



Oral Presentation

Submission from the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

In the Matter of the

Beaverlodge Project

Application to amend the Waste Facility Operating Licence to allow for the removal of 20 properties at the Beaverlodge Project from its licence

Commission Public Hearing

October 2, 2019

Exposé oral

Mémoire de la Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

À l'égard de

Site Beaverlodge

Demande pour modifier le permis d'exploitation d'une installation de gestion des déchets pour permettre le retrait de 20 propriétés du site Beaverlodge de son permis

Audience publique de la Commission

Le 2 octobre 2019

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September 6, 2019

Louise Levert

Senior Tribunal Officer, Secretariat Division

Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

280 Slater Street P.O. Pox 1046, Station B

Ottawa ON K1P 5S9

**RE: ATHABASCA CHIPEWYAN FIRST NATION SUBMISSION TO CANADIAN NUCLEAR SAFETY
COMMISSION ON CAMECO'S BEAVER LODGE FACILITY**

INTRODUCTION

Eglànet'e,

Archeological evidence demonstrates that Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) has occupied our traditional territory for at least 9,000 years. As such our citizens have a deep connection and understanding of the land, its flora, fauna and natural resources. Through teachings passed down from Elders since time immemorial, and through direct, modern-day experience we have valuable traditional knowledge relevant to this project.

Because our members live in an area so heavily impacted from resource development, any further industrial or extraction activity threatens to impact our fragile ecosystem, hindering our ability to practice our Treaty rights to hunt, trap, fish and the peaceful enjoyment of our lands. ACFN reviewed this application with the view to make suggestions to Canada, Saskatchewan and Cameco on how best to steward the environment and protect our sacred Treaty rights.

This work was carried out by ACFN's Dene Lands and Resource Management department whose vision is: We the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Dene Lands & Resource Management department are united. We adapt to constant change, honour the past, and are obligated to our future generations. We lead and prosper to maintain the integrity of our Nation, our Land rights, our People, and our Treaty rights. We protect our Treaty and Aboriginal rights to land, water, air, and livelihood. We support the infrastructure that preserves our

culture, language, and knowledge. Through innovation, we foster growth and progress through collaboration, economic development, and building relationships. We support the future of a self-sustaining Nation.

ACFN interests in the area are extensive and deep-rooted. Cameco's Beaverlodge facilities are within our traditional territory, many of our members came from or continue to reside in Uranium City and the surrounding areas, and there are strong ties to other local bands, particularly the Fond du Lac First Nation, who was once a single band with ACFN. Additionally, ACFN has a reserve N.22 right across Lake Athabasca from the project. To this day our ACFN members practice their Treaty rights in this area on a yearly basis and have strong ties to the land and water.

ACFN would like to thank the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) for this opportunity to relate our concerns. ACFN would also like to thank the proponent, Cameco for supplying information for our review. This submission does not grant or withhold our approval of the request of Cameco to release the 20 Beaverlodge properties from CNSC licensing, but rather is a summary of statements and concerns of our ACFN Elders. On Sep 3, 2019 ACFN convened a meeting of approximately 50 elders in Fort Chipewyan, AB to discuss the contents of the following documents provided to us by CNSC staff: *Request for Release of 20 Beaverlodge Properties from Requiring Licensing under the Nuclear Safety and Control Act* and *Written submission from Cameco Corporation In the Matter of the Beaverlodge Project Application to amend the Waste Facility Operating Licence to allow for the removal of 20 properties at the Beaverlodge Project from its licence.*

OVERVIEW

On Sept 3, 2019 DLRM staff asked a group of ACFN Elders several questions to assess their connection to and experience with the area and the project. From a show of hands roughly 20% of those in attendance had family from Uranium City and the surrounding areas within 1 or 2 generations. Additionally, 17 other ACFN families were mentioned that were not in attendance at the meeting, but were identified as being from that area and having relevant information. Beyond that, of those who didn't grow up there or had relatives in the area, an estimated 1/4 of the group had direct experience regularly or periodically travelling to, recreating or practicing their Treaty rights in the general vicinity. Also, important to note that several Elders had direct experience themselves or their families working at the mine under the previous proponent. Below are a selection of statements and concerns raised that identify problems, pose questions for further consideration and offer additional information that wasn't included in the submissions provided by CNSC staff.

