

Community Engagement Session Summary Report – Point Lepreau, June 9 & 10

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 community of Point Lepreau, New Brunswick.

The sessions began with a land acknowledgement, recognizing that if this event were held in person, we would be on the traditional and unceded territory of the Wolastoqey and Passamaquoddy Nations. 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.

Attendees had some preliminary questions and comments to share after viewing our educational materials. We heard questions regarding existing projects at Chalk River in Ontario and how waste was being handled at this site. We also heard from some of the participants that they do not support that project. Participants were reminded that the focus of these engagement sessions is on waste that does not currently have a long-term plan and not on other radioactive waste projects already underway such as the one planned for Chalk River. We heard that some participants are opposed to the NWMO leading the development of the strategy because they question its independence from the nuclear industry, and they asked about the make-up of the NWMO and how it was organized and managed. We also heard that safety must be the main concern regarding radioactive waste and that the public needs to feel safe with radioactive waste in their communities. We heard that the public is concerned about the dangers that come with radioactive waste, including the potential for nuclear war, as well as deformities in children that they perceive could arise as a result of waste being placed in their communities. We also heard concerns about the potential targeting of these facilities by terrorists and heard that the waste must be well protected by armed guards. We also heard that our videos were not precise enough and that we do not focus on the continued existence and generation of nuclear waste. We responded by highlighting that this is why we are gathering information aimed at creating a long-term plan. We also reiterated that we are focusing on engaging communities regarding low- and intermediate-level waste and not on nuclear policy.

Attendees were asked to associate which words came to mind when they heard “the management of radioactive waste in Canada.”

We heard from attendees that when they think of radioactive waste, they think of various disasters such as Fukushima or Chernobyl. They expressed their concern that even when waste is safely stored and managed, disasters can still take place. We also heard that continuing the generation of nuclear waste is dangerous for children and that it hinders future generations. We heard that many people do not have much knowledge about radioactive waste and do not know about many of the facilities.

We heard from other participants that nuclear waste is nothing to fear because there are so many scientific safety precautions taken to protect us. We also heard concerns about the common misconceptions surrounding radioactive waste.

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?

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. The strategy must:

- **have safety as the overarching principle**
- **ensure the security of facilities, materials, infrastructure, and information**
- **ensure that the environment is protected**
- **meet or exceed regulatory requirements**
- **informed by the best available knowledge, includes Indigenous Traditional Knowledge**
- **respect Indigenous rights and Treaties**
- **developed in a transparent manner that informs and engages the public, including youth and Indigenous peoples**
- **developed and implemented in a fiscally responsible manner**
- **make use of existing projects**

We heard that our list was well-rounded and that it would help the public understand the industry better, with education being an important factor, because when people do not have the facts about radioactive waste they may make assumptions, which are often incorrect or based on disasters. We also received positive feedback regarding the videos that were presented.

We also heard that while safety should be paramount, we cannot guarantee safety, and that we may be making promises we cannot keep when we include it as the overarching principle. We heard that we should include a principle focused on stopping the production of radioactive waste entirely. Participants also emphasized that we can never abandon the waste stored across the country, and even though it is safely stored, the facilities must be maintained. This too should be included in the guiding principles.

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?

Transportation was highlighted by the participants as being a very important aspect of the long-term plan. We also heard that we must be mindful of the impact to future generations, and we must avoid leaving them with a big pile of waste that is not taken care of.

We also heard that participants would prefer to get rid of the existing nuclear waste and not generate any more.

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

Participants were comfortable with storing waste both at surface level and below surface level. We also heard that the waste should be kept at least 20-30 kilometers away from water sources.

We heard that the government should not support this plan for radioactive waste or any new uses of nuclear, but if it does go ahead, waste should be stored in mines that have already been dug. There

were concerns about the danger radioactive waste poses to humans and the risk when transporting and housing waste near water.

We heard from participants that there should be one central facility for managing low- and intermediate-level waste that is located central to the nuclear facilities where the waste is currently stored, so it is easily accessible and would rely less on transportation.

When asked which governing body should overlook the handling of low- and intermediate-level waste, the CNSC was mentioned as being best suited to oversee the long-term management of radioactive waste. While a new regulatory body could be introduced, the CNSC already has experience and connections within the industry.

