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**Written Submission from
Paul Haynes of the Clearwater
River Dene School**

**Mémoire de
Paul Haynes de l'école Clearwater
River Dene**

In the matter of

À l'égard de

NexGen Energy Ltd.

License application to prepare a site for
and construct its Rook I uranium mine and
mill project

NexGen Energy Ltd.

Demande de permis concernant la
préparation de l'emplacement et la
construction de son projet de mine et
d'usine de concentration d'uranium Rook I

Commission Public Hearing

Audience publique de la Commission

February 2026

Février 2026

Dear Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission,

I am writing this letter in regards to the proposed Rook 1 uranium mine to be operated by NexGen Energy. This letter is intended to explain my support for the potential mine site and its importance to the community of Clearwater River. Through this letter I hope to share with you some of my observations, experiences, and opinions about these interactions with NexGen.

My name is Paul Haynes. I have been a teacher at Clearwater River Dene School for the past 25 years. I am a land user. I trap, hunt, fish, and gather from the land. Myself, like others living here, depend on the land and water to help sustain my family. I am a land-based educator who teaches these practices, amongst others, within our school. As such, I have had many unique opportunities to work with our students in meaningful ways. Experiences that connect their mental and physical health with the natural world around them. Experiences that blend concepts of their traditional and cultural heritage with the knowledge of what science tells us. I hope you will take note as you read on, of the ways that we have combined these teachings through our collaborations with NexGen.

To begin, and in the spirit of full transparency, I would like to share some information that is quite close to home for me. Literally. My daughter, Ava Haynes, has had many positive relations with NexGen. Please allow me to detail some of them. As a high school student, Ava spent a lot of time researching cyanobacteria in northern Saskatchewan. This took her to first place finishes at the Provincial level science fairs and a few trips to the Canada Wide National Science fair where she has placed twice. During these years of Ava's research, NexGen offered their support by showing up at our school science fair, witnessing the school projects, offering advice and actually taking the time to visit Ava at the Provincial science fair in Saskatoon. Particularly valuable was when NexGen's Environmental lead, Alyse Swerhorne (who has a background in cyanobacteria) shared her ideas with Ava.

This is only the beginning of Ava's ongoing journey with NexGen. Ava was also a part of the NexGen seed collection and tree planting initiative to help with reclamation work. Ava spent two summers as a high school student working for NexGen in their summer student work program. During these employment opportunities NexGen provided Ava a real world work experiences in various departments on site. She loved it. She learned a lot. We are both thankful to NexGen for this.

As Ava entered her first year of university she was awarded NexGen's \$10,000 scholarship. Then, she was once again awarded the NexGen scholarship for her second year in university. These scholarships are providing for a student, who is autistic, to pursue her academic dreams. These scholarships enable Ava to focus on her education free from some of the financial stresses that face many students.

As Ava aged out of the summer student program this past summer, she applied to be one of the mentor's for the program. She was not hired for those mentor positions. A week or so later, Ava received a phone call from NexGen HR in Vancouver. Based on support from the NexGen Engagement team and Alyse, Ava was being offered a job that she didn't even know existed, nor had she applied for! To me that said a lot. A company, such as NexGen, reaching out to a teenage girl and offering her a job based on their positive interactions with her.

As a land based educator, I work with a full-time team of six people, all from CRDN. Our team is comprised of two teachers, two Elders, and two assistants. Our Students Of The Land Program aims to work with students to help prepare them for their future. We believe in teaching our students about the importance of a hard work ethic, being on time, being a team worker, and being problem solvers. We lead the students through activities that utilize cultural/traditional practices and the natural/scientific world around them. These teachings focus on their mental and physical development. The ultimate goal is to help students find themselves, their strengths, and how to pursue their dreams in the future.

Our goals as a Students Of The Land Program and how it relates to NexGen is twofold. First, is to collaborate with NexGen to help our students gain work experience and an understanding of the job opportunities that will need to be filled by the potential mine site. As well as any necessary education they need to attain those careers. Second, is to be directly involved with environmental monitoring and reclamation work. We believe that working together with NexGen in these two capacities is crucial to a mutually respectful and beneficial future. We believe that this collaboration to date, has accomplished these two goals as detailed below.

NexGen, as stated, operates their summer student program providing employment opportunities to approximately 15 kids each season. However, they also provide our students another important opportunity in the form of the “seed collection” program. This initiative covers both of our goals for our Students Of The Land. In this land reclamation project, the students work with NexGen’s team closely. They learn from our Elders in conjunction with the scientists. Each autumn the students learn about and collect seeds from jack pine, spruce, birch, and alder trees. They also collect seeds for bearberry, blueberry, and cranberry plants. Thousands upon thousands of seeds are gathered. These seeds are sent off to a nursery to germinate and grow into seedlings. Each spring students then head back to the surrounding NexGen area to tree plant. What a rewarding project! Students wake at 5:00, breakfast at 5:30. Safety meeting. Off to work at 7:00. Work all day in adverse weather conditions. Back to site for the evening to see what camp life is like. Visit and talk with other “local” people already employed at NexGen (very important interactions). Never had a student late for work! They want to work! They want to be at NexGen. Only ever had one student decide that camp life is something that wasn’t for them. But, that experience helped steer their post secondary decisions. That’s good. That’s the point. That NexGen is providing the chance for these students to shape their own futures.

This powerful learning opportunity also helps us to teach our students about their environment and the importance of their role in preserving it. These students understand that this is a potential mine site. They understand how a future mine will impact the local environment. Most importantly, they understand the significance of their roles as Students of the Land. They are able to walk away after each seed collection or planting session with immense pride in the work they are a part of. They understand that the role they play now has a direct impact on the future. We hope they have learned that their continued input towards the environmental oversight of any future mine is critical to the transparent relationship between NexGen and the community of CRDN.

I believe that the collaborations between NexGen and CRDS in the last few years has opened eyes so to speak. Seeds have been planted not only in the ground. I see the positive interactions between our students and NexGens employees providing our kids with hope. The hope of jobs. The hope of jobs that are in their own backyard. This is new. I have never witnessed so many kids wanting to graduate and go to post secondary training. I have never heard so many kids making plans for their future. Talking about working for NexGen.

Sincerely,

Paul Haynes
Land Based Learning Instructor
Clearwater River Dene School