

Designing the process for selecting a site  
NWMO Citizens' Panel Dialogues and Public  
Discussion Groups

**DRAFT**

# Agenda

- Process overview
  - Objectives of Engagement
  - Methodology
  - Participants
- Key findings
- Cross-cutting themes
  - Informed and willing communities
  - Community well-being
- Guiding principles
- Site selection process



# PROCESS OVERVIEW

# Objectives of Engagement

1. Obtain **citizens' perspectives** on the proposed site selection process
2. Identify possible ways of **strengthening** the proposed plan with a particular focus on **ensuring that it is fair and appropriate**
3. Identify and advise on any **challenging or potentially problematic implications** related to the selection process

*Canadians will have a decision to make:*

*Where should our used nuclear fuel be contained and isolated for the long term?*



# Methodology

## Citizens' Panel Dialogues

*Led by: Ascentum*

- Full-day
- Invitation extended to all NWMO citizen panelists
- Learning sessions (APM, guiding principles, siting process)
- Mix of small group and plenary dialogue; participant worksheets
- Q&A with NWMO and CSNC subject-matter experts

## Public Discussion Groups

*Led by: Navigator*

- 3 hour sessions
- Randomly-recruited citizens (14-18 per session)
- Abridged learning session
- Facilitated plenary discussion
- Feedback forms
- Q&A with NWMO subject-matter experts

# Analysis

## Citizens' Panel Dialogues

*Led by: Ascentum*

Data sources:

- Guiding Principles
  - Plenary discussion notes
  - Participant summary worksheets
- Site Selection Process
  - Plenary discussion notes
  - Participant post-it notes
- Cross-Cutting Themes
  - Plenary discussion notes
  - Working group notes

## Public Discussion Groups

*Led by: Navigator*

Data sources:

- Guiding Principles
  - Discussion notes
  - Participant worksheets
- Site Selection Process
  - Discussion notes
  - Participant worksheet
- Cross-Cutting Themes
  - Discussion notes
  - Participant post-it notes

# Participants

## Citizens' Panel Dialogues

- Toronto (Sept. 26/09  
English)
  - 63 citizen panelists
  - GTA (32%), the rest of Ontario (28%), NB (14%) and SK (26%)
- Ottawa (Oct.03/09, French)
  - 6 citizen panelists from Province of Quebec

## Public Discussion Groups

- Saskatoon (Oct.7/09)
  - 15 participants
- Sault Ste-Marie (Oct.8/09)
  - 16 participants
- Toronto (Oct. 15/09)
  - 18 participants
- Scarborough/Pickering (Oct.17/09)
  - 14 participants
- Saint John (Oct. 19/09)
  - 14 participants



# KEY FINDINGS

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# Key Findings

## 1. NWMO's Guiding Principles are on track

- Support for the intent and purpose of the guiding principles
- Call for the NWMO to put principles in practice

## 2. The site selection process meets the test of fairness and safety

- Overall, almost all participants agreed that the proposed nine-step process was both fair and appropriate
- Many questions about the specifics of each step and the process of moving from one step to the next

# Key Findings

## 3. Robust public participation: the heart and soul of a successful site selection process

- Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that *communities be represented by their citizens in an on-going decision-making capacity*
- Guiding principles: ‘shared decision-making’ and ‘inclusiveness’
- Nine steps: in determining whether a community is informed and willing to host the site, in signing a formal agreement with the NWMO, and on an on-going basis once the site is operational

# Key Findings

## 4. The community must benefit from hosting the site and risks must be mitigated

- Overriding concern for participants
- Multifaceted benefits: community and culture; physical and social infrastructure; job opportunities, business incentives; and community capacity-building.
- Expectation that quality of life must not be compromised just for economic gain (“humanist approach”)

# Key Findings

## 5. Need for transparency and third-party involvement

- Transparency of utmost importance
- Recurring call for a neutral third party to ensure fairness and transparency, and help instil public confidence and trust in the process
- Participants' lack of trust in governments to act in the best interest of its citizens, especially in the Public Discussion Groups

## 6. A “social contract” with future generations

- Concerns about issues of intergenerational equity

## 7. Research on reducing the volume and toxicity of nuclear waste

- Importance of the project being *adaptive* to new research / technology
- Repeatedly raised issues related to greater use of ‘green’ energy



# CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

# Informed and Willing Communities

- Core concern for participants across all sessions
- Interwoven in the Guiding Principles and Site Selection Process Discussion
- Many ideas and suggestions for implementation

*How well does the siting process provide for the kinds of **information, tools and resources** that are needed to support the participation of communities that may be interested?*

*What might a community be expected to do to demonstrate **'in a compelling way'** that it is **willing** to become a host site?*



# Informed and Educated

- Consistently expressed the view that the public must be ***educated*** about the project
- Feel that the process of informing the public must be well documented and give everyone opportunities to become informed
- Suggested multiple communication techniques, styles and channels to reach a broad and diverse audience

