



**Remarks – CNSC Hearings on BWXT Canada License Renewal
Delivered March 3, 2020**

President Velshi, Commissioners, fellow community members.

Thank you. I want to start by thanking you all for the opportunity to present here today.

My name is Marit Stiles and I am the Member of Provincial Parliament for the riding of Davenport.

I'm a member of the Official Opposition in the Ontario Legislature...and proud of having lived in the riding for many years, and raising my children here.

I want to acknowledge the CNSC for coming here, to our community, and for moving these hearings from a north Toronto location right into our community at the request of myself and the Member of Parliament for our riding. It is so very important that people in our community have a chance to speak and to hear from you – and all the presenters – directly.

I also want to thank all the community members who have presented here so far and will do so today – My staff and I were listening to all the presentations yesterday and I want to tell you I appreciate that you gave up your day, brought photos of your children, spent so much time preparing and participated in this process... which I think can be quite intimidating. So thank you.

I recognize that the facility is federally regulated, but I believe it's important that I'm here, as the provincial representative, to represent my community and, particularly, to bring forward the concerns and questions that have been raised with me.

Although I had lived in the riding for many years, it wasn't until the last round of license renewal hearings took place that I became aware of the existence of the uranium processing facility.

Since I lived in the area of Dufferin Grove Park – so not really close to the plant – that wouldn't be surprising. But I have been active in the community around many issues, and as a volunteer, and so I do recall being somewhat surprised that this had not come to my attention previously.

After attending some of the public meetings around the license renewal ten years ago, I came to better understand that I was not alone... many people – even long time residents living close to the facility – were becoming aware of the facility for the first time.

So when news of this facility broke in the media, I think it's fair to say that many residents were concerned... about the safety of the facility, their health and the health of their families. And they were upset that they didn't know about the uranium facility that was operating in their own neighbourhood.

I remember at the time that our MP and MPP – Andrew Cash and Jonah Schein, respectively – worked very hard in partnership with local residents to get information for our community and to ensure greater accountability and transparency, as well as ensuring that residents' questions could be raised in new public meetings with the CNSC.

I recall many of the issues raised during those meetings:

- Families concerned about the safety of eating the food they grew in their gardens.
- Parents concerned about the safety of their children playing in local playgrounds
- Some residents wondered if their health problems were caused by proximity to the plant.

I mention this because over the last few months – since news broke of the latest request by now BWXT to renew the plant’s license for another 10 years – I have been struck by the fact that many of the same concerns and questions are being raised by residents and neighbours.

I’ve heard these concerns in correspondence from constituents, at community meetings and on the doorsteps.

In fact, I’ve knocked on doors in this neighbourhood many, many times. But – on the eve of these hearings – I wanted to see for myself what people were thinking about the facility, the proposed license renewal, etc. So this weekend I went door to door... in the area just immediately north of the plant.

And I need to tell the Commissioners that I wasn’t expecting to find that everybody was familiar with the plant, or that they were engaged in the issues and questions around it.

But I sure wasn’t expecting to find that virtually no one that I spoke with seemed to have even the most basic information about the plant.

I found newer residents, who – one might expect this – were not familiar with what the facility produces.

But even still, I would have imagined -- given the company’s interest in a 10 year license renewal, and given the nature of the questions raised about this facility – that there would be an interest in ensuring these people KNOW about the hearings. KNOW about the nature of the facility. KNOW what is being produced and proactively address their concerns.

Beyond the newer residents, I met residents who have lived within half a block of the facility for 6,8,10 years who could not recall ever receiving information. People who had only recently learned about the hearings taking place because they received a flyer which seems to have been circulated by members of the public opposed to the plant.

So once again, we’re in a situation where the people living closest to the facility are only now finding out about it as the license is up for renewal – and again the sources are not even from BWXT or the CNSC, often it’s because they received a homemade pamphlet from local activists. And frankly in some cases, it’s because I was there over the weekend. Armed with a little flyer simply including details of the hearing.

This runs counter to the company’s claims that they have been reaching out to 1000s of neighbours to join their community liaison committee etc.

I want to thank the current and past members of that committee for their work. I have reviewed over the years the minutes of these committee meetings and appreciate that the meetings appear to happen regularly.

Commissioners, Davenport is a community that has been defined by its industries, many of which were located here because of the proximity to the rail line. We produce everything from chocolate bars to hardwood floors to gelatin. And people live with noise, odours and truck traffic in those neighbourhoods daily.

But this facility is not manufacturing chocolate bars. And the nature of its production means that public perceptions and safety concerns about the work being done there is substantially different from those facing other industries. Those concerns are legitimate and deserve to be taken seriously by the company and the regulator.

There are good reasons why the nuclear industry is so highly regulated in Canada, and that means there should also be a higher threshold for community engagement.

Now, I understand that many questions around health impacts of the uranium emissions as well as emergency preparedness have been addressed by the company and CNSC staff as part of these hearings.

But my point is that residents who share a neighbourhood with this plant shouldn't have to attend a licensing hearing to find out that their neighbourhood is safe.

That their water and air are safe.

Or to raise their questions and concerns, and have them answered by impartial third parties.

They deserve proactive, ongoing communication from BWXT.

That communication should be accessible, in plain language, and should recognize that there are new people moving into the area on a regular basis.

Frankly, they should not be required to first figure out there's an issue, then go to the company website, and then sign up for a newsletter.

From what I am hearing from my constituents and from what has been said by others making presentations here this week – the company's communication protocols are not getting the job done.

I understand that it is hard and it can be inconvenient. I applaud the company for committing to do more on social media, but a robust social media strategy is still a passive means of reaching people.

Asking the public to find their website and sign up for their newsletter online, is not doing the job.

As development draws more people to the area, this kind of outreach is going to be more important than ever.

But this is not just a communications problem.

The onus is on the company to make its operations known, assure neighbours that emissions are being monitored and invite them to fully participate in safety preparedness measures.

Rather than making testing results available on an intermittent schedule, why not make them open data, and available in real time?

What I've seen throughout this process and the hearings that happened a few years ago, is that when people do not have access to accurate information, they have no other option but to think the worst. Or they rely on information that can be less than accurate.

We can't ask residents to become their own environmental monitoring agency.

We can't expect neighbours to research the impacts of uranium and its properties themselves.

Or rely on Google for info on the technical construction of a hydrogen tank.

We rely on the federal regulator to do that work for us, and that's why it's essential that the public have faith in that independent regulator to put their interests – and safety – first.

I have serious concerns about the length of this license. This community has changed a lot since the last license was issued. And it's going to change a lot in the next ten years.

Given the consistent community concerns raised about the facility – if the CNSC is going to renew this license (which I would point out seems to be an unpopular option, having listened to other presenters, and from speaking with many in my community and elsewhere) I think it would be appropriate for the public to have the opportunity to have the operations reviewed by the commission on a shorter time frame.

I know that folks in Peterborough would welcome the same, particularly given the proposed change in operations there.

In closing, Commissioners I want to ask that you take the concerns of this community very, very seriously. They are asking for what I believe is the BARE minimum that BWXT should live up to.

Transparency. Accountability. Participation in emergency preparedness. Real time testing results. Basic, clear communication.

We don't want barbeques. We want information. We want to know that our children are safe.

If BWXT can't live up to these basic requests, perhaps their license should not be renewed.