



NUCLEAR WASTE SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION  
MANAGEMENT DES DÉCHETS  
ORGANIZATION NUCLÉAIRES

February 15, 2013

Municipality of Central Huron  
P.O. Box 400, 23 Albert Street  
Clinton, ON N0M 1L0

Attn: Mayor Jim Ginn

**Re: Adaptive Phased Management Initial Screening – Municipality of Central Huron**

Dear Mayor Ginn,

Further to the Municipality of Central Huron's request to Learn More about the Adaptive Phased Management program and request for an initial screening, I am pleased to attach a report outlining the findings from the initial screening, as described in the Process for Selecting a Site for Canada's Deep Geological Repository for Used Nuclear Fuel (May, 2010). As you know, the purpose of the initial screening in Step 2 of the process is to determine whether, based on readily-available information and five screening criteria, there are any obvious conditions that would exclude the Municipality of Central Huron from further consideration in the site selection process.

As the report indicates, the review of readily available information and the application of the five initial screening criteria did not identify any obvious conditions that would exclude the Municipality of Central Huron from further consideration in the NWMO site selection process. The initial screening suggests that the Municipality comprises geological formations that are potentially suitable for hosting a deep geological repository for Canada's used nuclear fuel. It is important to note that this initial screening has not confirmed the suitability of your community. Should your community choose to continue to explore its potential interest in the project, your area would be the subject of progressively more detailed assessments against both technical and social factors. Several years of studies would be required to confirm whether a site within your area could be demonstrated to safely contain and isolate used nuclear fuel.

The process for identifying an informed and willing host community for a deep geological repository for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel is designed to ensure, above all, that the site which is selected is safe and secure for people and the environment, now and in the future. The NWMO expects that the selection of a preferred site would take between seven to ten years. It is important that any community which decides to host this project base its decisions on an understanding of the best scientific and social research available and its own aspirations. Should the Municipality of Central Huron continue to be interested in exploring the project, over this period there would be ongoing engagement of your community, surrounding communities and others who may be affected. By the end of this process, Central Huron as a whole community would need to clearly demonstrate that it is willing to host the repository in order for this project to proceed.

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The next evaluation step would be to conduct a feasibility study as described in Step 3 of the site selection process. This feasibility study would focus on areas selected in collaboration with the community. As your community considers whether it is interested in advancing to the feasibility study phase, the NWMO encourages you to continue community discussion and further learning about the project. Support programs are available to assist your community to reflect on its long-term vision and whether this project is consistent with achieving that vision. Programs and resources are also available to engage your community residents in learning more about this project and becoming involved. We would be very pleased to provide further information about these programs.

Once again, I thank you for taking the time to learn about Canada's plan for the safe, secure management of Canada's used nuclear fuel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathryn Shaver". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kathryn Shaver,  
Vice President, APM Public Engagement and Site Selection

Cc: Peggy Van Mierlo-West, CAO

**SUMMARY REPORT  
INITIAL SCREENING FOR SITING A DEEP GEOLOGICAL  
REPOSITORY FOR CANADA'S USED NUCLEAR FUEL**

**The Corporation of the Municipality of  
Central Huron**

**Prepared by:**

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## AECOM Signatures



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Report Reviewed By:

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## Executive Summary

On September 10, 2012, the Corporation of the Municipality of Central Huron expressed interest in learning more about the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) site selection process to find an informed and willing community to host a deep geological repository for Canada's used nuclear fuel (NWMO, 2010). This report summarizes the findings of an initial screening, conducted by AECOM (2013), to evaluate the potential suitability of the Municipality of Central Huron against five screening criteria using readily available information. The purpose of the initial screening is to identify whether there are any obvious conditions that would exclude the Municipality of Central Huron from further consideration in the site selection process. The initial screening focused on the areas within the boundaries of the Municipality of Central Huron. Areas within neighbouring municipalities were not included in the initial screening.