CONCERNS

There was some concern with who was selected to be interviewed by Cameco to discuss land use practices, identified only as "residents of Uranium City" in the supplied documents under the *Current Condition and Land Use* sections for each mine area. Several questions emerged

such as who was selected, how were they selected, and are they active land users? Further questions emerged such as; were former residents of the area contacted, as many sustenance harvesters moved away during the expansion phase of the mine as animals were driven away by the industrial activity. Furthermore, if they were active land users in the sample, was there anyone there to speak to the pre-development state of the land and wildlife populations? Two Elders present stated they lived, hunted, fished and trapped in the area before Uranium City was even founded.

Further concerns arose about the estimated annual time on sites for recreational use for several of the mine areas, particularly the HAB area, which was assessed at 3.25 hours annually. Elders wondered if this was an estimate for the whole community, or a single individual. First of all, elementary statistical concerns were present for how this number was arrived at and if it can be considered a representative sample. Furthermore, there were several in the group who directly challenged the estimated number of hours, as they personally spent more time in those areas hunting and trapping martin, wolverine and caribou than the report suggests. The report indicated that most of this time was spent traversing the area, and the question was posed if this number only included the former mine site footprint, or the surrounding area. And if it was only the footprint, then this reveals that the proponent does not have an appreciation of cumulative effects, or that effects can extend beyond the border of the project. Further doubt was cast upon the veracity and completeness of the report when it mentions several times that “there are no features of interest” in certain areas. Questions existed about how that was defined and assessed. For instance, the question was raised “a feature of interest to whom?” Humans? Caribou? Marten? An area that might strike a human, Cameco employee conducting the survey as featureless, may be a prime area of interest to an animal. ACFN Elders were adamant that these areas should not just be reclaimed and remediated with the interests of humans in mind, but all of Creator’s beings. The concerns about the perspective from which this report was prepared continued. For instance, each description of the individual mine sites details their relative connectivity via road access. However, this demonstrate an incomplete understanding of traditional life and practice. Indigenous people do not solely rely on settler constructed roads for travel, and instead utilize quads, ATV’s, snowmobiles, boats and dog sleds to carry out their activities. Therefore, a sites assessed importance or productivity shouldn’t be measured by its accessibility by what a settler might consider a road alone.

Other concerns about safety repeatedly arose, especially by those whose families had fallen sick to cancer or radiation poisoning. There was a request to have ACFN members conduct our own community-based monitoring in the mine area but also downstream in Lake Athabasca and the Peace Athabasca Delta. There was a request to test the “Forestry Dock” in Fort Chipewyan for radiation because that is where barges from Uranium City would dock. This combined with widely acknowledged anecdotal evidence of uranium and other radioactive waste being thrown overboard of barges in the 1950’s and 60’s elevated this concern. There was also a request to test the sand on the North shore of Lake Athabasca because it is known as a natural filter. And while members were happy to not have this contamination leech into Lake Athabasca, there was still some concern that radiation may be building up along its shores.

Among those who had direct experience and some familiarity with mining, there was a general knowledge that the uranium becomes purer the more North you go. This posed a threat to the area surrounding the HAB where members hunt, trap and fish, especially the Beverly caribou herd. Elders wanted to see more testing in that area and of the herd itself to ensure they are not contaminated.

Concerning indigenous consultation, there was a general consensus that more needs to be done. Elders felt that they did not know enough about the project and felt that they had important knowledge to contribute that was going unheard. In the future, Elders wanted to have CNSC meetings of this nature conducted in Fort Chipewyan. It was also mentioned that people in La Loche, SK should be interviewed as many of them worked in the Beaverlodge mines.

CONCLUSION

Once again, the ACFN would like to thank CNSC and Cameco for this opportunity, and offer our assistance for future assessments. Our Elders felt that if they were involved sooner in the process, and that if the families that lived or previously lived in the mine area were invited to tour the site, then the level of information provided would be of more use. Once again, this submission is not meant to give or withhold ACFN approval but is meant to serve as instruction on how to conduct such reviews and hearings in the future. Again, the concerns about the perspective from which these assessments were being conducted were repeatedly raised as they failed to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of Indigenous land use and tradition. Furthermore, from a Western science perspective, some concerns arose about the methodology of the public opinion polling. What was the sample size, what questions were asked, how were respondents qualified as knowledgeable? Beyond that, public opinion should not be presented as evidence or fact. Questions emerged if anyone bothered to ask the moose, or the heron, or the whitefish how they felt? From an indigenous methodology perspective, you cannot have a truly representative sample if you are only asking one species, and leave out the rest of Creator's many and diverse children.

Marci Cho.