



Oral presentation

Written submission from the Nuclear Waste Watch

In the Matter of the

Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL)

Application from the CNL to amend its Chalk River Laboratories site licence to authorize the construction of a near surface disposal facility

Commission Public Hearing Part 2

May and June 2022

Exposé oral

Mémoire d' Action Déchets Nucléaires

À l'égard des

Laboratoires Nucléaires Canadiens (LNC)

Demande des LNC visant à modifier le permis du site des Laboratoires de Chalk River pour autoriser la construction d'une installation de gestion des déchets près de la surface

Audience publique de la Commission Partie 2

Mai et juin 2022



Submission to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
with respect to
Canadian Nuclear Laboratories'
Application to amend its Chalk River Laboratories site licence to
authorize the construction of a near surface disposal facility

REF 2022-H-07

Submitted on April 11, 2022



**The Old Fort William
Cottagers' Association**

Community Awareness & Acceptance of Near Surface Disposal Facility at Deep River

Part 1: Introduction:

In 2017, Nuclear Waste Watch and the Old Fort William Cottagers' Association engaged Christine Peringer, an expert on group facilitation and mediation¹, to assess community awareness and acceptance of the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories' (CNL) proposal for a near-surface disposal facility (NSDF) at Chalk River. Her work consisted of:

1. a 9-question multiple choice survey conducted in October and November 2017;
2. two community round tables (one in Pembroke and one in Deep River) held on November 9, 2017; and
3. telephone informant interviews.

She submitted her final report to us on December 4, 2020. The report was entitled *Final Report: Assessment of Community Awareness and Acceptance of the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories Proposal for a Near-Surface Disposal Facility at Chalk River*.² That report is based on work carried out primarily in 2017.

Part 2: Observations from Peringer report:

In summary, Christine Peringer made the following observations.

b. Level of Community Awareness:

"The level of public awareness of the NSDF appears to be low or moderate."³

The reasons given by those she had contacted for the lack of awareness included:

- "There is not much public discussion.
- The topic is complex and people are busy.
- There is not a lot of information available.
- The role of the public is unclear."⁴

c. Level of Community Acceptance:

"There appears to be a significant difference of opinion within the community as to support for the proposal."⁵

Some of her other observations on the acceptance question were:

¹ See Appendix 2 for Christine Peringer Curriculum Vitae.

² Peringer, Christine, *Final Report: Assessment of Community Awareness and Acceptance of the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories Proposal for a Near-Surface Disposal Facility at Chalk River*, December 4, 2020. Attached to this submission as Appendix 1.

³ Peringer, p. 5.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Peringer, p. 6.

- “The source of waste matters to people.
- No relationship appears to exist between opposition to nuclear power and opposition to this proposal.
- Current nuclear industry employees generally support the proposal and see movement on this as essential for their industry.
- Past nuclear employees may support or oppose the proposal.”⁶

She also observed a sharp difference on the trust issue between those who were in favour of in contrast with those opposed to the proposal:

- Those in support had “trust in the consultation, approval and oversight process.”⁷
- Three prime concerns of those opposed to the project were:
 - Concern about a “proponent that is a multinational consortium of commercial interests,”
 - “Distrust in CNSC as the regulator,” and
 - Concern about “capacity of government oversight now and in the future.”⁸

One of Christine Peringer’s recommendations was:

“Engagement with the community would be more meaningful if it involved more community participation. Collaborative processes are being used in other jurisdictions in which communities are part of the decision-making process.”⁹

Our consultant’s findings indicate to us that there was not adequate public engagement in the early stages of the project development.

Part 3: Degree of Community Awareness and Acceptance in 2022

The hearing process was delayed substantially as CNL worked on revising its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS). CNL submitted an updated EIS on May 26, 2021, which contained Section 4 on “Public and Stakeholder Engagement”. Both CNL¹⁰ and CNSC¹¹ have had continued contacts with the community.

⁶ Peringer, p 8.

⁷ Peringer, p. 7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Peringer, p. 22.

¹⁰ For description of these CNL contacts, see “Section 4.0 Public and Stakeholder Engagement (pp. 231-268)”, Near Surface Disposal Facility, Deep River Environmental Impact Statement, VOL 2: EIS Report, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, May 26, 2021; and Supplementary Information Presentation from the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, Commission Public Hearings, Part 1, February 22, 2022, Slide 20, CMD 22-47.1A.

¹¹ “Public Outreach & Engagement 2019-2022,” Canadian Nuclear Laboratories Near Surface Disposal Facility (NSDF) Application to Amend the License to Construct the NSDF at the Chalk River Laboratories (CRL) Site, Commission Hearing, Part 1, February 22, 2022 CMD 22-H7.A, CNSC Staff Presentation E-Doc 671 6852 PPTX. Slide 30 - 32.