# Expert Input and Public Participation

- Valued neutral third-party and expert advice
- Felt that citizens should be given the opportunity to “both receive and contribute information”
- Expressed a strong view that everyone’s voice must be heard – including dissenting voices



# Demonstrating Willingness: Voting

- Use of referenda was strongly supported, but views varied on appropriate threshold
- Voter eligibility and turnout also critical considerations
- Underlined the importance of continued public involvement in decision making beyond an initial vote to demonstrate willingness to host the site

# Community Well-Being

- Community well-being seen as imperative
- Strong sentiment that the project should promote the socio-economic well-being of the community and contribute to its cultural, economic and infrastructural development

*How well do the **criteria to assess community well-being** capture the key factors that should be considered in deciding whether the project would support or damage a community's well-being?*



# Mitigate Risks

- Heavy emphasis on risk mitigation
- Key concerns:
  - Health and safety risks
  - Environmental effects and risks of transportation
  - Unknown long-term effects on health and the environment
  - Negatively impacting relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples
  - Risk of an economic downturn once the “construction boom” ends
  - Compromising quality of life for economic gain

## Mitigate Risks (continued)

- Transparency deemed paramount, e.g.:
  - Known and potential risks
  - Worst case scenarios, the strategies to avoid them and emergency plans to deal with adverse incidents
- Frequently mentioned risk-mitigation strategies:
  - Build site close to where most nuclear energy is produced
  - Avoid locating the site near ecologically sensitive areas
  - Continuously monitor and document the surrounding environment, population health, and of general community well-being



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

# Guiding Principles

- General agreement with the intent and purpose of the proposed guiding principles
- No suggestions for additional or fewer principles
- Suggested refinements/clarifications

*Will the proposed guiding principles help ensure that the siting process is **fair and appropriate**? Why? Why not?*

*What **additions and/or revisions**, if any, should be made? Are there any critical gaps?*



# Guiding Principles

## Focus on safety

- Unanimously supported, seen as top priority
- Sought details on how safety standards will be maintained and updated on a continuous basis
- Language clarifications:
  - “a very long period of time”;
  - “acknowledge precautions”

*“To me, it is the most important thing here; the site chosen must be the safest.”*



# Guiding Principles

## Informed and willing “host community”

- Informed...and also educated
- Questions/concerns re: how to define, measure and demonstrate “willingness”
- Suggestion that measures be taken to ensure that community willingness is independent of vested interests
- Language clarification:
  - Expand upon definition of “host community”



# Guiding Principles

## Focus on nuclear provinces

- While fair, this should not trump site safety or limit viable site location options
- Participants prioritized minimizing transportation distances over seeking remote/isolated sites
- Other concerns: protecting best interests of vulnerable communities, and maintaining public visibility of the site

*"Take into consideration how far away the site will be from the generating plants to minimize hazardous materials on our roads."*



# Guiding Principles

## Right to withdraw

- Want citizens to have a voice in deciding if and how to withdraw
- Support for a withdrawal clause in the formal agreement contingent on new information on safety
- Language clarification:
  - Want to see more imperative language (e.g., “must observe” vs. “take into account”)

*“The ultimate objective must always be the protection of the community, and the community must have recourse in the event of undisclosed or new information that changes the situation.”*



# Guiding Principles

## Aboriginal rights, treaties and land claims

- Definitive about not considering any land involved in unresolved legal disputes about Aboriginal rights, treaties or land claims
- Lack of trust in governments treating Aboriginals fairly
- Language clarifications:
  - Strengthen the terms “respect” and “take into account” to be less ambiguous

# Guiding Principles

## Shared decision making

- Strong support for public participation in decision making
- Not only the “host community” representatives, but every citizen
- Expectation that shared decision-making model would be on-going, throughout the project’s life cycle
- Language clarifications:
  - Participants suggested expanding “host community” to “the citizens of that community” or “the host community and all its citizens”

# Guiding Principles

## Inclusiveness

- Agreement that neighbouring communities and those on transportation route need to be well-informed, but views diverge on the extent to which they should be involved in decision making.
- Sought more clarity on the decision-making role of provincial/territorial governments
- Language clarifications:
  - Want a more precise definition of the parameters and metrics for “affected” communities and “host community”

*“Everyone potentially affected deserves [to have his or her] voice heard.”*



# Guiding Principles

## Informing the process

- Support a third-party review at each step of the site selection process, and want more information on qualifications for third-party review role
- Want to see information more widely available and actively disseminated beyond the NWMO website
- Feel public review and scrutiny are an important component of the review process to uphold transparency
- Value the “adaptive” dimension of the process

*“The process needs to be on-going – again responding to new knowledge of the effects of waste management.”*



# Guiding Principles

## Community well-being

- Advocated for the protection of disadvantaged communities (ensure that they are not taken advantage of)
- Concerns relating to residential proximity to the storage site and compensation for related hardships

*"How do we insure that we are not taking advantage of poor, disadvantaged communities by offering them economic benefits to take this[...]waste."*