After returning from the breakout sessions, the sessions concluded with some follow-up questions and comments that were addressed by Karine Glenn, Strategic Project Director at the NWMO.

The question was posed as to who is currently responsible for low- and intermediate-level waste. We explained that the current policy says that individual waste owners are responsible for all aspects of managing the waste now and in the long term. There was also a question regarding how the risk level is calculated, and how is waste defined as low or intermediate level? We explained that this can vary based on several factors including what isotopes are contained in the waste and how long the material will have to be isolated from the environment. Most often, for low-level waste, the risk decays after approximately 300 years. These storage facilities use multiple barriers to ensure the waste is safely stored until it is no longer dangerous.

Participants also asked a question about capacity, and how we will maintain capacity in waste facilities if we keep generating waste. We explained that waste owners use projections to judge how much waste there will be in the future and how large facilities will have to be to safely accommodate the waste.

Another question asked by participants was about the relationship between waste owners and regulators like the CNSC. We explained that each facility must be licensed, and that the type of licence can vary based on how much activity there is at a facility or how great the risks or needs of a facility are.

Following the sessions, we received comments and questions via email from some of the participants. These are included in the language in which they were submitted in Appendix A. Questions about the current status of specific waste were forwarded to the respective waste owners to provide answers.

Appendix A

Comments and Questions Received After the Sessions

(in the language of submission)

- Nous sommes en désaccord avec votre processus actuel. Ce n'est pas acceptable que la SGDN ait accepté le rôle de consultant sur la stratégie de la gestion intégrée des déchets radioactifs alors que la politique canadienne sur la gestion des déchets radioactifs n'a même pas été élaborée. Cela est illogique et nous estimons que c'est un manque de respect de l'opinion de la population.
- Si vous voulez mériter la confiance de la population, il y a des postulats minima à respecter avant d'élaborer une bonne stratégie.
- Le public a le droit d'exiger non seulement de se sentir en sécurité mais d'en avoir l'assurance. Si le public ne se sent pas en sécurité avec quelque chose qui est proposé par le gouvernement, cela démontre que la proposition n'est pas socialement acceptable.
- Changez de paradigmes : penser aux polluants radioactifs et non plus au développement nucléaire.
- Pour appliquer le principe de prévention / précaution, il faut arrêter de produire et d'importer des déchets radioactifs.
- Pas de retraitement de combustible nucléaire usé non plus.
- Arrêter le développement des PRM (comme celui de Moltex à Point Lepreau) qui perpétuerait la pollution radioactive et les risques de prolifération des armements nucléaires.
- Les déchets radioactifs doivent être surveillés et récupérés durant toute la durée de leur désintégration ce qui peut prendre des milliers d'années.
- Ne jamais « abandonner » les déchets radioactifs même dans un site d'enfouissement en couches géologiques profondes car il faut toujours les surveiller.
- Le Canada a besoin d'un organisme indépendant du gouvernement et de l'industrie, pour superviser la gestion des déchets radioactifs et le déclassé des installations nucléaires.
- Nous nous questionnons sur les compétences et la formation des opérateurs concernant la gestion des déchets radioactifs et la gestion des centrales nucléaires au Canada. Une meilleure formation des travailleurs dans le domaine du nucléaire devrait être une priorité pour assurer notre sécurité.
- Nous questionnons le peu de participation des médias lors de vos événements d'information. Si la SGDN a la volonté d'assurer une véritable participation des populations, elle doit améliorer son plan de communication.
- L'information dans les milieux d'enseignement devrait faire partie de votre stratégie. Dans les écoles secondaires, collégiales et dans les universités, il y a des « comités environnement » qui devraient être interpellés.
- Qu'est-il arrivé aux générateurs de vapeur de Point Lepreau ? Où sont-ils entreposés de façon sécuritaire ?
- Qu'est-il arrivé aux déchets radioactifs de Gentilly -1 retrouvés dans la cour du ferrailleur Bélanger Métal à Trois-Rivières en septembre 2012 ?

- Nos enfants auront à vivre avec les conséquences de nos décisions.
- Nous partageons la responsabilité de prendre tous les moyens pour que l'eau, l'air et les sols ne soient jamais contaminés par des matières radioactives. L'usage du « nous » exclut l'industrie nucléaire en raison de son absence d'indépendance et de sa fonction notoire de lobbyiste.