

What We Heard: *Engagement Activities in 2015*

INTRODUCTION

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) continued to implement the Adaptive Phased Management (APM) project in 2015, focused on supporting communities that expressed an interest in learning more about hosting a deep geological repository for Canada's used nuclear fuel in their area. Engagement also continued to broaden to involve First Nation and Métis communities in each area and surrounding communities in learning about and reflection on the project. At the end of 2014, 14 of the original 22 communities that expressed interest in the project had successfully completed early studies and continued in the site selection process as interested communities in 2015. In early 2015, five of these communities were screened out of the process following the completion of additional studies. Preliminary assessments continue in and around nine interested communities.

Over the course of the year, we held a broad range of one-on-one conversations as well as larger open-house and open-office discussions and presentations with groups, and attended conferences and public events in and around the communities where we work. Over the course of these discussions, many comments, questions, and ideas were expressed, and we also heard from interested individuals and groups through correspondence, from their participation in Community Liaison Committee meetings and working groups organized by communities, social media, and other kinds of public forums. The NWMO also noted comments and opinion pieces that appeared in local, regional and national news media or were published on public websites and social media platforms.

The discussion which follows reports on what we heard over the course of 2015.

CONTINUING THEMES OF DISCUSSION

As dialogue continues with communities involved in the site selection process, conversations continue to broaden and deepen on several key ongoing themes: health and safety associated with the project; potential to advance the well-being of the community and area through the project; details related to how a preferred site for the repository will ultimately be selected; and, how the safe transportation of used fuel to the repository will be assured.

Health and safety considerations have been central in our discussions with communities, and are integral to the site selection process. As communities continue in the siting process, their exploration of health and safety considerations deepens, and an evolving understanding leads to more focussed questions. The potential to foster **well-being** in the interested community is also becoming more detailed and, importantly, the effect on the broader area is becoming a focus. Communities are becoming increasingly interested in the results of the ongoing assessment in their area, whether they are a strong candidate, and how community members can become more involved (**local factors**). The **site selection process**, including higher-level questions about APM, the NWMO, our governance and our mandate, continue. The key theme of **transportation** is being discussed broadly. No matter whether an individual lives in-town or in the surrounding area, people in the communities we have worked with are

very interested in knowing more about how the NWMO will safely and securely move all of Canada's used nuclear fuel from existing reactor sites to the single deep geological repository. For the past two years the NWMO has published a separate *What We Heard* report, available on our website (www.nwmo.ca) on this theme. This report looks into the nature of the Transportation conversations in more depth, and with a focus on subthemes that run throughout so many social and technical areas of our work.

FREQUENT QUESTIONS / COMMENTS ABOUT ONGOING THEMES

These four themes run strongly throughout our conversations with communities. Typical questions we encounter in these conversations are varied and include the following.

<p>HEALTH AND SAFETY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long will this radioactive material be dangerous? • How can you know it will be safe over millions of years? • How much radiation would this facility emit in a year? • Will this affect groundwater and nearby water ways like rivers, lakes, and especially the Great Lakes? • How will the environment be protected? 	<p>WELL-BEING AND LOCAL FACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the local benefits of hosting? Will there be local jobs or infrastructure? • Where is my community in your site selection process? • How do I get involved in my community's decision-making process? Is there a local committee? • How does the rock look here in the region? Is it suitable to site a repository? • Have you talked to [my neighbour] about this project yet? I think they would be interested to know. • What happens if local circumstances change? Can we opt out of the process? • How much land is required locally to build the repository and facilities? Is there enough in my community? • Will you be looking at Crown Land? • How many people have attended this event? How many of my neighbours are coming out to meetings? • Where is your local office? I want to come by and pick up some materials.
<p>NWMO, ADAPTIVE PHASED MANAGEMENT & SITE SELECTION PROCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is used nuclear fuel? • Who owns the NWMO? Who do you report to? How are you regulated? • How much nuclear fuel exists and how is it being managed now? • How was Adaptive Phased Management developed? Who approved it? Do Canadians support it? • How much will this project cost, and who are the used fuel owners that are paying for it? • How long will it take to find a site? How long will it take to construct, and how long will the repository operate? • What is a Deep Geological Repository and how will it isolate used nuclear fuel from people and the environment? • Is used nuclear fuel a resource? 	<p>TRANSPORTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What transportation route will you be using to get the used nuclear fuel from reactor sites to the repository? • Is this material safe to transport? What if an accident happens while on the way? • What modes can you use to transport used nuclear fuel? Road or rail? • Will your drivers be transporting the used nuclear fuel even in the harsh, northern winter conditions? • Will you be tracking the transportation canisters? • Will the trucks or trains be emitting radiation as they travel?