The review of readily available information and the application of the five initial screening criteria did not identify any obvious conditions that would exclude the Municipality of Central Huron from being further considered in the NWMO site selection process. The initial screening indicates that the Municipality comprises geological formations that are potentially suitable for safely hosting a deep geological repository. These include the Upper Ordovician shale and limestone units that comprise the geology of the Municipality at typical repository depths. The review also identified the presence of salt formations beneath the Municipality. The extent to which potential salt mining activities within the Municipality could affect the integrity of a repository located within the underlying Ordovician shale and limestone units would need to be assessed in detail during subsequent site evaluation stages, if the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

It is important to note that the intent of this initial screening is not to confirm the suitability of the Municipality of Central Huron to host a deep geological repository, but rather to provide early feedback on whether there are known reasons to exclude it from further consideration. Should the community of Central Huron remain interested in continuing with the site selection process, more detailed studies would be required to confirm and demonstrate whether the Municipality of Central Huron contains sites that can safely contain and isolate used nuclear fuel. The process for identifying an informed and willing host community for a deep geological repository for Canada's used nuclear fuel is designed to ensure, above all, that the site which is selected is safe and secure for people and the environment, now and in the future.

The five initial screening criteria are defined in the site selection process document (NWMO, 2010) and relate to: having sufficient space to accommodate surface and underground facilities, being outside protected areas and heritage features, absence of known groundwater resources at repository depth, absence of known economically exploitable natural resources and avoiding known hydrogeologic and geologic conditions that would make an area or site unsuitable for hosting a deep geological repository.

# 1. Introduction

In May 2010, the NWMO published and initiated a nine-step site selection process to find an informed and willing community to host a deep geological repository for Canada's used nuclear fuel (NWMO, 2010). The site selection process is designed to address a broad range of technical, social, economic and cultural factors as identified through dialogue with Canadians, including Aboriginal peoples, and draws from experiences and lessons learned from past work and processes developed in Canada to site facilities for the management of other hazardous material. It also draws from similar projects in other countries pursuing the development of deep geological repositories for used nuclear fuel. The suitability of potential candidate sites will ultimately be assessed against a number of site evaluation factors, both technical and social in nature.

The site evaluation process includes three main phases over a period of several years, with each step designed to evaluate the site in progressively greater detail upon request of the community. The three site evaluation phases include: Initial Screenings to evaluate the potential suitability of the community against a list of initial screening criteria using readily available information (Step 2); Feasibility Studies to determine if candidate sites within the proposed areas are potentially suitable for developing a safe deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel (Step 3); and Detailed Site Evaluations, at one or more selected sites, to confirm suitability based on detailed site evaluation criteria (Step 4). It is up to the communities to decide whether they wish to continue to participate in each step of the process.

## 2. Objective of the Initial Screening

The overall objective of the initial screening is to evaluate proposed geographic areas against a list of screening criteria using readily available information. Initial screening criteria (NWMO, 2010) require that:

1. The site must have enough available land of sufficient size to accommodate the surface and underground facilities.
2. This available land must be outside of protected areas, heritage sites, provincial parks and national parks.
3. This available land must not contain known groundwater resources at the repository depth, so that the repository site is unlikely to be disturbed by future generations.
4. This available land must not contain economically exploitable natural resources as known today, so that the repository site is unlikely to be disturbed by future generations.
5. This available land must not be located in areas with known geological and hydrogeological characteristics that would prevent the site from being safe, considering the safety factors outlined in Section 6 of the Site Selection Document (NWMO, 2010).

For cases where readily available information is limited and where assessment of some of the criteria is not possible at the initial screening stage, the area would be advanced to the feasibility study stage for more detailed evaluation if the community remains interested in participating in the siting process.

### 3. Initial Screening Assessment

This section provides a summary evaluation of each of the five initial screening criteria for the Municipality of Central Huron, based on readily available information (AECOM, 2013). The intent of this evaluation is not to conduct a detailed analysis of all available information or identify specific potentially suitable sites, but rather to identify any obvious conditions that would exclude the Municipality of Central Huron from being further considered in the site selection process.

The Municipality of Central Huron is approximately 456 km<sup>2</sup> in size and is located along the shore of Lake Huron, between Goderich and Bayfield.

#### **Screening Criterion 1: The site must have enough available land of sufficient size to accommodate the surface and underground facilities.**

The review of readily available information indicates that the Municipality of Central Huron contains sufficient land to accommodate the repository's surface and underground facilities. Surface facilities will require a land parcel of about 1 km by 1 km (100 ha) in size, although some additional space may be required to satisfy regulatory requirements. The underground footprint of the repository is about 1.5 km by 2.5 km (375 ha) at a typical depth of about 500 m or more.

Review of available mapping and satellite imagery shows that the Municipality of Central Huron contains sufficient area to accommodate the repository's surface facilities. The main land constraint within the Municipality of Central Huron includes the wetland complexes, which account for approximately 2% of the land area. In addition, a small portion of the Municipality is covered by localized residential and commercial infrastructure, primarily located within the settlement area of Clinton in the south-central area of the Municipality. The remainder of the Municipality of Central Huron is largely agricultural land with development limited primarily to roadways and the settlement areas of Holmesville, Kinburn and Londesborough.

