

SAUGEEN OJIBWAY NATION COMMUNITY NEWS RELEASE

Minister announces delay of decision on environmental assessment of the DGR until further information is provided to address outstanding issues. The delay will give our nation more opportunity to deal with serious concerns we have before our communities decide on the future of the nuclear waste in our Territory.

On February 18, 2016, the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change (the “Minister”) announced that she would delay the decision on the environmental assessment for the DGR Project until more information is provided by OPG on key issues, including information on alternative sites for the DGR and the possibility that a used fuel repository could be located in SON Territory. The Joint Chiefs and Councils appreciate the questions raised by the Minister and welcome this as an opportunity to continue to allow the SON Communities to understand the issues, address community concerns, and ultimately to make informed decisions about the future of the nuclear waste in Anishnaabekiing.

In 2013 and 2014 a Joint Review Panel (the “Panel”) held 33 days of hearings as part of the environmental assessment of OPG’s DGR Project. The SON was a key participant in those hearings and many community members were in attendance. The SON made significant written and oral submissions, seriously questioned the presentations of the proponent and government and has consistently pressed upon these key points: 1) That any DGR Project for radioactive waste and used fuel in the Territory cannot happen without consent from the SON communities; 2) The long-standing impacts from nuclear power production on our communities and our Territory must be addressed.

In May 2015, the Panel’s report was completed and it recommended that the environmental assessment of the DGR Project should be approved by the Minister. SON was very concerned that the Panel, in their report, connected this DGR project to the used fuel repository and failed to adequately acknowledge the SON as decision-maker in the Territory. SON Joint Chiefs and Council Members met with the Minister earlier this month to raise these critical concerns.

“We believe the Minister has heard our concerns regarding the DGR Project and the Panel’s Report. All the key players will need to get this process on the right track,” said Chief Greg Nadjiwon, Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. “It is our right as a Nation to decide what goes on in our own Territory. We look forward to meeting with the Minister again and with OPG to explore next steps,” said Chief Vernon Roote, Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation.

The extension of the deadline for the decision provides the SON further opportunity to engage with OPG and the Crown to address our concerns and interests regarding the DGR Project and our overarching nuclear power, waste and legacy issues. **Although the Minister has delayed her decision on the environmental assessment it is important to note that ultimately, it is the SON and OPG that will make that decision as to whether the DGR Project will be built.**

Stay tuned for another update and information on our Community Process.