

PNCS Community Advisory Council
Pickering Nuclear Information Centre
Tuesday, January 23, 2024
Highlights

Site Update

Riedewaan Bakardien presented an update on the operating status of the six Pickering Nuclear reactors, the shutdown of Units 1 and 4 later this year, and the especially high productivity of the plant during 2023.

PNCS Licensing Update

Soo Chae presented a licensing update for Pickering Nuclear. She noted that OPG submitted an application to the CNSC last June to operate Pickering Units 5, 6, 7, and 8 to 2026. The Commission will hold a public hearing on the application in June of this year. It was agreed that the CAC will intervene in the hearing and several members will present the Council comments in person.

The Pickering Nuclear Emergency Response Plan

Scott Preston talked about Enterprise Emergency Management (EEM) at OPG and its implementation at Pickering Nuclear. He reviewed EEM highlights of 2023 and priorities for 2024. CAC members talked about evacuation challenges due to the growth of Pickering along Hwy 401 and emphasized the importance of publicizing OPG's program of emergency preparedness.

Community Update / Public Affairs

Analiene St. Aubin talked about recent and forthcoming OPG activities in the community. Secondary school nuclear education day at the Pickering site; Pickering Nuclear hosting Winter Wonders, with bird watching and other community events; the station hosting public information sessions in February; and other activities.

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CAC:

Craig Bamford
Pamela (Pam) Collins
Nicholas (Nick) Fontana
Bill Houston
Tim Kellar
Pat Mattson
Sean McCullough
Cody Morrison
Tavis Nimmo
Peter Ottensmeyer
Eric (Zhen) Qin
Dan Shire
John Simpson
Nicholas (Nick) West

Regrets:

Samira D'Souza
Frank Dempsey
Mary Gawen
Tracy MacCharles
Robert Rock
Helen Shamsipour

OPG:

Craig Axler
Riedewaan Bakardien
Soo Chae
Jon Franke
Christine John
Marilena Michienzi
Scott Preston
Analiese St. Aubin
Barbara Stavropoulos

Hardy Stevenson and Associates:

Francis Gillis
Dave Hardy

Topic #1: Introductions

Jon Franke stepped into the meeting to announce that he is moving to a new position: Senior Vice President for the Darlington New Nuclear Project. He thanked CAC members for their participation over the past several years and introduced Riedewaan Bakardien as the new Senior Vice President at Pickering Nuclear.

CAC Facilitator Dave Hardy introduced new Council member Nick Fontana, who is replacing Rishida Peterson as the Lakeridge Health representative.

Topic #2: Health and Safety Moment

Following a Land Acknowledgment, Riedewaan talked about staff support services at OPG for managing mental health issues, in particular during the month of January with its short days and long cold nights. For workers everywhere, he remarked, it's important it get a good night's sleep, to take lunch and other breaks, and to seek professional help when needed.

Regarding January weather, he cautioned that paths can be slippery and urged CAC members to take care when leaving the building.

Topic #3: Review of Minutes

The CAC minutes from Nov. 21, 2023 were approved without changes.

Topic #4: Media Matters

Council Facilitator Dave Hardy noted that an article on the issue of Pickering Nuclear refurbishment of Units 5 to 8 recently appeared in The Globe and Mail. A CAC member remarked that the article raised an important question: Is the investment worth it? The member indicated that it might well be worth it, but the question should be explored.

As well, an article by Council member Peter Ottensmeyer on the opportunity to recycle nuclear fuel appeared in The Toronto Star.

Both of these articles were forwarded to CAC members.

Dave noted that Peter was also interviewed by radio host Ben Mulroney.

A CAC member remarked that, with the disappearance of many print outlets (e.g. the recent bankruptcy of Metroland Media Group), it's more important than ever that OPG

continue to monitor social media. He mentioned Facebook as a “dangerous weapon” in terms of misleading content.

Dave also noted that the CAC asked for OPG to share information on Facebook.