# Guiding Principles

## Regulatory review

- Participants, especially at the Public Discussion Groups, lack a clear understanding of the Canadian nuclear regulatory system
- Value regulatory safeguards and on-going regulatory reviews, by more than one regulating body, plus third-party review
- Desire for regulatory standards to be sufficiently flexible to adapt as scientific research reveals new knowledge and technologies





# **SITE SELECTION PROCESS**

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# Site Selection Process

- Views of Citizen Panelists and Public Discussion Group participants generally converged
- Overall, almost all participants agreed that the proposed nine-step process for selecting a site was fair and appropriate

*Is this nine-step siting process **fair and appropriate**? Why? Why not?*

*Are there any critical elements and considerations **missing or not adequately addressed**?*

*How might we **strengthen** each of the individual steps and/or the process as a whole to make it as fair and appropriate as possible?*



# Step 1 – Initiating the siting process

- Unclear on *how* the NWMO would initiate the process.
  - Idea: issue tenders with a clear checklist to help communities determine their eligibility before expressing interest.
- Suggested creating a short list of communities with the best geographic, geologic and environmental qualities necessary for a suitable host site.
- Inquired about what is envisioned for the “broad program” of “awareness-building” activities

## Step 2 – Initial screening

- Agree that an initial screening is essential, but had questions about the details:
  - *How* does the community decide to request a screening?
  - *Who* would make the request on behalf of the community?
  - Would *all* communities expressing interest be granted a screening?
- Value transparency of screening criteria and evaluation results.
- Feel there should be broad-based support to request a screening.

## Step 3 – Preliminary assessment

- Similar questions were raised for Step 3 including:
  - How to determine if a community is interested, and should have the preliminary assessment.
  - Whether all interested communities would be evaluated, and if so, concurrently or in prioritized order.
  - Also what would happen if no communities were to be interested, or none passed the pre-screening.
- Concern that the initial screenings and preliminary assessments not be lengthy and costly steps

# Step 4 – Detailed site evaluations/ engage surrounding communities

- Support the study of health, safety, environmental, social, economic and cultural effects of the project at a regional level.
- Want a more precise explanation of:
  - what it means for citizens to be “engaged”
  - how engagement would differ between citizens of the host community and those in affected surrounding communities
  - what level of involvement for the surrounding communities would continue throughout the site selection process.
- Believe that the list of communities deemed to have suitable sites (following an evaluation process) must be made public

## Step 5 – Decide whether they are willing and negotiate formal agreement

- Want to know what methods communities could use to “decide whether they are willing to accept the project.”
- Feel that consent should be elicited from a pre-determined percentage of the population to demonstrate broad-based support.
- Desire to know if the federal government would be prepared to mandate the site location, and if it would build the site on crown land.

## Step 6 – Decide whether they are willing and negotiate formal agreement

- Wonder how the NWMO would select the host community if multiple eligible communities were to be equally suitable and willing.
  - Idea: select the community that has demonstrated the greatest degree of broad-based citizen support for the project.
- Feel that site selection should be done in collaboration with the community.
- Asked about which legal political authority would sign the formal agreement – a provincial or territorial government or municipal council?



## Step 7 – Centre of expertise and demonstration facility

- Approve of the plan for a demonstration facility to inform the general public, allowing them to observe and learn firsthand about the project.
- However, some concern about whether this step warrants the associated expense (DF and Centre of Excellence)
- A few questioned whether the existence of a demonstration facility might jeopardize security by advertising the storage operations of hazardous and potentially dangerous materials.

# Step 8 – Regulatory review and approval

- Judged to be one of the most important steps in terms of ensuring safety.
- But questions remain: which regulatory authorities would be involved; how will conflicts of interest be avoided?
- Desire to engage regulatory approvals earlier in the process so as to avoid a major roadblock further down the road,
  - e.g. what happens if one in the “series of consecutive licenses” was not granted?
- Want a formal consultation within the regulatory review process with the results reported back to the public and host community.

# Step 9 – Construction and operation of the facility

- Participants wanted to know how will the contractor be selected and who will operate the site?
- Raised concerns about:
  - privatizing the facility; project overruns; and need for a third-party overseer to monitor operations.
  - If the site were to close what are potential consequences for the community and the environment?
  - How will the NWMO “continue to work in partnership” with the host community?



# CONCLUSIONS

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# Conclusions

- Key common themes and shared values emerged from Citizens' Panel Dialogues and Public Discussion Groups, as well as similar expectations, concerns and suggestions.
- Consensus that the guiding principles for selecting a site, and the site selection process itself, were both fair and appropriate.
- Contributed good ideas on how the process might be refined, clarified and strengthened.

# Conclusions

*"The risks and benefits of being a host community, and of nuclear energy, must be clearly communicated. We need to talk about this more – it's a big issue!"*



*"I feel more comfortable now that [the] NWMO is serious about selecting a site in a proper and more human way; that the interest and safety of the people is just as important as selecting and building a site."*



*"I think you have taken the right approach by involving average people. You show respect for our opinions by using most of our suggestions in developing your literature."*

