

Keeping you connected to the DGR



Marie Wilson

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), on behalf of Ontario Power Generation (OPG), recently hosted open houses in seven different area municipalities to share the preliminary results of the environmental assessment (EA) for OPG's Deep Geologic Repository (DGR) for low and intermediate level nuclear waste (L&ILW) with the public. The open houses were well advertised by both print and broadcast media throughout Bruce County with some overlap into Grey County. About 75 people attended the open houses, which although not exceptionally high in attendance, remain an important venue. Many of those who attend open houses enjoy face to face discussions with staff members, and are able to spend considerable time in discussions about various aspects of OPG's proposed DGR for L&ILW. And it should be noted, open houses provide different opportunities for different people.

For some, it's an opportunity to find out what's new. "What can you tell me that is different from last year", is a common refrain. These are the people who were most interested in the preliminary results of the EA – they had substantial knowledge about the project and regulatory approvals process and were mainly interested in whether the preliminary results of the EA assessed any significant residual effects on the environment. Although some residual effects have been assessed, none are deemed to be significant. (For more detailed information

about the preliminary results of the EA, please view the September 2010 newsletter at www.nwmo.ca/dgr.)

For some, the open houses provided an opportunity where specific concerns were discussed and allayed such as "How will you protect the water quality of the great lakes and groundwater" and "Will the DGR accommodate used fuel/high level waste". The results of the four-year geoscientific site characterization of the geology that lies beneath the Bruce nuclear site provides strong evidence for the DGR safety case in that the attributes of the geology will safely isolate and contain the low and intermediate level waste (see the September 2010 newsletter for more details). The answer to whether used fuel will be accommodated in OPG's proposed DGR for L&ILW is a resounding "No" because:

- The DGR hosting agreement between the Municipality of Kincardine and OPG is for the management of low and intermediate level waste from OPG-owned and operated facilities;

- OPG's Environmental Impact Statement and license application are for low and intermediate level waste;

- The engineering/design of the proposed DGR is for low and intermediate level waste; and

- A completely separate and distinct approach has been mandated by the federal government for all of Canada's used fuel. NWMO has initiated a siting process which, over the next two years, invites communities who are interested in hosting a repository for used fuel to participate in the process.

And getting back to opportunities, for the first time ever, a DGR open house was also used as an opportunity to teach students about nuclear waste and the regulatory approvals process, which governs nuclear projects such as the DGR.

Grade 9 Christian School teacher Anthony Horst, from the Harriston area, brought five of his students to the Kincardine open house on September 29 to participate in the engagement opportunity. Students viewed a series of panels depicting key information about the DGR Project and the preliminary EA results, examined core samples taken from beneath the Bruce nuclear site and engaged in discussions with NWMO staff – talk about a hands-on learning experience. At the end of their visit, Mr. Horst expressed his appreciation of the open house, which he



Teacher Anthony Horst used the DGR open house in Kincardine as a classroom for both himself and his Grade 9 students.

said was both informative and helpful for himself and his students.

Of course, the open houses also provided an opportunity for those who expressed significant concerns, and rightly so – the public consultation process is meant to be inclusive and encourages comments and participation from all; however, it should be noted the DGR does have strong local support from across Bruce County, which was evident from the majority of comments made by participants at the open houses.

In other news, Bruce County Warden Mike Smith was honoured, along with many past wardens, at the annual Bruce County Warden's Banquet held in Port Elgin on October 16. Congratulations to Mike on his past year of service in this important position.