EMERGING CONVERSATIONS

In addition to the ongoing themes outlined above, new conversations are emerging.

i) Understanding the Details of the Siting Process

Conversation is intensifying in open houses and open office events concerning the details of the siting process as communities are continuing to reflect on the ability of their area to be successful in the siting process. People want to be assured that there is a thoughtful, well-designed plan to find a host for the deep geological repository. Understanding the requirements for 'partnership' and 'willingness', which are important considerations in the siting process, are a growing focus of conversation. Identifying ways to reach out to municipal and First Nation and Métis neighbours to reflect upon the project on an area basis is becoming a focus. Identifying ways to build and advance relationships with neighbours, relationships of respect and mutual understanding, is an increasing focus of discussion and activity among community members. Cultural awareness building is an activity many municipal communities are engaging in to better seek and build relationships with their First Nation and Métis neighbours.

Frequent questions and comments include:

- What is meant by partnership? How much say will my community have in this process?
- I am glad you keep coming back to my community so I can tell you what I think about this project.
- If you want to work with [our community], you must do so appropriately and with respect for cultural considerations.
- What does a partnership between the community, First Nation and Métis communities and the NWMO look like? What happens if you site on Crown Land?
- Who is the ultimate decision maker? The NWMO or the community?
- How is willingness defined?

ii) The concept of 'Partnership' in a Dynamic Environment

The release of the report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in late 2015, as well as the election of the new federal government which has identified the relationship with Aboriginal peoples as a high priority, formed a backdrop to evolving conversations with communities about the shape and form of Partnership. Questions about how Duty to Consult will be addressed, how Treaty Rights and Traditional Territory will be respected in the decision-making process, and the role of Free Prior Informed Consent in the siting process are emerging as part of a larger conversation about Partnership. The conversation about how the NWMO will work with various communities, and how communities might work with each other, is interwoven through siting activities including the planning of technical studies in an area and the way learning will proceed.

iii) Timelines

The timelines associated with making the siting decision and beginning to construct and operate the project has been an emerging point of conversation. Some have told us they would like the siting process to advance more quickly. Others have told us they appreciate the time and care the NWMO is taking in making decisions, and that there is ample time for people to learn and make their own decisions.

We heard concerns raised by community members when the pace of studies varied from initial expectations. Conversely, some community members were reassured to see that the NWMO was prepared to take the time needed to engage people and respond to changes in local circumstances. For example, in the course of preparing for aerial surveys in the area around Hornepayne, Manitouwadge and White River, some community members told us they needed more time to properly understand the studies and their impact. In response, NWMO delayed the studies to allow more time to engage people in the area and to proceed in a more socially acceptable manner.

Some concern was expressed with the extended timelines for Phase 2 Preliminary Assessments described in the Draft Implementation Plan in late 2015, and the challenges associated with sustaining interest in the project. Others were reassured by the timelines that there would be sufficient time to learn and to demonstrate that NWMO's Phase 2 objectives for a preferred site can be met in their area.

Frequent questions and comments include:

- I appreciate knowing that this is still 10 to 15 years off. It means no one is being pressured into a decision now.
- I hope you take the time necessary to let everyone understand the risks and benefits of this project. It is too important a decision and should not be made in a hurry.
- Why is this taking so long? Am I even going to see this project completed in my lifetime?
- I feel like I just found out about this project. Have decisions already been made without my input?
- Our kids go to the local school. Do you think there will be jobs here by the time they graduate?
- How long have you been studying my community? How long will it be until you make a decision?
- If you find out a reason why your organization could not safely site a repository here, will you tell us right away?

iv) Well-being in a Regional Context

Residents of interested communities and their neighbours, including nearby First Nations and Métis communities, are still gaining awareness of the project and its impacts on one another. Interest in discussing the potential risks and benefits and opportunities of the project on neighbours, and on the broader area as a whole, is increasing in the siting areas. So is the involvement of neighbouring communities in activities such as visiting an interim storage facility for used nuclear fuel to see how it is safely managed now, and meeting with representatives of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission so

that community representatives could have candid conversation with the national nuclear safety regulator.

Frequent questions and comments include:

- How will the project contribute to local economic development? How will it contribute to the development of the area?
- What will be the opportunities for local workers? What kind of jobs?
- Where will the jobs be? Somewhere in-town or remote/fly-in? Will people from my community get preference in hiring? What about others in the region?
- What is the definition of community/ region? Who is included?
- Are you engaging our neighbours, including Aboriginal people? What about those along transportation routes?
- How many jobs will there be at each stage in the project? How long will these jobs stay here?
- I'm retired up here, but I want to know if there will be jobs for my children or grandchildren.

v) Traditional Knowledge

As the siting process proceeds, conversation is beginning to focus on how the NWMO will work with Aboriginal peoples in an area to interweave Western Science with Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge. Working with Aboriginal communities in an area to provide resources for communities to conduct their own studies, agree on processes in which to work together to plan and implement field studies, and identify ways to protect the knowledge being shared is a growing focus of conversation.

THE NWMO'S IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND UPCOMING CHALLENGES

In 2015, the NWMO also received comment and direction from interested individuals and groups on our annually updated strategic plan, *Implementing Adaptive Phased Management*, which describes our strategic objectives and five-year work plan. The plan is regularly assessed, strengthened and redirected in the face of new information, advances in technology and science, evolving public policy and comments we receive through our engagement initiatives. A draft of the 2016 to 2020 plan was released for public comment in October 2015. Comments received on the 2016-2020 Draft Plan were summarized in a separate report, [available on our website](#).

