

# Ignace Township Update on Willingness



## Our Future Decision

For many years, Ignace, along with Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation, has been involved with learning about and exploring the potential in hosting the Adaptive Phased Management (APM) project. This project involves a deep geological repository (DGR) for Canada's used nuclear fuel as well as the Centre of Expertise. We were the first of 22 communities in expressing interest to the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) with regards to being part of the siting process and exploring whether the area would be suitable. After many years of social and technical studies conducted by NWMO, two areas have been identified with strong potential that meet the requirements of the project: Township of Ignace and Municipality of South Bruce both located in the Province of Ontario.

As part of the siting process, our community will need to let NWMO know in 2023 if we are willing to see the project implemented in our area. Before making this decision, we will have more information about the project from many technical and social studies that are currently underway with respect to social, economic, and environmental considerations. It is important to our community that we remain informed so that we can weigh all of these considerations when determining if the project can and should be sited in this area. Foremost, safety must be demonstrated at the site. The project will only proceed with the involvement of First Nation and Métis communities in the area and surrounding communities along with Ignace. We must all work together to implement the project. Regulatory and licensing requirements will also need to be met.

## Community Conversations

Over the last six months, our community has been talking about the process that we would like to implement throughout the next two years to help us make our decision in 2023. As a result of our community outreach process, over 1,000 respondents - representing all ages and sectors - were reached whether it was through community group meetings, social media, pop-ups, a survey on the Ignace website, and/or one-on-one discussions. Information was also sent to each household throughout this time including an invitation to join our community conversations. In addition, 166 people provided formal written comments. Hardy Stevenson, an independent consultant, was retained by the Township of Ignace to help facilitate the community engagement process as well as prepare a report and share its findings with the Ignace Community Nuclear Liaison Committee (ICNLC), Ignace residents for feedback and then Town Council for deliberation and resolution.

## What Ignace Residents Have Said

When it comes time to make the decision, Ignace wants a process that is fair, transparent, balanced, confidential, and inclusive. Rather than just one way, we want to have multiple ways so that we can demonstrate whether we are willing or not in supporting the DGR project. To achieve fairness, we like the idea of an extended decision-making process that would allow seasonal residents and workers who live in Ignace and travel outside to work to participate. More importantly, the decision process must allow residents to consider, discuss, and weigh options in a manner that is characteristic of "deliberative democracy".

To inform our decision, we want to receive information through newsletters and letter mail-outs to all community members. Face-to-face open houses and door-to-door campaigns are also desirable. Our community would then be asked to decide. A third party could help collate the responses in a transparent manner and present them to the ICNLC. The ICNLC would then share the results to the public and facilitate further comments. Following a period of reflection and comment, the ICNLC would present the results to the Township of Ignace Mayor and Council for a final community decision through a Council resolution. Public input is, therefore, central and vital to this process.

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## Questions and Answers

### **Why wasn't a referendum given as an option on the Ignace community survey?**

If we decide that we want to pursue this project, we need to show the NWMO that we are “informed and willing”. A referendum cannot determine whether someone is informed. Community members were also encouraged to suggest new and different ways to determine willingness as well as multiple opportunities in the comment form to suggest different approaches be used, including a referendum. No one suggested it during our community outreach events whereas two of the 166 people who commented in our formal survey indicated that Ignace should hold a referendum.

### **What does Ignace think is the best democratic way to assess willingness?**

The process the community wants us to implement in determining willingness is characteristic of “deliberative democracy”. Decisions are best reached through public deliberation – argument, debate, exchange of ideas – among citizens. Residents have been given many opportunities to provide comment on this project through surveys, discussions, and one-on-one meetings. The expectation is that not every person would participate actively and extensively. Rather, deliberative democracy envisions public forums where residents are offered equal access and opportunities to participate. In so doing, their voices are heard and better understood. This method puts an emphasis on reasonableness, on civic-mindedness over pure self-interest, on the equality of citizens, and on legitimation of public policy decisions.

### **Why weren't other communities involved in the survey in determining Ignace's willingness decision process?**

Ignace started the exploration of the project in 2011 being one of 22 communities across Canada that initially expressed interest for the DGR project. As part of the NWMO siting process, Ignace will need to demonstrate willingness. NWMO is also working with Dryden and other communities in our region to support learning about the project; to understand their perspectives and concerns; and to explore whether broader regional support for the project can be developed.

### **You only heard from 166 people, out of a community of 1,200 people, how can you conclude that you had a representative sample of comments?**

The 166 individuals who did provide formal comments represent a broad cross-section of the community (for example age, gender, race, ethnicity, and labour status). This number of respondents is well within the range for the number of participants that the Township of Ignace engages with for important public policy matters. Through our various community engagement activities, we have reached over 1,000 respondents informing and providing them with multiple opportunities to comment. Every household in our community received information about the dialogue. Community members had been either briefed on or had discussions about the project through various meetings, pop-ups, and one-on-one discussions over a six-month period (i.e. late Spring, Summer, and early Fall 2021). In addition, the Township, ICNLC, and NWMO has been involved in many opportunities relating to outreach, engagement, and mutual-learning since the inception of this project proposal – over a decade in the making.

If you would like to share information with the Township of Ignace about the Willingness project or have any additional thoughts or feedback, please contact Petrina or Leisel by December 10, 2021:

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