



**Written submission from
Victor Fern**

**Mémoire de
Victor Fern**

In the Matter of

À l'égard de

**Request for 2-Year Licence Renewal for
Cameco Corporation's Beaverlodge Project**

**Demande de renouvellement, pour 2 ans, du
permis de Cameco Corporation pour le projet
de Beaverlodge**

Public Hearing - Hearing in writing based on
written submissions

Audience publique - Audience fondée sur des
mémoires

March 2023

Mars 2023

February 9, 2023

Victor Fern
General Delivery
Fond du Lac, SK S0J 0W0

Tribunal Officer, Commission Registry
Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
280 Slater St.
P.O. Box 1046, Station B
Ottawa, ON K1P 5S9

Tribunal Officer:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit an intervention letter in support of Cameco's application for the 24-month renewal of the Beaverlodge Waste Facility Operating Licence.

I grew up in Fond du Lac Denesų́liné First Nation (Fond du Lac), which is in the traditional Treaty 8 territory, I lived on a trapline in my younger days. I was raised by my parents who taught me my Dene culture and traditional ways of how to live off the land. They taught me to respect the environment and the animals because it provides for our family and our people. The environment also connects us with our community and our culture. I am proud of who I am and where I come from.

I spent over 30 years in the mines, with Cameco at the Cigar Lake and Rabbit Lake operations, which are in the traditional Treaty 10 territory. I am a multi generational uranium mining worker. I am proud to have two sons that now work for Cameco at the mines. They balance their work life with their time at home and have the ability to continue living traditional lifestyles. I was able to see firsthand life at an industrial site and the safety culture and environmental protection in place and in practice. I want to encourage the young generation to pursue careers in the industry because this provides an opportunity for long-term employment in the region and possibilities for advancement.

As a previous Chief of Fond du Lac First Nations and currently, the Fond du Lac, northern village of Camsell Portage and the northern village of Uranium City Cameco and Orano community relations liaison, I have had different opportunities to serve my community. When I was the Chief in 2005, I wanted to work with industry. I was Chair of the Ya'thi Néné Board that negotiated the Ya'thi Néné Collaboration Agreement (CA) in 2016. The agreement builds on the Impact Management Agreement (IMA) signed in 1999. The IMA was a step forward on how things should be done with the communities. The CA confirms the partnership between the communities in development of the uranium resources in the Basin.

Cameco has over a 30-year history in the region with its uranium mining and milling operations. During this time, Fond du Lac First Nation and Cameco have a long history of working together. The negotiations and processes under the CA have brought Athabasca Basin leadership closer together and created a way we can work along side our industry partners. The seven Athabasca Basin communities and industry signed the Ya'thi Néné CA.

I have seen the Athabasca Basin communities making the most of the benefits, previously as Chief and currently, as the community relations liaison. The relationship is not always easy, but the intention of the CA is to provide stability and predictability around 4 pillars: workforce development, business development, community investment, and community engagement and environmental stewardship. Some of the benefits I have seen:

- Workforce Development: hiring preference for residents of the Athabasca communities and employment targets. Providing career awareness programs and scholarship funding for residents.
- Business Development: preference for community-owned businesses.
- Community Engagement and Environmental Stewardship: established a process together to engage and inform members. Enhance the community-based environmental monitoring program (CBEMP).
- Community Investment for initiatives that promote the health and well-being of members, address housing needs, preserve language, culture and traditional practices, improving community infrastructure and generate education and economic opportunities for residents.

Since the CA was signed, over \$697million has been provided to the Basin communities under the four pillars.

I have worked for my community as a leader, on boards in support of the region and now, in support of our relationship with industry as a community relations liaison. In my current role, I work closely with community leadership in the Basin and liaise with industry. I also enjoy working with all members of the community, Elders, land and resource users and the youth.

Living a traditional way of life is still important to me. I am teaching my children and my grandchildren how to live off the land. I am teaching them our culture and our language. It is important that the community know it is safe to practice a traditional lifestyle. Lake Athabasca is important to me, my family and my community. We fish and trap along the shoreline of Lake Athabasca. I have spent all my life in the community where I continue to practice a traditional lifestyle. My culture is part of who I am and connects me to the land and to my community. My family continues to thrive on hunting and fishing, we utilize the land and the water almost everyday.

I have learned a lot from my involvement in the Community-Based Environmental Monitoring Program (CBEMP) (previously the Athabasca Working Group environmental monitoring program), which had been conducting monitoring in the region since 2000. I heard presentations from the community representatives as part of leadership or as a community member, and now I work with the traditional land and resource users as part of the 2021 program for Uranium City and Camsell Portage. I conducted interviews and mapped out the areas with the Ya'thi Néné Land

Technician. I have talked a lot with the land and resource users in my Dene language. I have discussed the 2019 CBEMP results with Fond du Lac leadership and community members in that the country foods remain safe; the water remains safe. I feel comfortable with the knowledge that we can continue our traditional way of life and share that information with community members.

The Eastern Athabasca Regional Monitoring Program (EARMP) is also another great program for our region that speaks to environmental monitoring that was completed by, or with, community members. In 2022, the program celebrated its 10th year anniversary, which provided an opportunity to talk about the positive findings of environmental monitoring over the past decade in a summary report. It is important for the people to feel confident that the traditional foods and water is safe.

I have seen a lot of activity on the decommissioned Beaverlodge properties over the years. Cameco hosted remedial options workshops in 2009 and 2012, I attended as Fond du Lac's Northern Saskatchewan Environmental Quality Committee appointed representative, as did many other northern residents with various representation throughout the region and in the Basin. Participation in the workshops was as important to me then as it is now because I am from the north and it matters to me what happens here. We were engaged in this process, which gave me confidence and builds trust between the communities and industry. We were able to use our own set of values and judgements to understand the information in order to provide feedback to Cameco about what we felt could be done to prepare the properties, it was not just industry making the decisions in preparing these properties into the Intuitive Control (IC) program.

I have seen Cameco's commitment to its engagement with the north, to provide annual opportunities for those interested to get updates on what's going on and what's planned for the properties. I have attended those meetings in Uranium City and virtually as a representative for my community and industry. We had opportunities to raise questions and have our concerns addressed. I did not feel that it has been one sided. I was able to walk the land and see firsthand the conditions of the properties. I saw action from industry from what was said by representatives like the Zora Creek diversion or Cameco's Moose study that I participated in, which found that moose from the area were safe to eat.

I believe the upcoming renewal shows Cameco's commitment to keeping people informed and an opportunity for engagement on the long-term monitoring plan that will be implemented upon final release of the decommissioned Beaverlodge properties. I do believe this licence renewal will allow time for engagement to occur with those interested.

It has been a long road since the remedial workshops – there have been many meetings and I have seen various community representatives and organizations participate throughout the years. As Indigenous people, we need wild food in our diet and in our bodies. When the mines are done, we need to know that the food around all the areas is safe for traditional use. It is important to the north that the IC program provides assurances that these properties will continue to be monitored and maintained properly and never be forgotten in the future. It gives me comfort to know that the monitoring on these properties will continue for future generations.

I support Cameco's application to renew the Beaverlodge Waste Facility Operating Licence for a 24-month period to provide Cameco time to complete the regulatory process and engagement

associated with the final release of the decommissioned Beaverlodge properties from CNSC licensing.

Marsi,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Fern", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Victor Fern