In March 2019, the CNSC put out a notice of a second round of Participant Funding. We applied for funding to update our assessment of public awareness and knowledge of the project and the range of public views, and community acceptance. This funding was essential to allow us to determine whether the situation in terms of public awareness and views had changed over the years between our work in 2017 and the current situation, a five-year period during which CNL and CNSC continued to carry out public outreach activities.

Unfortunately, in the second round of funding, CNSC provided us with zero dollars to carry out this work. As a result of not being funded on this subject, we have not been able to update our work. Since our consultant's work is based on the situation in 2017, it is impossible for us to make judgements as to whether the situation has improved or not over the past five years.

A review of the "Public and Stakeholder Engagement" section in the current EIS shows very similar concerns still coming forward in the past five years as those that our consultant observed earlier.

Have community awareness and community acceptance improved over the past five years? CNL's EIS does not address these two questions and thus does not give us or you the basis for making that judgement.

Part 4: Recommendations

We consider community awareness and acceptance as core principles in a modern environmental assessment process and in modern decision-making.

To have awareness and acceptance, it is essential to involve the public in the early stages of project development in a collaborative process. This is when the community can have the best opportunity to influence the direction of the project and to most fully understand the project. This is likely to result in a project that better suits the needs of the proponent, the community, and the environment.

We ask the CNSC Commissioners to find that CNL's early project assessment stages failed to achieve this goal.

We also ask the CNSC Commissioners to not consider the amount of mail drops, meetings, website visits, social media impressions, etc, that have occurred in the past five years as necessarily meaning that public awareness and acceptance is at a satisfactory level.

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Final Report:

Assessment of Community Awareness and Acceptance of the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories Proposal for a Near-Surface Disposal Facility at Chalk River

Submitted to: Nuclear Waste Watch and Old Fort William Cottagers' Association

By: Christine Peringer

December 4, 2020

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1. Goal and Methodology of this Assessment

a. Goal

I was engaged in 2017 by Nuclear Waste Watch and the Old Fort William Cottagers' Association (the project leads) to provide an assessment of community awareness and acceptance of the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories' (CNL) Proposal for a Near-Surface Disposal Facility (NSDF) at Chalk River. I was asked to assess:

- The level of community knowledge about the NSDF proposal and its potential impact; and,
- The level of community acceptance of the proposal.

This assessment was to be in relation to assertions, related to community awareness and acceptance, in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by the project proponent, CNL, which had been expected in early 2018.

As of the writing of this report in October 2020, CNL has not submitted the final EIS. In November 2017 the delay was announced as follows:

"CNL is currently addressing all comments received, as well as the CNSC's [Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission] requests for information. CNL has indicated that additional time is required to complete these deliverables. As a result, timelines for the final EIS, originally expected in January 2018, and the public hearing, tentatively planned for July 2018, will be delayed. A revised timeline for project deliverables will be made available to the public once finalized."

There has not been an update posted since 2017.

The task of my study has thus been changed to share an assessment of the community knowledge and acceptance of the CNL proposal without comparison to the (yet unreleased) final EIS.

b. Methodology

Three methods were used to assess community awareness and acceptance:

- **Survey**
A 9-question multiple choice survey was completed by 113 people between October 6, 2017 and November 19, 2017. It was available online and in hard copy. (All responses were submitted online.) Appendix A presents the survey results.

- **Community round tables**

Seventeen people attended two community round tables on November 9, 2017; one round table was held in Pembroke and the other in Deep River. These were 2-hour sessions at the local public libraries. The meetings started with a brief explanation of Nuclear Waste Watch's intention to gather information regarding community awareness and acceptance of the CNL proposal and rest of the time was used to hear the views of those in attendance. See Appendix B for a full record of these meetings and the flyer advertising the events.

- **Telephone interviews**

In order to gather the views of a diverse cross section of people – not just those motivated enough to respond to a survey or attend a meeting – we sought to speak to other people, from the general public. We identified 31 people who were on publicly available lists of community members who were involved in municipal affairs or service/community club activity in Renfrew County. Of the 31 potential informants, we were able to find phone numbers for 17, made contact with nine and six people were willing to be interviewed. See Appendix C for the report summarizing the input from these interviews.

c. **Nature of the Data and Limitations of the Study**

Nature of the Data: The data in this study are quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data is based on the survey and some of the statistics gleaned from the round table and interview responses. The qualitative data are presented through summary of the comments from the round table sessions and the telephone informant interviews.