Topic #5: Site Update

Riedewaan Bakardien, Senior Vice President, presented a site update:

- Units 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8 are operating at or close to full power. A planned outage of Unit 7 began earlier this month and is expected to be completed in May.
- Units 1 and 4 are being prepared for safe storage. Unit 1 will be shut down during the third quarter of this year, and Unit 4 during the fourth quarter. By 2025 these units will be defueled and dewatered. They will also be isolated from the rest of the plant.
- 2023 was a very productive year for Pickering Nuclear. The plant achieved its highest power output since 2019 and the second highest output in the history of the six-unit station. The plant normally provides electricity for 1.5 million homes and businesses. In 2023, Pickering produced enough power for over two million homes. All of which is a testimony to the hard work of plant employees, 24/7 365 days a year.
- Pickering continues to replace the power not being produced by Darlington and Bruce Power during partial shutdowns during their refurbishment projects.

Riedewaan responded to Council questions:

- *Given the pressure of building development at the south end of Liverpool Road, and units being placed in safe storage, are the boundaries of the site exclusion zone going to change?*
No, there are no plans to change the exclusion zone.
- *As a community person, I'm glad to hear that.*
- *You'll want to maintain that zone in case there is SMR development at Pickering in the future.*
- *What agency regulates exclusion zone issues.*
The key body would be the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC).
- *Is CANDU expertise saleable to other countries?*
Yes. CANDU refurbishment expertise is being sold.

Topic #6: PNGS Licensing Update

Soo Chae, Senior Manager Pickering Regulatory Affairs, presented a licensing update for Pickering Nuclear (Appendix 1).

Soo noted that OPG submitted an application to the CNSC last June to operate Pickering Units 5, 6, 7, and 8 to 2026. The Commission will hold a public hearing on the application in June of this year. Applications to intervene in the hearing are due by April 29.

Soo, Riedewaan, and Craig Axler responded to Council questions:

- *Your presentation showed the happy path. What if the extension of operations doesn't get CNSC approval.*

Soo: We already have a plan to stabilize all the units.

- *I don't think OPG has to worry about that. The CNSC draws on OPG expertise. Any problem in getting the licence would be political.*

- *Why not a longer extension?*

Soo: It's an issue of feasibility. Any additional extension would be very difficult to prepare for in the time available.

Riedewaan: Also, the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) has requested the extension only to 2026, when units now being refurbished at Darlington are scheduled to be back on line.

- *Where are Darlington and Bruce Power in the time lines of their refurbishment projects?*

Craig: The project at Darlington is scheduled for completion in 2026 (two of their four units have already been refurbished). The last reactor in the Bruce Power project will have completed its refurbishment by 2033.

CAC Intervention

Council members expressed interest in intervening in the CNSC hearing in June, and in having several CAC members present the intervention in person. Dave said he and Francis will work with the CAC through emails and zoom meetings to draft a text for their intervention (see Appendix 2 for draft preparation schedule).

Dave will also work with the Council member presenters to prepare them for the hearing. As noted above, the intervention document has to be submitted to the CNSC by April 29.

Dave added that he will request background information from Analiese St. Aubin.

In response to a Council question, Dave said that intervenors will be presenting to the group of about six CNSC commissioners. A CAC member noted that about half the group will be new commissioners.

Dave asked that Council members inform their contacts and associations that the CAC is intervening in the CNSC hearing. *A draft schedule is attached.*

Topic #7: The Pickering Nuclear Emergency Response Plan

Scott Preston, Director Emergency Management and Fire Protection, talked about Enterprise Emergency Management (EEM) at OPG, and provided a 2024 program overview for Pickering Nuclear (Appendix 3).

The EEM mandate is to ensure OPG has adequate provisions for the preparedness, and response capability, to mitigate the effects of a nuclear emergency, and protect the health and safety of the public, personnel, and the environment.

Scott noted that Enterprise Emergency Management involves over 1,000 employees, who have EEM-related responsibilities in addition to their regular jobs at OPG. Ten drills and exercises are held throughout the year. Every three years, a major event is held involving all levels of government and emergency response organizations. In September 2023, Exercise Unified Command was a three-day large-scale exercise simulating a nuclear emergency at the Pickering station.

Scott noted that the Enterprise Emergency Management is viewed very positively internationally.

Scott talked about the roles of the province, municipalities and utilities such as Pickering Nuclear in the event of a nuclear emergency.

He reviewed the highlights of 2023 and priorities for 2024.

