



Oral presentation

Exposé oral

**Written submission from
Victor Fern**

**Mémoire de
Victor Fern**

In the Matter of the

À l'égard de

Cameco Corporation, Beaverlodge Project

Cameco Corporation, Projet Beaverlodge

**Application to amend its licence to allow
release of 18 Beaverlodge Project
properties from CNSC licensing**

**Demande de modification du permis de
Cameco visant à retirer 18 propriétés du
projet Beaverlodge du contrôle de la CCSN**

Commission Public Hearing

Audience publique de la Commission

March 24, 2022

24 mars 2022

February 2, 2022

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

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

Senior Tribunal Officer:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit an intervention letter in support of Cameco's application to amend the Beaverlodge licence in order to release these 18 decommissioned properties from licensing into the Institutional Control (IC) program.

I grew up in Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation (Fond du Lac) on a trapline. I was raised by my parents who taught me my Dene culture and how to live off the land. They taught me to respect the environment 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 30 years with Cameco at the Cigar Lake and Rabbit Lake operations, which are located 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. We have all balanced our work life with our time at home, the ability to continue living traditional lifestyles while providing for our families. When at the mines, 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 while staying part of our community.

I was a previous Chief of Fond du Lac and am currently the Fond du Lac, northern settlement of Camsell Portage (Camsell Portage) and the northern settlement of Uranium City (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) that was signed by the Basin communities in 2016. This agreement builds on the Impact Management Agreement signed in 1999. I believe 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 40-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, created a way we can work alongside 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, \$697 million has been provided to the Basin communities under these 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. We tell stories of the past and also talk about the future.

Living a traditional way of life is 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. In our culture we respect our Elders. Elders are the people you need to listen to. They know the land because they have lived off the land.

Elder Martin has always been an important leader in our community. He has always been involved, as a former Chief and now as a land and resource user. Elder Martin is also familiar with the monitoring programs in the region, he has worked for a number of years with CanNorth, an Indigenous owned company from northern Saskatchewan. He is passionate about ensuring the environment is protected. His son has learned from him and has taken over the sample collection for the community. The Elder has told me he knows firsthand that the country foods are safe to eat and the water safe to drink.

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic we hunted to provide for ourselves and shared with those that were unable. 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, every day we use the land and the water.

I have learned a lot from my involvement in the Community-Based Environmental Monitoring Program (previously the Athabasca Working Group environmental monitoring program), which had been conducting monitoring in the region since 2000. I worked with the traditional land and resource users, I received training. Part of the 2021 program for Uranium City and Camsell Portage was to include a more inclusive role for Ya'thi Néné Lands and Resource Office that provides technical support to the community engagement and environmental stewardship subcommittee under the agreement. Under this program, I conducted interviews and mapped out the areas with the Ya'thi Néné Land Technician.

I have also 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.

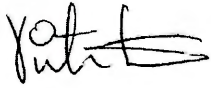
Cameco hosted a couple remedial options workshops for the decommissioned Beaverlodge properties. I attended these as the Fond du Lac's Northern Saskatchewan Environmental Quality Committee appointed representative, as did many other northern residents with various representation throughout the region. Participating was important to me because various stakeholders came together and were engaged, it was not just industry making the decisions in preparing these properties into the IC program. The process gave me confidence because of the way information was provided, we were able to use our own set of values and judgements to make decisions of that information. We had opportunities to raise questions and have our concerns addressed. It was not one sided. I believe this shows Cameco's commitment to keeping those interested engaged and provided meaningful participation on the path-forward.

Cameco's annual public meetings provide opportunities for those interested to get updates on what is going on and what is planned for the decommissioned properties. I have attended those meetings in Uranium City and virtually. I was able to walk the land and see firsthand the conditions of the properties. Cameco adapting to the pandemic provided a virtual tour to help those connect with the properties and not only rely on an in-person tour. It was good to see areas I would not have had the ability due to limited access.

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 are decommissioned properly and will 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 amend the Beaverlodge licence in order to release these decommissioned properties from licensing into the IC program.

Marsi,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Fern". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "V" and "F".

Victor Fern