Limitations of the Study: This study has the following limitations:

- **Variety of viewpoints:** While effort was made to advertise and recruit broadly for participants, especially participants without a stake in the issue, it is the nature of online surveys and round table meetings that they usually attract people with strong interest and potentially firm opinions on an issue. (In fact, that was the case for the round-table participants who, for the most part, had firmly held opinions in favour or opposed to the proposal.) For this reason, the telephone informant interviews were undertaken.

- **Numbers of Participants:** This study gathered the views of 129 people. The population of Chalk River and neighbouring municipalities is 49,494¹. Because of the low financial resources available for this study, we did not undertake telephone polling, which would have allowed the study to assess the opinion spectrum of the local population as a whole.
- **Possibility of repetition:** While the surveys are unique respondents, it is possible that one of the telephone respondents interviewed and some of the 18 participants in the round tables also completed the online survey.
- **Time horizon:** This data was gathered in 2017 and early 2018, which is now three years ago. This is another negative impact on this study due to the extended delay in the filing of the final EIS and subsequent delays in the completion of the review.

¹ The local population (2016 Census) was assessed as follows:

Deep River, Ontario	4,109
Laurentian Hills, Ont. (incl. Chalk River)	2,961
Petawawa, Ontario	17,187
Laurentian Valley, Ontario	9,387
Pembroke, Ontario	13,882
Rapides-des-Joachims, Quebec	156
Sheenboro, Quebec	130
Chichester, Quebec	348
L'Isle-aux-Allumettes, Quebec	1,334
Total	49,494

2. Summary of Findings

a. Introduction

Here follows the learning from the survey results, the round tables and the telephone interviews, when considered together. There is more detail on these points in the following section that analyzes the material from each source individually.

b. Level of Community Awareness

The level of public awareness of the NSDF appears to be low or moderate.

While all but two of the 129 people engaged in this study reported that they were aware of the proposal, this cannot be interpreted as indicative of broader community awareness because some awareness of the proposal was necessary for a person to engage in the survey or the round tables.

The telephone informants, our sample of unengaged citizens, assessed themselves on average as only 40% aware and assessed the community as a whole as slightly less informed than that at 35% aware. Survey respondents who assessed themselves "Very aware" were only 58% accurate in the response to factual questions related to the proposal, further suggesting that the level of understanding of what is being proposed is not high.

The reasons given for lack of public awareness are as follows (*quotes from round table members or telephone informants are in italics*):

- **There is not much public discussion.** *People aren't discussing this much in general... Local provincial and federal politicians don't appear engaged... Those with strong views are in the papers; others are silent.*
- **The topic is complex and people are busy.** *The public are not taking up the information in the way it is provided, e.g., only 15 people attended one of the daylong open houses....The implications of the information are difficult for many to understand ... People have a lot of other things on their minds.*
- **There is not a lot of information available.** *CNL is providing incomplete information and little information beyond the local area... I've typed up questions, wrote them in early summer and got no answers until the day before the close of the comment period. This is a barrier to engagement.*

- **The role of the public is unclear.** *It's hard to know the relevance of the public input... They [CNL] tell me that "if there is missing information, we are willing to look at it", so there seems to be a rule or guideline that they will only comment on information deficiency, but that is not the same as an invitation to express your views... Lack of meaningful public input*

People reported that they wanted to know more about the following topics:

- The proposal and CNL's plans
- Safety planning
- Environmental impact
- Safeguards for the 300-year disposal time
- Nature of the decision-making on the type of waste to be included
- Assurance that the government is going to monitor this
- The status of this assessment process

Informants shared that they learned about the proposal through the following mechanisms:

- Cottagers and other resident groups
- Nongovernmental organizations (like Ottawa Riverkeeper)
- Local groups like Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County
- Newspapers (e.g., North Renfrew Times, The Pontiac Journal, Ottawa Citizen)
- CNL and CNSC websites and open houses
- Friends and neighbours (in person, on Facebook etc.)

They recommended more use of newspapers, the internet, radio/TV and in-person meetings to disseminate information.

c. Level of Community Acceptance

There appears to be a significant difference of opinion within the community as to support for the proposal. This conclusion is supported by the following data:

- Survey results show that 87% of respondents "strongly disagree" or "disagree" with the statement "I support CNL's proposal and plan for a NSDF for radioactive wastes at Chalk River."

- The round-table participants were divided with six supportive and eight who were opposed or had significant concerns.
- Of those interviewed, one supported the proposal, one didn't know about it and four were "opposed" or had significant concerns. They assessed community support as 42% of those who knew about the proposal.