Topography is variable across the Municipality of Central Huron; however, no obvious topographic features that would prevent construction and characterization activities have been identified. Most of the Municipality of Central Huron could be accessed from Highway 21 and the numerous subsidiary county and rural roads that cross the area.

As discussed under screening criterion 5, readily available information suggests that the Municipality of Central Huron has the potential of containing sufficient volumes of host rock at depth to accommodate underground facilities associated with a deep geological repository. This would have to be confirmed in subsequent site evaluation stages, if the community remains interested in continuing to participate in the site selection process.

#### **Screening Criterion 2: Available land must be outside of protected areas, heritage sites, provincial parks and national parks.**

The review of readily available information shows that the Municipality of Central Huron contains sufficient land outside of protected areas, heritage sites, provincial parks and national parks to accommodate the repository's facilities.

There are no provincial or national parks within the Municipality of Central Huron. The nearest parks are the Morris Tract Provincial Nature Reserve and the Point Farms Provincial Park immediately north of the Municipality. Known protected areas within the boundaries of the Municipality cover about 10% of the Municipality of Central Huron. These include: the Naftels Creek and Black's Point conservation Areas; three Provincially Significant Wetlands; two Earth Science Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI); two Life Science ANSIs; and the G.G. Newton NGO Nature Reserve.

Most of the land in the Municipality of Central Huron is free of known heritage constraints. There are 16 known small and localized archeological sites within the Municipality. There are also 15 provincially designated heritage properties within the Municipality, all located with the settlement area of Clinton and along County Road 8. There are no National Historic Sites in the Municipality of Central Huron.

The absence of locally protected areas or heritage sites would need to be confirmed in discussion with the community and Aboriginal peoples in the area during subsequent site evaluation stages, if the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

**Screening Criterion 3: Available land must not contain known groundwater resources at the repository depth, so that the repository site is unlikely to be disturbed by future generations.**

The review of available hydrogeological information did not identify any known groundwater resources at repository depth beneath the Municipality of Central Huron. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment Water Well Records indicate that no potable water supply wells are known to exploit aquifers at typical repository depths (approximately 500 m or more) within the Municipality of Central Huron or the surrounding areas. All water wells known in the Municipality obtain water from overburden or shallow bedrock sources at depths less than 134 m below ground surface.

Experience in similar geological settings across southern Ontario suggests that the potential for groundwater resources at the typical repository depth (approximately 500 m or more) beneath the Municipality of Central Huron is very low. The active groundwater system is shallow and generally limited to the upper approximately 200 m. At greater depths, the deep groundwater regime is diffusion-dominated and isolated from the shallow groundwater system. Groundwater at such depths is also generally highly saline. The absence of groundwater resources at repository depth would need to be confirmed during subsequent site evaluation stages if the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

**Screening Criterion 4: Available land must not contain economically exploitable natural resources as known today, so that the repository site is unlikely to be disturbed by future generations.**

The review of readily available information indicates that the sedimentary rock sequence beneath the Municipality of Central Huron contains deep rock formations that are free of known economically exploitable natural resources.

There is no record of past metallic mineral production, and no exploration potential for metallic minerals has been identified within the Municipality. Current licensed non-metallic mineral extraction in the Municipality of Central Huron is limited to sand and gravel resources. However, the risk that these resources pose for future human intrusion is negligible, as quarrying operations would be limited to very shallow depths.

Oil and gas resources within the Municipality were actively exploited in the past at two hydrocarbon pools. These two pools are currently depleted and used for natural gas storage. The review did not identify known currently economically exploitable hydrocarbon pools within the Municipality. However, given that there has been previous exploitation of oil and gas resources within the Municipality, the potential for these resources would need to be further assessed during subsequent site evaluation stages, if the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

The review identified the presence of salt beds beneath the Municipality of Central Huron and surrounding area. These salt beds occur 100 m and 300 m above the Ordovician shale and limestone units respectively, which are potentially suitable for hosting a deep geological repository. The average cumulative thickness of these salt beds beneath the Municipality is about 76 m. However, they quickly thin out east of the Municipality and extend



significantly outside the western and southern margins of the Municipality. If salt were to be mined in the future within the Municipality, the distance between the salt beds and the underlying potentially suitable Ordovician shale and limestone units is likely to provide a sufficient buffer to isolate and maintain the integrity of a repository in the long-term. However, this would need to be assessed in detail during subsequent site evaluation stages, if the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

**Screening Criterion 5: Available land must not be located in areas with known geological and hydrogeological characteristics that would prevent the site from being safe, considering the outlined safety factors in Section 6 of the Site Selection Document.**

Based on the review of available geological and hydrogeological information, the Municipality of Central Huron comprises deep geological formations with no obvious known geological and hydrogeological conditions that would make the Municipality unsuitable for hosting a deep geological repository.

