

Canada-wide Community Engagement Session 10 November 2021, Summary Report

The objective of the Integrated Strategy for Radioactive Waste (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 November 10 Canada-wide open session, for anyone who missed a specific community focused session or was interested in providing their perspective on this topic to attend.

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.

We heard from participants who believed it is our collective responsibility to find a solution to managing the waste without having future generations burdened with determining how to deal with the waste. This was equally true of hazardous waste that is not radioactive. Dealing with waste today needed to be at the forefront of decision making, rather than leaving a problem for the future.

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."

We heard from some participants who thought of the federal regulator (CNSC) when asked what came to mind when they heard the terms "management of radioactive waste in Canada." Others thought of waste producers (Bruce Power, OPG), and the complexity of the issue.

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.

We asked if the attendees thought the guiding principles addressed or reflected the most important aspects that a Canadian strategy for the long-term management of radioactive waste should include and what we need to ensure. We heard participants identify safety as a key aspect, ensuring that the environment is protected and that there's respect given to of indigenous rights and treaties.

We also heard from participants who wanted to be informed by the best available knowledge, including an openness to continuous improvement, incorporating lessons learned and adapting management practices. They felt the strategy should never be completely fixed, and ideas of adaptability and flexibility should be included in the ISRW Guiding Principles.

Participants expressed that safety, care for the environment and Indigenous rights were more important than cost, but that there is a fiscal responsibility to look at cost over the long term.

We asked what the best way to deal with Canada's low-and-intermediate-level waste over the long-term would be.

We heard from participants who thought the video presentations were useful, but it was a lot of information to digest. Some felt they did not know enough about the processes to comment on the best solution.

We heard concerns about low-level waste characterization and the longer-lived nature of some waste, and the concern about potential mobility of radionuclides into the environment over time. Participants expressed that it was important to ensure decisions were informed by experts, rather than bureaucrats, to ensure an appropriate strategy was developed and implemented, and that the strategy considered activities such as decommissioning and the inclusion of wastes from newer technologies such as small modular reactors.

We also heard concerns from some participants who felt that there is so much more information that has not been shared to provide a better understanding over preferred best practices and project costs.

Additionally, participants wanted to know more about uranium mine and mill waste, and why the strategy was prioritizing the low- and intermediate- level waste.

We heard participants strongly support doing something now and avoid delaying consensus on what the long-term storage disposal should look like. Considering the future shutdown and decommissioning of the current reactor fleet, it was important to be proactive in determining how we would manage the waste in the long-term.

We asked participants about whether they thought one or multiple locations would be better to manage radiative waste.

We heard from participants that believed that either a single or multiple locations would be fine, if the approach selected was safe.

Some expressed that it was difficult to make such a choice as they felt they were missing the information and knowledge necessary to make such a decision. We heard that the topic is complex, and that it is difficult for people to understand but that they are concerned about nuclear waste, despite the benefits of nuclear technology. Participants stated that more education was needed to provide people with the information to make decisions.

One of the considerations that emerged in the discussion included the transportation that would be required if there was a central location for the waste, and the associated risks of travel over long

distances between provinces. Some felt that as long as it's safe it does not matter, all solutions are possible.

In terms of one or multiple facilities, we heard support for segregating low- and intermediate-level waste in different facilities. We also heard that co-location could be a good idea, so long as it did not compromise safety. Participants stated that any solution should be fiscally responsible, whether one or multiple sites are selected.

We heard the importance of using Indigenous knowledge, and that it can be challenging for technical specialists and engineers to grasp the very long-term nature of these decisions. The Indigenous concept of Seven Generations is one that could help people gain a new perspective on how to think about considerations for these very long-term decisions. We heard that respecting Indigenous rights is important, but that all decisions also needed to be fiscally responsible.

We asked participants about who (what kind of organization) they thought should be responsible to implement the strategy.

We heard concerns from some participants who had a distrust of waste owners and did not think the waste owners should be responsible to manage the waste. There was, however, agreement that the waste owners should be financially responsible for the waste.

We heard that separate organizations would be preferred to ensure waste facilities are designed properly and meet safety requirements. We heard that the responsible organization could be an existing organization, or a new organization, but that waste generators should not be in charge for making decisions on solutions, although they should have the funding responsibility.

We heard from participants that we must ensure whatever organization is responsible needs to be around for a long time. We also heard the importance that all parties involved work together. We heard an example of other cultures/countries caretaking over extended time horizons; Japanese bonsai trees were passed down from family to family over 300 up to 1000 years, and Indigenous peoples taking care of the land for multiple generations.

We concluded the event with a question-and-answer period with Karine Glenn, Strategic Project Director.