For those who support the proposal, their reasons can be summarized as follows:

- **Strong sense that there is a need to find a way to dispose of nuclear waste**
- **Trust that a lot of work has been done by experts to create this proposal**
- **High confidence in the knowledge of the decision-makers**
- **Trust in the consultation, approval and oversight process**
- **The proposal is seen as reasonable**
- **Some are glad that intermediate-level waste is no longer being considered**

For those opposed, or with serious questions, their prime concerns are:

- **Location close to the Ottawa River.** There is concern about leakage into the Ottawa River affecting downstream communities and habitat. Several said that if the site was much further from the river, opposition would be reduced. It was pointed out that the location is on unceded Algonquin land and that the clay soil type and location on a fault line make it not ideal.
- **Proponent that is a multinational consortium of commercial interests.** There is a concern that this body lacks long-term commitment to the area and that their profit incentive could reduce their commitment to safety
- **Distrust in CNSC as the regulator.** Concern was expressed that the same body was licencing the site and administering the environmental assessment process.
- **Capacity of government oversight now and in the future.** Concerns were raised that the government was not equipped to do effective monitoring of the site. AECL was seen as having reduced its staff from 3000 to fewer than 100 so may be challenged to oversee CNL, which is much larger.
- **Lack of consideration of the views of impacted communities.** Many expressed frustrations with the one-way nature of the communication at

open houses and online interactions. There did not appear to be a way to discuss alternatives. It was also not clear to some people to what extent it mattered if the community accepted the proposal or not.

Additional conclusions are also drawn from this study:

- **The source of the waste matters to people.** Support is strongest and opposition is lowest for the idea of placing only Chalk River waste in the NSDF. There is the most opposition to accepting waste from the other CNL sites or on a commercial basis from any source.
- **No relationship appears to exist between opposition to nuclear power and opposition to this proposal.** Forty-two percent (42%) of the survey respondents opposed to this proposal support nuclear power.
- **Current nuclear industry employees generally support the proposal and see movement on this as essential for their industry.** As one current employee said: *“Not having an end of life plan is a gap that has been hampering Canadian nuclear energy.”*
- **Past nuclear industry employees may support or oppose the proposal.** In the survey three of the five past employees opposed the proposal, citing concerns with CNL, with monitoring and with inadequate public consultation. Three of the telephone informants had worked in the nuclear industry for more than 30 years -- one supported the proposal, one was equivocal and one was opposed. The one who was opposed stated that he had retired from his position. They also had differing views on whether there was support for this proposal among other current or past CNL employees.

3. Detailed findings considering each of the Study Methods

a. THE SURVEY

Introduction

Between October 6, 2017 and November 19, 2017, 113 people responded to a 9-question multiple choice survey. See Appendix A for the full survey results.

Awareness of the Proposal

General: Most of the 113 survey respondents were either “very” or “somewhat aware” of the proposed NSDF for Chalk River. A majority said they had knowledge of the risks and a (slightly smaller) majority said they were aware of the safety measures being proposed. Twenty-four percent (24%) reported being unaware of the safety measures being taken.

Information Sources: Survey respondents said their top sources of information regarding the NSDF were the following:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Cottagers or other resident groups | 73% |
| 2. Nongovernmental groups like Ottawa Riverkeeper (e.g.) | 63% |
| 3. Newspapers | 60% |
| 4. Local Groups such as Concerned Citizens of Renfrew Cty. | 56% |
| 5. Talking to my friends and neighbours | 53% |
| 6. CNL website | 40% |
| 7. CNL open houses | 39% |

The respondents’ assessment of the reliability of these information sources generally follows this same ranking with a few minor variations, e.g., by a few percentage points respondents found newspapers to be very or somewhat more reliable as an information source than nongovernmental groups. The highest scores for reliability (i.e. “very reliable”) were given to nongovernmental groups like Ottawa Riverkeeper (70% of respondents) and local groups, such as Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County (61%) and cottagers or other residents’ groups (55%). Highest ratings for “Not at all reliable” went to television coverage (30%), information on the CNL website (29%) and CNL open houses (27%).

Accuracy of self-assessments of awareness in relation to the knowledge test: To see if self-assessed levels of awareness (Question 1) were accurate, this study

developed a test. Question 4 listed 14 factual statements about the proposed NSDF. (These statements were based upon information provided by CNL.) It then asked respondents to rate each statement as “true” or “false”.

Here are the results:

- The respondents had an average correct score of 7.3/14 (52%).
- The 50 respondents who assessed themselves as “Very aware” for all three of the questions related to specific proposal elements (the plans for the NSDF, the risks and the safety measures proposed) had a slightly higher average correct score of 8.1/14 (58%).
- There was not a large difference between the knowledge level of those in favour of the proposal and those opposed: those in favour were on average 49% accurate in their responses; those opposed were on average 54% accurate.

