BWXT PLAYS IMPORTANT ROLE IN DARLINGTON NUCLEAR DEFUELLING

As long-time design agents for fuel handling at the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station, BWXT Nuclear Energy Canada (formerly GE – Hitachi Nuclear Energy Canada) was well prepared to handle the rigorous standards and tight scheduling requirements for the defuelling portion of Darlington's ongoing refurbishment.

"Everyone here understands the urgency and importance, whether it's for regular fuel handling operations, for outages and in particular for Darlington's refurbishment," said David LeFrancois, Director, Service Operations at BWXT NEC. "Widely viewed as a destiny project for the industry, we know all eyes in the province are on this refurbishment," he added.

BWXT NEC and its predecessor have been involved in the defuelling initiative since 2013, with as many as 200 staff members working on the project along the way. The company's work has included engineering and manufacturing components used in defuelling, as well as the significant software changes needed to modify programs for the type of fuel removal involved.

Part of the reason BWXT NEC has become such an engrained part of the Refurbishment team is its shared philosophy with OPG and other project partners who believe planning, preparation and training are absolutely key. Adhering to that philosophy is why the defuelling portion of the project was completed ahead of schedule.

"I can't stress enough the amount of rigour that our company and OPG put into not only design and supply, but the testing and commissioning," said LeFrancois, who began his career at Darlington Nuclear in Fuel Handling.

"It's this type of work that is directly responsible for the defuelling phase's strong finish," said OPG's Dietmar Reiner, Senior Vice President, Nuclear Projects. "This success was a direct result of years of detailed planning and preparation and the dedication of project partners like GE – Hitachi (now BWXT NEC) putting safety and quality first."

BWXT NEC will also work on defuelling Darlington's other three reactor refurbishments. Though its work on Unit 2 is largely complete, and the project was completed successfully, event-free and ahead of schedule, LeFrancois and his team are already looking forward to applying lessons learned to increase efficiency on subsequent jobs.