

Alberta Community Engagement Session August 26, 2021 Summary Report

The objective of the Integrated Strategy for Radioactive Waste's (ISRW) community engagement sessions is to invite and facilitate broad dialogue to develop a long-term strategy for managing Canada's low- and intermediate-level waste. We approach this goal by listening to the perspectives of attendees across multiple Canadian communities. The development of the strategy is grounded in a range of guiding principles and objectives as we explore key questions and issues discussed at our events. This summary report details what we heard from the participants at the sessions focused on the communities of Alberta.

The sessions began with a land acknowledgement, recognizing and expressing gratitude for the land that we are on. This was followed by an introduction and an overview of logistics for the evening. The event offered several opportunities for attendees to participate, give feedback and ask questions about various topics.

At the start of the presentation, we clarified that our focus is on engagement and information sharing/gathering, not consultation.

We emphasized that this is not a siting process and that at this time, we are inviting Canadians and Indigenous people to provide input to the approaches that we should consider for the long-term management of radioactive waste.

Once the group entered the breakout room, attendees were asked to associate which words came to mind when they heard the management of radioactive waste in Canada."

One participant had taken a tour of an existing site where waste was stored and noted that it was very clean and painted bright white. Other things that came to mind for participants were the need to identify the sites and hazard levels, transportation of waste to the sites, the need for regular monitoring, and ensuring that no radiation makes its way above ground, into the environment.

We heard that participants found the videos used in the presentation to be impersonal and would have preferred that the information contained in the videos be delivered live by the NWMO representative.

We heard there were several factors that the community considered important. A concern was raised about waste sites in general, not necessarily radioactive waste, being that there needs to be more emphasis on long-term management on sites so that these did not get forgotten over time, as had been the case with other hazardous substances. We heard that it's critical that sites for the disposal of low- and intermediate-level radioactive wastes are not forgotten over time.

We described the principles that guide every aspect of the ISRW project and asked the participants to review these principles and tell us if anything is missing or should be modified. There were no suggested changes.

We asked participants what should be done with low-level and intermediate-level waste in Canada, including considering aspects such as the number of facilities, where these should be located, and whether the types of waste should be kept separate or disposed of in the same facility.

We heard that we should not be overly prescriptive in defining low level waste and intermediate level waste. Noting that some waste has surface contamination only, we should take steps to avoid permanently disposing of items that are only surface contaminated. We heard that there should be more emphasis on demonstrating that waste has been cleaned and is no longer contaminated. Participants also expressed a desire for further education around how contamination is removed, ways of recycling the waste, and showcasing how we know that an item is clean (free of radioactive contamination).

We heard that several low-level waste disposal facilities across Canada could make sense, because Canada is such a vast country. We also heard that a single distinct intermediate-level waste disposal facility could potentially be more socially acceptable than a combined facility, or multiple facilities for intermediate level waste. Some participants expressed that co-locating low level waste with intermediate level waste would increase the safety of the low-level waste beyond what was required and could be seen as an enhancement by the public. We also heard that before disposal, decontamination, and additional processing such as vitrification should be considered.

Some participants stated that co-locating nuclear waste could be a good idea, but that there were multiple dimensions in deciding to put lower levels of waste with higher levels of waste. One consideration would be isotope composition and another consideration in making these decisions is the type of radiation (alpha, beta, gamma). It was noted by participants that there is a small amount of intermediate-level waste compared to the low-level waste.

Throughout the session, participants were adamant that public safety and the health of the environment is paramount when dealing with radioactive waste.

We asked participants to consider who should be responsible for implementing the integrated strategy.

Some participants expressed that under no circumstances should radioactive waste be left with producers or government, and that a single organization should be responsible, throughout the life of the waste, to ensure everyone operates under the same playbook. We heard that a government regulated central body would alleviate public concerns. We also heard that to implement the strategy effectively, any organization needs to be independent of the regulator,

independent of government and free from government interference, while following policy and regulations.

We concluded the event with participants asking final questions at the end of the session which were answered by Karine Glenn, Strategic Project Director at the NWMO and heard a variety of questions and comments