The areas in which respondents showed the highest lack of knowledge related to the nature of the waste and what would be released into the environment. The three factual statements for which respondents most often provided incorrect answers or said they were “unsure” were as follows (the correct answer for each of these statements is “True”):

- CNL has estimated that tens of millions of becquerels of radioactive plutonium will be released from the disposal facility each year (82% of respondents were incorrect or unsure)
- Radioactively contaminated leachate will be treated to remove some of the contaminants and then will be released into a wetland (65% were incorrect or unsure)
- The wastes will include PCBs, asbestos, mercury and lead (66% were incorrect or unsure)

Acceptance of the proposal

In Question 5, the survey asked about respondents’ degree of acceptance of CNL’s NSDF proposal. The responses were as follows:

- 11% support CNL’s proposal and plan for a NSDF for radioactive wastes at Chalk River; 88% disagreed (71% *strongly* disagreed) the highest rating of disagreement in the responses to the eight statements in this section.

- 10% have confidence that CNL will be a competent operator; 78% disagreed.
- 15% have confidence that CNSC will be a sound decision-maker with respect to the project; 71% disagreed.

There are many conclusions that can be drawn from the responses to these questions seen in relation to each other. They include:

- **Opposing the proposal does not correlate with opposing nuclear power.** Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents support nuclear power generation. This means that the results above are not related to support for, or opposition to, nuclear power.
- **Some uniformity in response regarding the right relationship between safety, timing and cost.** In Question 6, when considering the competing priorities of timeliness (ability to receive waste by no later than 2020), cost and safety, more than half of respondents made the following ranking:
 - Safety as the number one priority (94% of respondents)
 - Timing is the second priority (65% of respondents)
 - Cost is the third priority (73% of respondents). No one placed cost as the most important consideration.
- **The source of the waste matters to people.** Thirty-four percent (34%) of survey respondents either “agree” or “strongly agree” to disposing waste produced at the Chalk River site in the NSDF. The level of agreement drops to 10% for waste from other CNL sites like Rolphton, Ontario and Whiteshell, Manitoba and drops further to 6% for accepting waste on a commercial basis from any source. Equivalently, there is the most opposition (80% of respondents) to accepting waste from the other CNL sites or on a commercial basis from any source. This degree of opposition drops to 47% when the only waste is that generated at the Chalk River site (34% agree; 19% neither agree nor disagree; 47% disagree).
- **Mix of views within those experienced in the nuclear industry** Four survey respondents self-identified as currently working in the nuclear industry; five respondents said they had previously worked in the nuclear industry. Trends in the relationship between responses and whether the

respondent had a current or past employment relationship with Atomic Energy of Canada (AECL) were as follows:

- Chalk River should take care of its own waste. All but one of the nine current or past nuclear workers believed that because Chalk River Laboratory had generated the waste, it was appropriate these wastes be disposed of at that site.
- Current nuclear industry employees surveyed strongly favour the proposal. Those who work currently in the nuclear industry “agree” or “strongly agree” with the NSDF proposal; 3 of the 4 also “agree” or “strongly agree” with all the points in question 5 regarding confidence in CNL as a competent operator, CNSC as a sound decision-maker, and the monitoring, transparency, and that views of local communities have been adequately considered. One of the four said they did not agree or disagree with these other parts of the question. Two of the four neither agreed nor disagreed with the idea of radioactive waste from outside of CNL being deposited at the Chalk River NSDF. They all ranked the priorities as 1) safety 2) timing and 3) cost. They all assessed the level of risk of this proposal to public or worker health and safety as a low or nil and the impact on the environment as low or nil.
- Some past nuclear industry employees are supportive; some are opposed or have concerns. Of the five who no longer work in the industry, two “agree” or “strongly agree” with the proposal; three “disagree” or “strongly disagree”. Of the three who disagreed, they all “strongly disagree” with the idea that the potentially impacted communities had been adequately considered by CNL in developing the proposal and that wastes from other CNL sites should come to the Chalk River NSDF. Two strongly disagreed that CNL would be a competent operator of the facility and they both lacked confidence that the project would be well monitored and the results of the monitoring would be publicly available.

b. THE ROUND TABLES

Introduction

The round tables provided comments that assist in the interpretation of the survey results. The verbatim reports of these sessions are presented in Appendix B.

There were strong differences in the types of people who attended the two sessions. Most of the people at the meeting in Pembroke were community members; some were long-term community activists and others were just concerned with this proposal. At the Deep River meeting, six of the eight participants were nuclear industry employees. Of the two other participants, one was a family member of a past Chalk River employee.