The safety-related geoscientific factors outlined in Section 6 of the Site Selection Document (NWMO, 2010) relate to: safe containment and isolation of used nuclear fuel; long-term resilience to future geological processes and climate change; safe construction, operation and closure of the repository; isolation from future human activities; and amenability to site characterization and data interpretation activities. At this early stage of the site evaluation process, where limited data at repository depth exist, these factors are assessed using readily available information with the objective of identifying any obvious unfavourable hydrogeological and geological conditions that would exclude the Municipality of Central Huron from further consideration. The safety factors would be gradually assessed in more detail as the site evaluation process progresses and more site specific data are collected during subsequent evaluation phases, provided the community remains interested in continuing in the site selection process.

*Safe Containment and Isolation*

The geological and hydrogeological conditions of a suitable site should promote long-term containment and isolation of used nuclear fuel and retard the movement of any potentially released radioactive material. This requires that the repository be located at a sufficient depth, typically around 500 m or more, in a sufficient rock volume with characteristics that limit groundwater movement.

The review of readily available information indicates that the Municipality of Central Huron contains geological formations with no obvious geological and hydrogeological conditions that would fail the containment and isolation requirements. These include the Upper Ordovician shale and limestone units that are found at depths below approximately 530 m and 700 m in the eastern and western portions of the Municipality, respectively. These formations exist at a sufficient depth and in sufficient volumes to potentially host a deep geological repository. They are also expected to have hydrogeological characteristics that would greatly limit groundwater movement. Experience from other areas in southern Ontario suggests that the groundwater regime within the Upper Ordovician units beneath the Municipality is diffusion dominated and isolated from the shallow groundwater system. No mapped faults are documented in the Municipality of Central Huron.

Geoscientific characteristics that may have an impact on the containment and isolation functions of a deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel such as the mineralogy of the rock, the geochemical composition of the groundwater and rock porewater, and the thermal and geomechanical properties of the rock would need to be further assessed during subsequent site evaluation stages, provided the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

### Long-Term Stability

A suitable site for hosting a repository is a site that would remain stable over the very long-term in a manner that will ensure that the performance of the repository will not be substantially altered by future geological and climate change processes, such as earthquakes or glaciation. A full assessment of this geoscientific factor requires detailed site specific data that would be typically collected and analyzed through detailed field investigations. At this early stage of the site evaluation process the long-term stability factor is evaluated by assessing whether there is any evidence that would raise concerns about the long-term hydrogeological and geological stability of the Municipality of Central Huron.

The review did not reveal any obvious geological or hydrogeological conditions that would clearly fail to meet the long-term stability requirement for a potential repository within the Municipality of Central Huron. The Municipality is underlain by the Precambrian crystalline basement of the Grenville Province, which has remained tectonically stable since approximately 970 million years ago. No faults have been reported within an area of approximately 30 km surrounding the Municipality. The nearest fault is mapped approximately 36 km north of the Municipality and there is no evidence suggesting that this type of fault has been tectonically active within the past approximately 450 million years.

The geology of the Municipality of Central Huron is typical of many areas of southern Ontario, which have been subjected to numerous glacial cycles during the last million years. Glaciation is a significant past perturbation that could occur in the future. However, findings from studies conducted in other areas of southern Ontario suggest that the deep subsurface Paleozoic sedimentary formations have remained largely unaltered by past perturbations such as glaciations. These findings would need to be further assessed during subsequent site evaluation stages, provided the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

### Potential for Human Intrusion

The site should not be located in areas where the containment and isolation functions of the repository are likely to be disrupted by future human activities such as exploration or mining. Therefore, the repository should not be located within rock formations containing exploitable groundwater resources (aquifers) at repository depth and economically exploitable natural resources and other valuable commodities as known today.

This factor has already been addressed under Criteria 3 and 4, which concluded that the potential for deep groundwater resources in the Upper Ordovician units is low and that there are no known metallic or currently economically exploitable oil and gas resources within the Municipality of Central Huron.

