

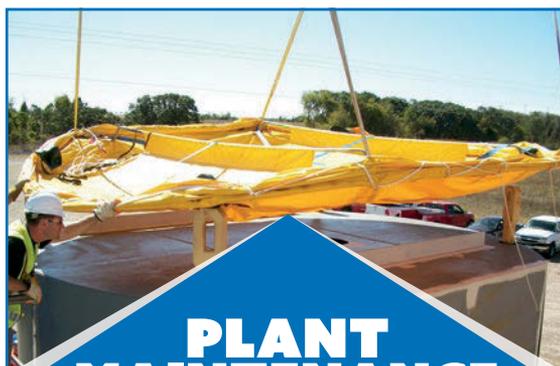
In 2015, an independent joint review panel endorsed the project, concluding that there is a strong safety case for the DGR and that it “should be built now rather than later” (NN, June 2015, p. 64). Bowing to political pressure, however, the government has delayed a decision on the repository, and in 2017 the federal minister of environment and climate change asked OPG to conduct further studies on alternative locations for the DGR, as well as to further assess the “cultural and spiritual impact” of the facility on the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON). Morton noted that OPG committed in 2013 to not construct the DGR without the support of the SON.

Morton said that OPG’s study on the alternative sites found that while the other sites were feasible, moving the DGR would result in about 22,000 additional waste shipments, increase costs by as much as \$3.5 billion, and delay operations by 25 to 30 years, all with no assurance of additional safety. OPG is still engaged with the SON and will reply to the federal government on the DGR’s impact on the SON. If the SON ultimately supports the project, the environmental assessment process will resume, and after a period of public review, the government will make a decision on the assessment. If the decision is positive, OPG will apply to the CNSC for a site license. “We stand by our commitment to SON to not build the repository without their support,” she said.

Following Morton, AECL President and CEO Richard Sexton provided an overview of Canada’s government-owned, contractor-operated (GoCo) model for the management of its nuclear sites. As a Crown Corporation, AECL acts as landlord to Canada’s nuclear sites, while CNL is responsible for site operations. “We define the work, CNL implements the how,” Sexton explained.

Sexton said that under the GoCo model, which was implemented nearly four years ago and was developed to reflect management and operations contract models used by the U.S. Department of Energy and the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, radioactive waste management and decommissioning in Canada has undergone a transformation. These transformational changes, he said, include sites placing a higher priority on permanent disposal of waste rather than continued storage, and a move to close older sites and facilities rather than maintain them. While CNL’s Chalk River Laboratories will remain open, Sexton noted that AECL is looking to close Whiteshell Laboratories and the Nuclear Power Demonstration facility. “Moving to that closure mentality does require a cultural shift, and we are seeing that,” he said.

Continued



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