

International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, Decommissioning, Environmental Protection and Remediation: Ensuring Safety and Enabling Sustainability



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sustainability and nuclear safety from a Canadian public interest perspective

The intersection of nuclear safety and sustainability in nuclear decision-making and policy deserves more attention. In Canada, safety lies at the heart of project-specific nuclear decision-making processes. While sustainability is addressed via broader energy planning and policy-making. While the former contains legislated provisions for informed and funded public involvement, the latter does not. Federal and provincial legislative regimes' differentiation of nuclear safety and sustainability frustrate attempts to address both together.

From a Canadian public interest perspective, I identify four prerequisites for joint considerations of nuclear safety and sustainability. First, any use of sustainability as a concept or framework should be consistent with Indigenous relations with, and responsibilities to, land (McGregor, 2021). The same would be true for definitions of nuclear safety. Second, applicable legislative frameworks should permit collaborative overlap between jurisdictions and between considerations of safety and sustainability. Third, a focus on impacts over risks would underscore the intersections of sustainability and safety: all facilities interact with the ecologies and societies of which they are a part. Ensuring these interactions are equitable and beneficial should be a key goal for all stakeholders. And lastly, public fora for considering matters of both nuclear safety and sustainability require transparent and participatory processes.

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