While the review identified the presence of salt beds beneath the Municipality, these thin out quickly towards the east and extend significantly outside the western and southern boundaries of the Municipality. If salt were to be mined in the future within the Municipality, the distance between the, salt beds and the underlying potentially suitable Ordovician shale and limestone units is likely to provide a sufficient buffer to isolate and maintain the integrity of a repository in the long-term. However, this would need to be assessed in detail during subsequent site evaluation stages, if the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

### Amenability to Construction and Site Characterization

The characteristics of a suitable site should be favourable for the safe construction, operation, closure and long-term performance of the repository. This requires that the strength of the host rock and in situ stress at repository depth are such that the repository could be safely excavated, operated and closed without unacceptable rock instabilities; and that the soil cover depth over the host rock should not adversely impact repository construction and site

investigation activities. Similarly, the host rock geometry and structure should be predictable and amenable to site characterization and interpretation activities.

From a constructability perspective, limited site specific information is available on the local rock strength characteristics and in situ stresses for the Municipality of Central Huron. However, available information from other locations in southern Ontario suggests that the Upper Ordovician shale and limestone units have favourable geomechanical characteristics and are amenable to the type of excavation activities involved with the development of a deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel. The Upper Ordovician shale and limestone units beneath the Municipality of Central Huron are found at greater depths than those previously studied in other areas in the region, resulting in higher in-situ stresses. While this should not present any geomechanical conditions that could not be mitigated by conventional construction techniques, the geomechanical properties of the deeper Upper Ordovician shale and limestone units would have to be assessed in detail during subsequent site evaluation stages, if the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

In terms of predictability of the geologic formations and amenability to site characterization activities, the review of available information on the bedrock geology for the Municipality of Central Huron did not reveal any conditions that would make the rock mass unusually difficult to characterize. The sedimentary sequence beneath the Municipality of Central Huron is consistent with the regional geological framework for southern Ontario. The Paleozoic bedrock stratigraphy is characterized by minimal structural complexity and a simple geometry, providing a basis for the subsurface predictability of stratigraphic formations.

## 4. Initial Screening Findings

This report presents the results of an initial screening to assess the potential suitability of the Municipality of Central Huron against five initial screening criteria using readily available information. The initial screening focused on the areas within the boundaries of the Municipality of Central Huron. Areas within neighbouring municipalities were not included in the initial screening.

As outlined in NWMO's site selection process (NWMO, 2010), the five initial screening criteria relate to: having sufficient space to accommodate surface facilities, being outside protected areas and heritage sites, absence of known groundwater resources at repository depth, absence of known economically exploitable natural resources and avoiding known hydrogeologic and geologic conditions that would make an area or site unsuitable for hosting a deep geological repository.

The review of readily available information and the application of the five initial screening criteria did not identify any obvious conditions that would exclude the Municipality of Central Huron from being further considered in the NWMO site selection process. The initial screening indicates that the Municipality comprises geological formations that are potentially suitable for safely hosting a deep geological repository. These include the Upper Ordovician shale and limestone units that comprise the geology of the Municipality at typical repository depths. The review also identified the presence of salt formations beneath the Municipality. The extent to which potential salt mining activities within the Municipality could affect the integrity of a repository located within the underlying Ordovician shale and limestone units would need to be assessed in detail during subsequent site evaluation stages, if the community remains interested in continuing with the site selection process.

It is important to note that at this early stage of the site evaluation process, the intent of the initial screening was not to confirm the suitability of the Municipality of Central Huron, but rather to identify whether there are any obvious conditions that would exclude it from the site selection process. Should the community of Central Huron remain interested in continuing with the site selection process, several years of progressively more detailed studies would

be required to confirm and demonstrate whether the Municipality of Central Huron contains sites that can safely contain and isolate used nuclear fuel.

The process for identifying an informed and willing host community for a deep geological repository for Canada's used nuclear fuel is designed to ensure, above all, that the site which is selected is safe and secure for people and the environment, now and in the future.

## 5. References

AECOM, 2013:

Initial Screening for Siting a Deep Geological Repository for Canada's Used Nuclear Fuel – The Corporation of the Municipality of Central Huron, Ontario. AECOM Report Number 60247068-6

NWMO, 2010:

Moving Forward Together: Process for Selecting a Site for Canada's Deep Geological Repository for Used Nuclear Fuel, Nuclear Waste Management Organization, May 2010. (Available at [www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca))