

Port Hope Community Engagement Session – July 14 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 community of Port Hope, Ontario.

The sessions began with a land acknowledgement, recognizing that if this event were held in person, we would be on traditional Indigenous land 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.

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

We heard that Port Hope is a community that has lived with radioactive pollution and waste from two nuclear industries for more than 80 years. The community continues to live with these industries, and they are faced with a \$1.2B cleanup. Since the historic waste that is destined for the Port Hope Area Initiative is not within the scope of the ISRW, the participants wanted to know if their experience was relevant to this session's conversation. We acknowledged that the citizens of Port Hope had extensive experience with radioactive waste, and that their input would be valuable to the development of the ISRW. We also emphasized that those past practices did not align with the standards in place today.

We heard from participants support for the phase-out of nuclear power and waste altogether by 2032 in Germany. We reminded participants that these sessions are not to debate the future of nuclear. The reality is that in Canada, we have 2.5 million cubic meters of radioactive waste, and so it is important to have this particular dialogue independent from energy policy.

Some in the community expressed disagreement with the NWMO's role in this important undertaking. We heard that some participants identified the NWMO as a proponent that should not be conducting consultations that should be independent and unbiased. We also heard from some participants that the slide deck we presented was presumptuous and biased, and that the timeline was insufficient for input.

We heard that there were several factors that the community considered important. One of which being that waste must be kept away from our land and drinking water. With regards to potential earthquakes, participants expressed that better containment and better packaging was necessary. We also heard that the waste must always be monitored and retrievable and kept away from major waterways because when we contaminate our waterways, we poison Mother Earth. Additionally, participants stressed that there must be no imports; we cannot be thinking of making money from other countries' waste.

We heard that Canada must have an independent agency, one that is at arms-length from government and industry, to oversee radioactive waste management and decommissioning. The participants stated that Canada does not have that now with the CNSC, which regulates based on risk and allows levels of radioactive exposure to people, which enables the industry to operate. It was expressed that the CNSC, and AECB before it, are tools of the industry and do not prioritize the health of the people, allowing the massive long-term cleanup of Port Hope's radioactive waste to proceed without health-monitoring

despite repeated requests from the people, not to mention basic public health principles. Some participants expressed that, from the perspective of Port Hope, radioactive waste can never be disposed of; it must be stored in a monitorable, retrievable manner into the future, well marked, well understood, well documented, and labelled. We heard that there should be no radioactive operations or wastes near waterways, lakes, rivers, watersheds, and especially people.

We also heard that the Port Hope Community Health Concerns Committee (PHCHCC) has participated in four sessions conducted by Natural Resources Canada and made submissions to that engagement process. The PHCHCC's comments will be posted on the NRCan website and participants hope they will be read and seriously considered as the voices of lived experience.

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' experience growing up in a contaminated house and how that resulted in health issues. They firmly believe that they are just one of the people who have been impacted. They feel invisible as a person who has been directly impacted by this industry. They felt that it is incredibly important that this material is kept away from waterways and people, and any clean-up needs to be thorough – private property owners cannot be allowed to opt out of cleanup. We also heard from some participants that they have participated in discussions about nuclear waste with civil society organizations that are almost like a watchdog, and that those groups are boycotting these sessions because they feel that the industry should not be leading this. Finally, we heard that environmental protection against nuclear waste was also top of mind.

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?

One question that came about was that the principles have a lot of 'must' statements, but who is there to enforce it? We also heard that other values that were important to the Port Hope community were transparency, openness, traceability, application of the pre-cautionary principle, community right-to-know, protection of human health and environment, independent oversight and accountability to the public.

We were asked what the plan for phasing out waste and moving to green energy is, and where do we stand on that since it is still waste. The participant added that they are blaming the northern communities to replace diesel but felt it is really all about the mining communities who want to get power for the 'ring of fire'.

We heard a concern about the perceived lack of disclosure, which is very important. What is going to happen, what are the risks, what products will be there? Where there are agreements, these should not be altered by the industry or the regulator. Another participant questioned whether there is a long-term plan for used nuclear fuel, stating that there is a proposal by the proponent doing this engagement, not a plan. They expressed that the situation feels very contentious with many people who think that the current proposal for a deep geological repository (DGR) is not the right solution. We also heard that there is a great deal of opposition to the DGR, and there will continue to be.

We asked what the best way would be to deal with Canada's low- and intermediate-level waste over the long term. We heard concern regarding uranium mining and mill waste. We explained that the waste is being disposed of in specially designed facilities, at or near the location where it is generated, in line with international best practice and does not need additional plans, and no gaps exist. Gaps exist for low- and intermediate-level waste, so we are focusing on that.

The community wanted to know what is considered high-level waste – is it the fuel rods? We explained that low-level waste requires isolation and containment for up to several centuries. Intermediate-level waste, however, is long-lived radioactive materials that require isolation for a long time, likely underground. We heard from some participants that based on the facility in Port Hope, they are not concerned with low-level waste being stored near the surface. However, the intermediate-level waste, with its higher level of radioactivity, is a greater concern when it comes to it being stored in a near-surface facility.

We heard that there needs to be an independent body similar to the Auditor General that would be directly responsible to parliament. We also heard that CNSC hearings are ridiculous, and there is nothing judicial about them nor do they seem independent.

We concluded the event with a question-and-answer period with Karine Glenn, and heard a variety of questions and comments, such as where (Ontario or other) is intermediate-level waste being produced? We answered that intermediate-level waste is, for the most part, located in Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick.

The community wanted to know what other countries are doing. We shared the strategies being implemented in Switzerland, France, and the US as examples. The international standard for intermediate-level waste is to dispose of the waste deep underground. In Finland, they store some of their intermediate-level waste in rock caverns. It may be stored alone or together with high-level waste. We provided information on where to find the international benchmarking report on our website which contains a table listing 40 countries and what they are doing for reference.