Awareness of the Proposal

All people who attended the two sessions considered themselves aware of the proposal. They cited the newspapers (e.g., North Renfrew Times, The Pontiac Journal, the Ottawa Citizen) and the CNSC Open House as important information sources.

Concerns expressed about awareness and information were as follows:

- **The public are not taking up the information in the way it is provided** – E.g., one participant said that at the CNSC public information session in Pembroke, over the whole day, only 15 people attended. A participant at the Deep River Round Table said that they had thought that more people would have attended this (round table) event.
- **Incomplete information** – Some participants pointed to the lack of response to questions related to remediating existing waste management, the plan for decommissioning buildings, the plans for transporting waste, among others.
- **Lack of meaningful public input in the process** – People expressed concern that they had provided their views at a consultation focused on an earlier proposal (E.g., the kinds of waste that will go in the facility changed twice in 2016-2017) so people may not have considered or provided feedback in relation to the whole current proposal.

- **Implications of information difficult for many to understand** – People said that they found it hard to engage with the information provided as a community member because it requires engineering or other expertise to understand the implications of the plan.
- **No information provided beyond the local area** - There was also concern raised that there had been no public engagement in Ottawa, so very little awareness there. Others believed that this is just a local issue, so providing information only in the local area is appropriate. As one participant said, *“People in Gatineau have no reason to have an opinion on this. This is our livelihood and we hope to have a career here and raise our family.”*
- **Lack of timeliness in CNL response to questions** – One person reported, *“I’ve typed up questions, wrote them in early summer and got no answers until the day before the close of the comment period. This is a barrier to engagement.”*
- **Hard to know the relevance of public input** – Participants said they had difficulty in getting consistent information as to whether “social acceptance” or “social values” are considered relevant in this environmental assessment.
- **No opportunity to express one’s views** – It was perceived that Open Houses were not an opportunity to express one’s views, just a time to ask questions or point out if information was missing.
- **Media have unhelpfully stirred controversy** – Several expressed concern that content in the North Renfrew Times has inflamed the public, not informed them.

Acceptance of the Proposal

Most of the people at the meeting in Pembroke were opposed or concerned about the impact of the proposed facility. At the Deep River meeting, six of the eight participants strongly supported the proposal. One was opposed and the other participant expressed concerns.

The reasons for support, articulated by those in favour, were as follows:

- **Need for a way to dispose of nuclear waste** – Many pointed to lack of clarity on dealing with the waste and legacy waste has been hampering the industry, so this proposal is a welcome step forward.
- **High confidence in the knowledge of decision-makers** – They trust CNL and the regulator CNSC to make evidence-informed decisions. As one person stated, *“We need to trust the responsible authority. Anyone can have an opinion, but it may not be well-informed. Natural Resources Canada is overseeing the whole process, they oversee CNSC.”*
- **Much work has been done to create this proposal** – This proposal is the result of a lot of research, some of which was conducted by participants at this meeting. As one participant stated: *“CNL is always working to learn more.”*
- **Glad that intermediate-level waste is no longer being considered**
- **Consultation process is working** – This group saw the changes in the proposal over time (e.g., the waste inventory) as evidence that the authorities are listening and responding.

For those opposed, or with serious questions, their prime concerns were as follows:

- **Location** – The most repeated concern raised was that a waste site this close to the Ottawa River poses a significant risk to the waterway and those downstream (with no economic benefit). As one participant stated, *“If this was proposed to be located 70 kilometres from the river, this would not be the same discussion.”* Another concern raised is that this site is on unceded Algonquin land and also, that the site is seen as higher risk due to the clay soil type and location on a fault line.
- **The proponent** – The concern expressed was that CNL is a multinational consortium of commercial interests without a long-term stake in the region; SNC-Lavalin is one of the members and it has a bad corporate reputation for skirting the rules.
- **Quality of government oversight** – Concern was raised here that the government was not equipped to carry out the required oversight because AECL has much reduced staff (estimated reduction from 3,000 to under 100)

and several participants question its ability to oversee the activities of a \$1 billion multinational.

- **Lack of primacy of safety** - Some are concerned that low cost may be overriding the public good, e.g., at one time AECL had a plan to deal with the waste, a plan that was more expensive. As one participant put it, "We need to rethink this with safety at the top of the priorities list and profit at the bottom."
- **Distrust of CNSC as the regulator** – CNSC issues licences and is also responsible for overseeing the environmental assessment process. These are seen as incompatible roles.

C. THE TELEPHONE INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Introduction

The six people interviewed live and work locally – two women and four men. They are all active volunteers in their communities (e.g., Service clubs, Curling Club, Unity in Diversity group). Three had retired from 30+ years of working at the Chalk River laboratories. They were identified as interview candidates on the basis of their involvement with local community or service organization and without any prior knowledge of their views, past employment or association with the nuclear industry, or familiarity with the project.