Comments received on the NWMO's strategic objectives suggested that the objectives are appropriate for the phase of work. Comments credited the NWMO with implementing a "robust methodology" that instills confidence in the organization's assessments and conclusions. The addition of a new strategic objective (*Advance planning and capabilities for the construction and operation of the deep geological repository and the associated Centre of Expertise*) was seen by commenters as appropriate, and a few revisions were suggested, mainly to move aspects of the discussion around advance planning for environmental assessment and regulatory approvals to a dedicated section.

As part of the draft Implementation Plan review, NWMO staff met with community liaison committees and others involved in the siting process to seek input on new aspects of the plan, including the new strategic objective. In these discussions, the NWMO heard that the strategic objectives as laid out in the plan, including the new strategic objective and the NWMO's planned activities (including an active program to involve communities in key aspects of this work), are appropriate.

Commenters highlighted and made suggestions concerning a number of additional themes important to the NWMO's work:

- The NWMO received commentary and questions regarding the eventual transportation of used nuclear fuel to a future repository with an informed and willing host focused on the safety and security of these shipments. Various commenters indicated a desire to know additional details about transportation security, planning, and potential routes, and some offered specific guiding input and descriptions of road and rail conditions in their home communities.
- Some commenters suggested more detailed information be included in the plan about how Aboriginal peoples will be engaged and the duty to consult addressed.
- Two commenters wrote to express their preference for an alternative management approach for used nuclear fuel than a single deep geological repository for all Canada.

The NWMO received comments about the ongoing challenges and issues that will need to be addressed in the next five years as part of implementing Canada's plan and that will need to be considered in the development of future plans. These challenges include ensuring that there is a broad understanding of the project; building confidence in the safety of transporting used fuel, and; building awareness, understanding and acceptability of the project in siting areas.

SOCIAL MEDIA & OTHER ONLINE CONVERSATIONS

The NWMO continues to take note of the APM-related conversations happening online involving local, national, and international individuals and groups. This includes the comments, concerns, and support voiced across social media, public websites, and blogs.

This year, online activity related to the APM project was highest immediately following milestone events such as the publication of preliminary assessment studies and associated siting announcements in January and March, 2015. These milestones saw the completion of preliminary assessments in the North of Huron and North of Superior siting regions in January, and siting decisions in March resulted in Creighton, SK and Schreiber, ON exiting from Phase 2 studies and the Site Selection Process. In both cases, community members and others expressed a range of reactions: many noted their disappointment that their community would cease participating in the siting process, while some others expressed satisfaction. Others commented that these decisions were proof the Site Selection Process was working as designed and as intended, placing safety above all other considerations.

Social media users used Facebook and Twitter to share links to information directly related to the NWMO's work, but equally often, used it to share other content. For example, news items and discussions surrounding the progress and project milestones of other international waste management

projects, critiques and analysis of the nuclear energy sector and the nuclear fuel cycle at home and abroad, and debates over uranium mining in Canada.

Examples of transportation incidents in other industries, minor recorded earthquakes in northern Ontario, and the distribution of potassium iodide (KI) pills in areas surrounding Nuclear Generating Stations, were also shared in 2015 and led to questions among some regarding the safety of the deep geological repository and APM project.

Online support for APM and the deep geological repository concept continued to manifest itself in the countering of the perceived misinformation of critics related to safety and the site selection process, the sharing of official NWMO documents, reports, and background research papers, and the highlighting of the potential socio-economic benefits associated with hosting the APM project.

More broadly, as in the previous two years, online activity in 2015 continued to include concerns by some over the proximity of potential nuclear waste management projects to the Great Lakes Basin, in particular, the location of OPG's proposed low- and intermediate-level waste DGR in Kincardine, ON. Opponents tended to express their concerns framed in the language of water safety and the protection of the fresh water drinking supply for a large number of Canadians and Americans. Encouraging signatures on petitions opposing the project was a focus among some prominent social media users.

The NWMO continues to monitor the most popular online social networks for public posts on topics related to Canada's plan for the safe, long-term management of used nuclear fuel.

CONTINUING DIALOGUE

Engagement is one of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization's fundamental values, and we seek participation of all communities of interest in dialogue to help implement Canada's plan.

In 2015 we heard from and engaged a broad range of interested communities, First Nation and Métis communities, individuals and organizations on an array of topics related to our mission and work program. This dialogue is reflected in and supported by discussions during engagement events such as open houses and trade show events, other in-person conversation, community group briefings, direct correspondence, organizing learning events in the community and at conference venues, and the production of informational materials focused on areas of interest expressed through dialogue. The production of *What We heard* documents is part of meeting our commitments to engagement and transparency, and we publish one or more annually on our website or as part of our *Implementation Plans*, or annual and triennial reports.

The NWMO continues to invite comments and suggestions about its work programs and plans, and thanks all those communities, individuals and organizations who continue to lend their thinking to ensuring the long-term containment and isolation of Canada's used nuclear fuel today and for generations to come.