

CNL's Proposal for WR1

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During my eight years as Mayor of Pinawa (November '98 to October '06) most of our efforts were focussed on getting a proper decommissioning plan for the WL plant site. AECL's original intention was to monitor the site in what they called safe storage, and leave the expenses of decommissioning for future generations. We visited the UKAEA sites at Harwell, Winfrith and Sellafield to see for ourselves what decommissioning really meant. At Harwell they referred to the AECL plan as leaving a man and a dog to guard the closed site. This was followed by visits to Minister Goodale (Natural Resources Canada), subsequent Liberal Ministers, meetings with senior officials of NR Canada and speaking at CNSC hearings. The latter hearing also included a presentation from a deputy Minister of the Manitoba Legislature. Finally, AECL was convinced to produce a proper plan to remove all high level and intermediate level waste from the site and, with the help of Minister Vic Toews of the newly elected Conservative government, funding was committed for the project which is now well underway.

It is worrisome that the plan is to be altered as described in the CNL proposal with little or no R&D to support the change. The original plan was supported by nearly one billion dollars of research, reviewed by several independent panels and is now approved by parliament.

It is also worrisome that none of the senior members of the AECL Waste Management Program who are enjoying their retirement in Pinawa were consulted in the preparation of the proposal. The general level of community consultation of the CNL activities has been abysmal in spite of the fact that this is where we live and are expected to support an entombed site under institutional control effectively for ever.

The proposal to entomb WR 1, if approved, would set a dangerous precedent for future reactor decommissioning such as NPD, Douglas Point and our utility-owned reactors. I understand that this concept is already proposed for NPD. While I don't support this, the difference is that NPD is under control of Chalk River Labs and institutional control will be relatively easy to deal with. It is almost unheard of to entomb a large reactor core in this industry, at least in OECD countries.

I expect that AECL has instigated this proposal as it is consistent with their early attempts not to decommission at all and spend as little money now with future generations holding the bag.