Scott, Marilena Michienzi, and Craig Axler responded to Council questions:

- *Who evaluates EEM activities?*
Scott: My team evaluates drills and exercises. The program is also evaluated by peer experts, and the CNSC has staff at the station all the time.
- *Citizens keep an eye on the program as well.*
- *How do you make sure the province does not send out a false alert about a nuclear emergency, as it did several years ago?*

Scott: In that episode, a simulated alert which was meant for internal use only, was accidentally issued in live mode. The province has changed its internal processes to prevent such a false alert in the future.

- *Who provides KI (potassium iodide) pills to the public?*

Scott: OPG distributes these pills to all homes and businesses within 10 kilometres of the Pickering and Darlington nuclear facilities. Anyone within 50 km of nuclear facilities can order KI pills from OPG through an on-line form: <https://preparetobesafe.ca/order>.

- *The OPG website on nuclear preparedness is not well known.*

Scott: This is something we are always trying to improve.

Marilena: A new campaign on the KI distribution program will be launched on Easter weekend.

- *Given the demise of Metroland newspapers, OPG should use Facebook to identify its key websites.*

Scott: We use Facebook as well as ads on weather websites.

- *Why are there expiry dates on the KI pills? They last forever.*

Scott: I follow your logic on that. (Dave said he would try to get information on that to the Council member.)

- *Because of growth in Pickering and area, with high-rise towers on both sides of the 401, there is already great traffic density on that highway. How is that situation accounted for in evacuation simulations?*

Scott: Census analysis is provided by municipalities. As well, we consider traffic, weather, time of year, special events and the behaviour surrounding each of those.

- *There are two one-million square foot distribution centres on Bayly Street in Pickering. So there's industrial as well as residential growth near the 401.*

- *OPG needs to monitor building plans along the 401.*

- *What is the rate of population change in the area?*

Scott: The numbers have increased. Municipal decision makers have that information.

- *I see that the photos in your slide presentation are of Darlington. Are there no slides featuring the Pickering site?*

Challenge accepted.

Topic #8: Community Update / Public Affairs

Analièse St. Aubin, Senior Manager Stakeholder Relations, talked about recent and forthcoming OPG activities in the community:

- Durham Region staff, including Durham Emergency Management, visited Pickering nuclear on Dec. 8.
- In early February, OPG will host 70 Grade 11 and 12 students along with a handful of teachers for a secondary school nuclear education day. The day will feature a CANDU 101 session as well as people from various OPG departments and industry associations. Among the participants will be Women in Nuclear and Ben Allison from Pickering Nuclear's X-lab, who will bring along the robot dog, Spot.
- New CAC members Nick West and Nicholas Fontana will tour the station in February.
- On Dec. 9, Pickering Nuclear hosted, in partnership with Environmental Stewardship Pickering, the Winter Wonders community celebration. Sixty-eight community members, along with 10 high school volunteers, participated in this great event. (CAC member Dan Shire added that, in partnership with Pickering Naturalists, the event included bird watching, which members of the public greatly enjoyed. Dan noted that Unit 5 hosts peregrine falcons, which have yet to be seen as it is too early in the season.)
- Pickering Nuclear will host public information sessions in February: Wednesday, Feb. 21 (virtual) and Wednesday, Feb. 28 (in person). More information about these sessions will be sent out.
- The Neighbours Newsletter will be in Pickering and Darlington mailboxes within the next couple of weeks.
- In 2023, OPG's Corporate Citizenship Program (CCP) supported 156 non-profit organizations across Durham Region (62 PNGS, 94 DNGS). OPG is now in the process of modernizing this program. Any questions about the CCP can be sent to Analièse.

A CAC member asked what are the criteria for CCP support. Analièse said the program focuses on organizations involved in safety, art, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). She said she could send details to the member. The CCP application window is currently being updated.

A CAC member noted that the Centennial Community and Recreation Association will hold Winterfest at the Port Union Community Centre on Lawrence Avenue East on Jan. 27. She invited CAC members and their families to attend.

Topic #9: Concluding Remarks

Riedewaan thanked CAC members for their valuable perspectives and for their interest in participating in intervening in the CNSC hearing on OPG's application to extend the operation of Units 5 to 8 to the end of 2026.

Next Meeting

Pickering Nuclear Information Centre

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

4 pm – 7 pm