

SAUGEEN OJIBWAY NATION

Deep Geologic Repository Update



MAY 2015

Frequently Asked Questions about the Joint Review Panel Report

On May 6, 2015 the Joint Review Panel (JRP) released their report about the proposed Deep Geologic Repository (DGR) Project at the Bruce Nuclear site.

The JRP report may have caused some concerns. This update answers some questions about the JRP report, the DGR project, next steps, and how and when the SON Communities (Chippewas of Nawash First Nation and Saugeen First Nation) will have their say on whether the DGR Project can go ahead.

Q. What is this all about?

A. The Ontario Power Generation (OPG) has made a plan to build a large underground facility at the Bruce Nuclear site to permanently dispose of nuclear waste. They call this project the Deep Geologic Repository or the DGR.

The waste they plan to put in the DGR is called low and intermediate level nuclear waste. This is waste with lower levels of radioactivity than used fuel, but that still needs to be dealt with in the safest possible way.

Most of the waste that would be placed in the DGR is already stored at the Bruce Nuclear site.

Q. Is this about High Level Nuclear Waste?

A. No. The DGR would not store high-level (used or spent fuel) nuclear waste.

There is another project being planned for the disposal of high-level nuclear waste. That plan is being run by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization.

Q. What is the Joint Review Panel?

A. Any project like the DGR has to go through an environmental assessment. It determines if there will be any damage or risk to the environment.

The Joint Review Panel or JRP is a panel of three members set up by Canada to carry out the environmental assessment. The JRP held hearings in Kincardine and Port Elgin in 2013 and 2014.

SON was heavily involved in the hearings. Statements were provided to ensure our nation's inherent right to decision-making over such projects in SON Territory are respected.

On May 6, the JRP delivered its report.

Q. What did the JRP Report say?

A. The report says that the DGR project is not likely to cause environmental harm if necessary precautions are taken and if OPG follows through with all of its commitments and other conditions. It recommends that the project go ahead.

The report also sets out some specific conditions to be met and steps to be followed. Many of these are to make sure the DGR project is built safely.

Q. Is the JRP Report the final word on the DGR?

A. NO. The JRP does not make any final decisions. It can only make recommendations to Canada's Minister of the Environment on whether the project is likely to cause harm to the environment.

The Minister must now decide whether to give approval for the project. Before that, the Minister must fulfil their constitutional obligations to SON to make sure all of our interests are understood and any concerns are dealt with appropriately.

Even if the Minister gives approval, this is NOT the final word on the DGR. In a letter from August 2013, OPG committed to SON that it will not build the DGR without the support of the SON communities. OPG has stood by this commitment.

Q. Does the JRP Report even matter?

A. Even though the DGR will not be built unless the SON communities give it the go ahead, the JRP Report is important.

The JRP Report gives us a lot of very good technical and scientific data about the DGR project. This can help the SON communities understand the project better so that we can make our own informed decisions about it.

The JRP Report also makes some statements that could be a problem for SON. SON Political Leadership and its technical, scientific, and legal advisors are now going through the JRP report very carefully to provide a response. The communities will be updated with concerns identified.

Q. What happens next with the JRP Report?

A. Canada's Minister of the Environment now has 120 days to decide:

- whether to accept the recommendations of the JRP report
- whether other conditions are required and
- whether to give approval for the project.

The Minister must fulfil Canada's constitutional obligations to SON to consult and accommodate before making any decisions on the project.

Q. If the Minister gives approval will the DGR go ahead?

A. No. If the Minister decides to approve the project the next step would be another round of hearings to deal with all conditions and technical approvals. The Minister's decision is not the final decision.

Q. Who makes the final decision about the DGR?

A. OPG HAS COMMITTED THAT THEY WILL NOT BUILD THE DGR WITHOUT SUPPORT OF THE SON. THE FINAL DECISION ON WHETHER THE DGR PROJECT GETS BUILT OR NOT RESTS WITH THE SON COMMUNITIES.

Q. What are the OPG's commitments to SON?

A. The OPG has made two important commitments to us:

- OPG will not build the DGR Project without the support of the SON communities.
- OPG will deal with the long-standing list of concerns and fears we have about the nuclear industry's operations within SON Territory.

OPG President and CEO, Tom Mitchell, will be visiting our Territory in the coming weeks to reaffirm these commitments. Plans for this event will be sent out soon.

Q. How will the SON Communities and OPG decide on the DGR?

A. SON has been working with OPG on a process to deal with the question of whether the DGR project should go ahead.

SON Political Leadership have stated clearly that this must be a community-driven process and that the SON communities must make our own decision. OPG fully understands and supports this approach.

The process undertaken by SON Political Leadership with OPG is the way for the SON communities to chart the path forward. It allows the communities to:

- identify concerns for SON Political Leadership to bring forward;
- deal with nuclear waste issues in the safest and best possible way and
- make informed and collective decisions that will be respected.

Q. Why are we going through this process with OPG?

A. SON achieved a historical victory when OPG made its commitments to SON. SON now has a real say in how nuclear issues in SON Territory will be dealt with. We now have the space to make our own decisions and shape our own future.

SON is committed to this process so that our communities can make fully informed decisions about the DGR and the nuclear waste issues. We all have an important role to play in this.

Q. When will the communities have their say?

A: Through the community process community members will be invited to raise concerns and provide input. Community input is needed on how we're going to make the final decisions.

Planning for this is underway. Information will be sent out soon.

Q. Isn't it better to just say 'no' today?

A. It is not as simple as just saying no to the DGR Project.

With or without the DGR, the nuclear waste problems in SON Territory will not go away. 50 years of nuclear waste is already stored at the Bruce Nuclear site. More is coming in every day.

The way waste is stored now is not a permanent solution. It is not the best and safest possible way. Something needs to be done. We must have a better and safer solution.

As Stewards of Our Territory, Saukiing Anishnaabekiing, it is our role to assert our inherent right to self-determination for the health and well-being of our communities and for the land and the waters within our territory. It is up to all of us to decide how this can best be done so that our future is protected for generations to come.

**Saugeen Ojibway
Nation
Environment Office**

Our mission statement is to provide the infrastructure and expertise for environmental matters that affect the interests of the Saugeen Ojibway Nations and, in doing so, assist the SON Joint Council to assert First Nation jurisdiction over the environment of SON Traditional Territory.

Joint Council

The SON Joint Council is collectively the Chiefs and Council Members of the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation and the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation.

The SON Joint Council is further divided into many sub-committees that deal with various issues and proponents whose operations stand to impact SON rights and interests within SON Traditional Territory.

Members of the Negotiating Team

Randall Kahgee, Lead Negotiator
Paul Jones, Councillor for Chippewas of Nawash First Nation
Greg Nadjiwon, Councillor for Chippewas of Nawash First Nation
Randy Roote, Councillor for Saugeen First Nation
Sonya Roote, Councillor for Saugeen First Nation

**The Negotiating Team is pleased to hear from you
and is holding *Come-and-Go Tea*:**

**Wednesday June 10 from 6 pm to 8 pm in the
Chippewas of Nawash Council Chambers**

**Wednesday June 17 from 6 pm to 8 pm in the
Saugeen Council Chambers**

Please join us!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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