate process in the later steps. This plan would obviously cover community(s) roles in the event of a disaster which may occur. It was felt by the group that another EMP be circulated to the communities that would be affected by the transportation of nuclear waste to the permanent site. If there is already a plan to implement this idea than we back this effort up.

Question 2. The focus group agreed overall that the proposed siting principles are fair and appropriate. The strengths are that safety was mentioned first. Another strength from our perspective was that Aboriginal people were included in the principles. The right to withdraw at any time was in our opinion a good principle but one that could cause a lot set-backs and delays in progress. Overall, the siting principles were well thought out and didn't require much more consideration.

A recommendation from our point of view would be to include all provinces and not just nuclear provinces. There may be other provinces with more suitable geologic properties that allow a safer environment for the long term storage of nuclear waste. There would be economic benefits for them to do such.

Question 3. The proposed safety-related questions in the discussion document covered most if not all areas of safety.

The focus group had no recommendations at this time.

Question 4. Mawiw's focus group felt that the considerations to community well-being and partnership and community support factors were appropriate. However some language around "involving Aboriginals" could use some rewording. The strengths are that efforts to foster a long lasting relationship that include well-being and quality of life for any willing and informed community will be committed by NWMO.

Our recommendation to improve on this would be to change the wording from "involving Aboriginals" to "**Ensure Inclusion & Full Participation with Aboriginal Communities**". This in our view gives more strength to the relationship with any Aboriginal community who is either willing, or is in the proximity to a willing community, and NWMO.

Question 5. Mawiw focus group had much discussion on this area. Whether or not any of these suggestions have any use in NWMOs' plan, we feel it is appropriate to mention these points:

- A promotional effort should be pursued to elevate awareness of "greener energy" thereby reducing waste itself over time.
- A clear and proven case should be written and presented to support the reasoning for one repository and not several repositories located in each waste producing province. This in our opinion would reduce the amount of waste being transported and would make each province accountable for its own waste. It appears that the budget for one repository is substantial, and there would be offsets to cost with several repositories of scale. Our position is not to demand several repositories, just support the one repository idea with hard data, evidence, or testimony.

A final recommendation would be ->In the event of dissention with respects to treaties and rights amongst First Nations communities and other surrounding potential hosts, NWMO must create a process of dispute resolution that allows fairness and equality for Aboriginal communities.

Conclusion

Overall, our involvement in this stage of the process has been stimulating at a minimum. Our knowledge has grown by vast amounts. However, there is still much more that our organization and our membership would need to learn and stay a part of. This initial phase has opened the eyes of many and has started the wheels of thought of all who have participated. There are still people within our communities that fear the subject. As we have learned, our position has gone from fear to acceptance for the most part. As those who are in fear of the idea begin to learn and open their minds to this plan they too will accept that this plan is part of our environmental responsibility that deals with the controversial subject of nuclear waste. Also we strongly recommend another phase of dialogue be held with Mawiw as to allow for further acceptance through information sharing thereby enhancing and resulting in more willing communities and the promotion of partnerships with Aboriginal communities, NB communities and NWMO.

Also in closing, I personally want to thank the following:

- Mawiw executive President Ruth Levi, Secretary, Carrie Dedam, and Treasurer Red Cougar Dennis (previously Tiffany Perley) for choosing me to work on this project which has rocked my thoughts about nuclear energy production, use and waste management.
- Mawiw focus group members from Elsipogtog; Kenneth Francis, Barbara Millea, & Valerie Levi. Tobique; Tina Martin, Ross Perley, Joanne Sappier, Paul Pyres, Ross Perley, & Brenda Perley. From Esgeoopitij; Jason Barnaby, Everett Dedam, & Calvin Barnaby. All of which participated in most if not all meetings and sessions. Your input was and is valuable.
- NWMO staff Pat Patton, Jessica Perritt, & Eric Kremer who worked with us to set up and present their plan to our members.
- A very special thank you goes to our elders who worked alongside NWMO as part of their Nagani Elders Group Gwen Bear from Tobique and Donna Augustine from Elsipogtog. It was a privilege and an honour to work with you and listen to your experience and wisdom on this subject.

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Thank you all!