Information about the interviews, including the results are found in Appendix C.

Awareness of the Proposal

The informants' awareness of the proposal covered a broad spectrum from not aware at all to highly aware:

- Self-Assessment of their personal awareness of the proposal was evenly spread from 1 – 9 on a scale 1 signifying low and 10 high. Scores were as follows 1, 2, 4, 4, 6, 9 – an average of 4/10.
- One individual was unaware of the proposal. (This individual could therefore not assess their own support or community awareness and support).

Informants reported that they wanted to know more about the following:

- More on the NSDF plans
- Safety
- Environmental impact
- Decision-making process for determining what kinds of waste would be accepted and how it will be assessed
- How the facility will be safeguarded and managed over the 300-year disposal time
- More assurance that the government is going to back this up
- An update on progress in the EIS process

From the five informants who were aware of the proposal, their average assessment of community awareness was 35%. Their scores were evenly spread from 2 to 6 out of 10.

The reasons given for this medium-to-low level of community awareness were as follows (*some quotes from informants in italics*):

- **Not a common topic of conversation.**
People aren't discussing this much (x 3)
- **People are busy.** *Have seen things in the newspapers but people are probably paying the same attention as I do. Most people are more concerned about more immediate needs (mortgage etc.)*
- **Trust that people who know more about it will attend to it.** *Most people don't know enough to have an opinion even when they hear about it... There is a high degree of reliance on the experts.*

Informants shared that they learned about the proposal through the following mechanisms:

- Facebook
- Newspaper (e.g., local newspaper, Ottawa Citizen)
- Meetings at a hotel (CNL Open House)
- Friends who still work for AECL

They recommended the following means to disseminate information (number of informants who recommended this approach is in brackets):

- Newspaper (6)
- Internet (4)
 - On the CNL website
 - AECL online Alumni network
- Radio or TV spots (3)
- Townhalls (1)
- In-person meetings (1)

Acceptance of the Proposal

Of the five informants who were aware of the proposal, one person supported it; one was equivocal (said he "probably didn't" support it but provided several reasons for support) and three people were opposed.

The person in favour and the person who was equivocal offered the following reasons for their support:

- *I have a certain amount of trust in the process such as AECL and other watchdog organizations*
- *It might be the best way to do this given the budget (if more money we could find a better way)*
- *It is a reasonable approach given the remote location of the site and limited budget – it is acceptable, but not the best*

The reasons given for not supporting the proposal, were as follows:

- **Don't know enough about it**
- **Concern about the NSDF failing**
- **Concern that there won't be enough government oversight** - *After the institutional control is gone, we will have problems ...Long term implications, cost, and difficulty of guaranteeing it.*
- **Concern about the mixing of waste** - *I worked for the labs for 25 years in waste management. One way to avoid danger is by avoiding mixing of radioactive waste and non-radioactive waste. I haven't seen any evidence that they won't be.*

They assessed community support of the proposal with scores from 2 to 7. This results in a weighted average of 4.2/10 assessment of community support or 42% of people who are aware of the proposal.

The reason given by the person who provided the highest level of assessed support (score of 7/10) was as follows:

- *Many work or did work at Chalk River so they have less fear, as they are aware of checks and balances required; the community who knows about it is in support*

The remaining four people provided their reasons for their assessment of lower community support. They said:

- *Not aware of project, but it is very important for communities to be engaged with projects like this. Companies and governments need to be responsible for informing affected people*

- *People feel that it must be dealt with, and trust the experts. However, the letters to the editor are usually better informed and are negative*
- *No clear cut answer. Depends on who you ask. Most of the information in the media tends to be negative or reporting on negative feeling. Most of the people I have talked to about it are active scientists in the Chalk River field and weren't happy about it.*
- *From little heard, people are not in favour*
- *No happiness about this*

It is interesting to note that three of the informants had worked in the nuclear industry for more than thirty years. History of working in the nuclear industry (3 of the informants) ...

