

Community Engagement Session Summary Report – Pickering & Clarington Region, July 7

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 Pickering and Clarington in Ontario.

The sessions began with a land acknowledgement, acknowledging the traditional Indigenous land we would be on if we were in person and expressing gratitude for that land. 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.

One of the participants opened the discussion with an opening prayer and shared resolutions on radioactive waste that had been passed by the Anishinabek Nation with the group.

Attendees had some preliminary questions and comments to share after viewing our educational materials. Participants asked about our Indigenous engagement plans and asked which groups we would be meeting with. We highlighted that we plan to engage a broad range of Indigenous groups from across the country and that we will meet with any groups or communities who want to contribute to the strategy. Questions regarding where these facilities would be placed were also asked. We emphasized that this is not a siting process and that at this time, we are just 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."

Participants associated the word "fear" and thought of dry storage containers. We also heard that there should be an emphasis on management instead of disposal because the waste has such a long shelf life.

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 following 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. And having heard from other participants, is there anything they would like added?

The guiding principles were generally well received. Participants expressed that due to the historic wrongdoings against Indigenous peoples and the prior use of their lands as "dumping grounds" for waste, we must ensure that no waste is stored or disposed of on their territory. We also heard that we must use traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous knowledge to guide our project.

Some participants also had questions about the focus of this project, whether we would be using existing projects, and whether it was related to the Adaptive Phased Management project.

We asked participants to consider the information we presented and this important challenge, and then asked, what is most important for us to get right when developing Canada's plan for managing waste?

Reflecting on the videos presented, some participants expressed that they lacked substance and seemed superficial. We also heard that we should ask for less feedback in our presentation and allow more time for participant input. Participants also expressed that we should provide more details in our videos, such as how long low- and intermediate-level waste will have to be stored for and how we plan to monitor it in the long-term.

We asked in what manner should we deal with Canada's low- and intermediate-level waste over the long term.

We heard that this question was too broad and quite difficult to answer. Participants felt that they did not know the dangers and risks of the various options. We also heard that it needs to be simplified: if a child stood atop a low-level waste facility, would they have any side-effects?

Some participants expressed that we need to make use of the facilities that currently store low- and intermediate-level waste because those who work at these facilities are already experts in the field. Participants were also concerned that we would continue to generate waste and that we may run out of storage space.

We heard that existing host communities have been told this waste is stored there on an interim basis so if we backtrack on that we may face opposition within the communities. Despite this, some participants were adamant that we should use the facilities where the waste is currently stored because the experts there know how to handle the waste.

We also heard that participants favour the idea of having a single oversight agency managing the waste if it is funded by the generators of the waste. We heard that, as long as it is regulated and we ensure that future generations are informed of the risks, it should be safe.

Participants had some final questions as we approached the end of the session which were answered by Karine Glenn, Strategic Project Director at the NWMO.

A participant asked if we have any cooling towers in Canada. We explained that Canadian nuclear plants use once-through cooling as opposed to cooling towers. The question of what would the risk be if a child came close to one of these storage sites was asked. We explained that there are regulations that limit the amount of radiological exposure a person could get. The doses at the perimeter of the disposal facilities, in a likely scenario, would be quite low, less than that regulatory limit. Most facilities have access control measure in place to prevent this from happening.

We also heard a question about our scope: Are you only focusing on nuclear fuel or are you looking at nuclear waste generated from hospital waste, agriculture, research, etc.? We explained that the focus of the strategy is not fuel, which is already covered by a separate project. In general, the focus of the strategy is the low- and intermediate-level waste, mostly from power plants. Much of the medical waste disintegrates after a short time, e.g. 30 days.

A participant asked how much waste is there? We explained that the federal government publishes updates every three years. As of 2016, there was over 2.4 million cubic meters of low, intermediate, and high-level waste.

A participant also asked about the NWMO and our focus. We explained that we were founded in 2002 and are funded by waste owners. We have a Board of Directors where some waste owners sit, along with others, including Indigenous people. We are a not-for-profit organization, tasked with the management of used nuclear fuel in Canada. A participant also asked why communities would want to host the waste? We explained that it can bring job opportunities and benefits the local economy.

We concluded by thanking the attendees and invited them to take our survey at www.radwasteplanning.ca