

Findings from Community Surveys – Fall 2019

The Adaptive Phased Management site selection process is initiated by communities with an interest in learning about the project and exploring hosting the project in their area. Over time, studies are conducted to explore potential to meet the robust social and technical requirements of the project in the area. A preferred site for the project will be selected by 2023. That site must be able to safely and securely contain and isolate used nuclear fuel for the long time periods required, and have a supportive partnership involving the initially interested community, and First Nation, Métis and municipal communities in the area.

The NWMO initiated this survey in the five municipalities involved in the site selection process to gauge progress in advancing awareness and learning in communities we are working with: Are residents aware of their community's involvement in the Adaptive Phased Management site selection process; what are the questions that are on the minds of community members at this point; and how would they like to receive information on these questions?

The surveys were conducted in collaboration with the municipalities, and together, we learned a lot about activities that are needed to advance learning and discussion in communities considering the project. We take lessons from this for advancing learning and discussion about the project among residents more generally.

Community surveys are a recent addition to a multi-faceted plan of engagement and dialogue with communities over many years. This survey was intended to supplement learning from ongoing engagement activities in the communities, including community briefings and presentations, regular meetings of Community Advisory Committees, community attendance at conferences and facility tours, ongoing workshops and open houses, day-to-day operation of a learn more office in the community, collaborative iterative planning of social and technical field studies and consultation on borehole sites with Indigenous communities. This was the first community survey conducted with communities. Additional surveys are planned as communities continue to learn about the project, and reflect on their interest in hosting it in the area.

Findings

The survey findings are encouraging. Activities to date have led to a high degree of awareness of the APM project, as well as of the community's involvement in the siting process among community members. There are still very important questions which need to be addressed for some community members, and we have good guidance on how best to share information on these topics within the community.

Key findings from across the individual municipal community surveys conducted in Hornepayne, Huron-Kinloss, Ignace, Manitowadge and South Bruce include the following:

- **Awareness of NWMO:** Between 92% and 98% of respondents indicated that they had heard of the NWMO prior to receiving the survey;
- **Familiarity with community involvement:** Between 66% and 91% of respondents were very or somewhat familiar with the involvement of their community in the site selection process;
- **Awareness of willingness requirement:** Between 80% and 94% of respondents indicated that, prior to receiving the survey, they were aware that the project will only be implemented with the involvement of an informed and willing host;
- **Sources of information on the project:** Top sources of information used to learn about what is happening in their community vary by community, but tend to include in order of preference: family/neighbours, newsletters, newspapers, meetings, web and social media;
- **Preferred method of communication:** Preferred methods of communication for receiving information from the NWMO also vary by community, but tend to include in order of preference: brochures/newsletters, meetings and authoritative websites such as township or NWMO website;
- **Top questions to address:** Key topics respondents would like to see addressed regarding the project or the studies being undertaken in their community include: Safety of the project as a whole or individual aspects such as potential for leakage or safety of transportation; environmental impacts, consequences or hazards including on water; and economics of the project such as jobs and benefits to the community.

Next Steps

We are encouraged by the high level of awareness which has been garnered by activities to date. This is a good foundation on which to build and these activities need to continue to ensure strong, sustained awareness and understanding across the community.

We have a better understanding of how information is shared within each community and preferred methods to receive information on this project. We have heard there are still important questions which need to be addressed for some community members. We encourage these questions, as they are fundamental to the kind of learning, dialogue and reflection within communities which will support their informed decision-making about the project in the future. These discussions, shared beyond these siting areas, can help inform broader discussion among citizens.

About the Survey Approach

The approach to implementing the survey was determined collaboratively with the communities involved. In four municipal communities a mail survey was used, with online and telephone completion options and surveys available for pick-up in the municipal and the NWMO community offices. In the community of Ignace, municipal leadership directed that a personal, door-to-door approach be used. This was supplemented by a mail-back and an online completion option. In each of these communities, the survey was advertised and information was provided through a number of means to ensure that community members were aware the survey was being conducted and could easily share their thoughts.

An independent research firm, CCI Research, developed the distribution methodology and administered the community survey in the municipalities where a mail survey was used. This firm also collected and processed all completed surveys, and produced a summary report for each community.

The survey was generally well-received in each community. Response rate was strong for the methodology used. It ranged between 21% and 36%, which is higher than the typical expected response rate. Viewed alongside the insight from ongoing engagement and dialogue activities in each community, we are confident in the guidance provided through these surveys. A broad range of engagement and dialogue activities will continue and intensify in these communities, and will increasingly broaden to Indigenous and municipal communities around study areas.

The survey results for each community are published on the NWMO website, as well as a detailed description of the methodology used prepared by CCI Research.