- Correlated with higher assessments of community support (4, 6 and 7 on a 10-point scale with 10 as high)
- Did not correlate necessarily with support of the proposal – Of those with this history, one supported the proposal, one was equivocal and one was opposed.
- Did not correlate necessarily with assessing the Chalk River scientists as supportive of the proposal; informants shared these contradictory viewpoints:
 - *Most of the people I have talked to about it are active scientists in the Chalk River field and weren't happy about it;*
 - *(as shared above) Many work, or did work, at Chalk River so they have less fear, as they are aware of checks and balances required; community who knows about it is in support*

4. Recommendations to Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

From the information gathered through a survey, round tables and informant interviews, this study makes the following recommendations:

1. **Undertake more outreach so that more people in the community can become aware of the proposal.** Without increased awareness, meaningful expression of support or opposition to the proposal is not possible. Suggestions made by study participants to improve transparency and trust include:
 - More information on the CNL website as well as through the newspapers, radio and television, town halls and in-person meetings.
 - Open Houses are easiest to access when centrally located – e.g., the Radisson was too far out of town for some, the Civic Centre is recommended by one round table member.
 - Allow time for public response when there are changes in the proposal.
 - Respond to questions throughout the review process, rather than all together one day before the review process ends.

2. **Share more information regarding the proposal and the state of the review process.** Study participants requested more information about ...
 - The plans for the NSDF
 - Assurances/information about safety
 - What waste will be stored in the NSDF
 - Environmental impact on the immediate area and the watershed
 - How the NSDF will be safeguarded for the 300-year disposal time
 - Assurances/evidence that CNL, as a composite of international corporations will have a long-term interest in ensuring environmental and community safety
 - How government oversight will be carried out
 - The timeline of the current EIS process

3. **Establish more meaningful two-way engagement with the community.** There is a perception that CNL is not hearing fully from communities. Some perceive the approach as willingness to provide missing information, but no interest in hearing

community views. Engagement with the community would be more meaningful if it involved more community participation. Collaborative processes are being used in other jurisdictions in which communities are part of the decision-making process. CNL could consider such approaches to move this forward with meaningful input from all stakeholders. For example, the American *Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future* studied several models of community involvement. It concluded:

"... [S]tates, tribes, and affected communities—in order to gain trust and confidence in the decisions taken by the waste management organization—must be empowered to meaningfully participate in the decision-making process. This means being in a position to evaluate options and provide substantive input on technical and operational matters of direct relevance to their concerns and interests."

https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2013/04/f0/brc_finalreport_jan2012.pdf (Page 55)

4. Provide more clarity on the relevance of community awareness and acceptance.

There is confusion in the community about the relevance of public awareness and acceptance of the NSDF facility. For instance, if CNSC determines there is a lack of community awareness or acceptance, will CNSC reject its proposal? Or will it require CNL to change its proposal or conduct more consultation before CNSC makes a decision? In order for the public to know the impact of their engagement, it would be helpful for the meaning of community awareness and acceptance to the decision-making process to be clearly communicated.

5. List of Appendices

A. Community Survey

- a. Survey
- b. Correct responses to Question 4 in relation to survey responses
- c. Survey Results in Excel

B. Round Tables - November 9, 2017

- a. Flyer inviting people to respond to the Survey and attend community round tables
- b. Record of Comments: Pembroke Community Round Table
- c. Record of Comments: Deep River Community Round Table

C. Telephone Informant Interviews

- a. Template for telephone informant interviews
- b. Email sent to telephone informants
- c. Summary of results of the telephone interviews



Christine Peringer

Group Facilitation and Mediation

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Curriculum Vitae

WHAT I OFFER

- ♦ Extensive experience facilitating meetings and other information gathering processes
- ♦ Ability to connect with people and guide them in productive communication of their views
- ♦ Ability to write clear and accurate reports and planning documents
- ♦ Experience and pleasure in facilitating meetings in rural communities

EXPERIENCE

This is a sample of clients for whom I have gathered information using public meetings, focus groups and surveys in the last ten years. References are available for all clients.

Effective, Neutral Public Meeting Facilitation

I facilitate well organized, productive and engaging public meetings that produce the results needed by my clients. Recent examples of such work include:

- *Township of Lanark Highlands, Ontario*
 - > Waste and Water Working Group (Sustainable Community Plan)
 - > Town Hall meeting regarding the village water system
- *Town of Perth, Ontario*
 - > Public sessions involving the public and newly elected town counsellors to gather input on setting strategic priorities for the new council
- *Rideau Community Health Services/LGL Public Health Unit*
 - > Town hall-style meeting to gather public opinion on the potential for local application of the principles and recommendations of the provincial Drummond report

Focus Groups and Survey Design

I design focus groups and surveys to gather stakeholder input on specific topics. I use neutral, engaging questions that elicit the information needed. I lead engaging meetings and prepare reports with a full record of opinions shared and/or a summary by theme. I have led focus groups and designed surveys for many organizations, including:

- *Lanark Renfrew Health & Community Services*
- *Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre*
- *County of Lanark - Housing and Homelessness Plan*
- *Ministry of Community and Social Services, South East Region Office*

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Laws, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University 1985
Bachelor of Arts (English), University of Western Ontario 1980

For more information about my background and approach see www.peringer.ca