

Responsible Action – Citizens’ Dialogue on the Long-term Management of Used Nuclear Fuel

Backgrounder #3

The Participants

In total, 462 Canadians gathered in 12 cities across Canada between January and March, 2004, to discuss the values they expect to be reflected in choosing an approach to managing used nuclear fuel for the long-term. Nine of the dialogue sessions were held in English (Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, London, Toronto, Halifax, Saskatoon, Calgary and Vancouver) and three were held in French (Montreal, Québec City and Moncton). Five of the sessions were held in Ontario, because it produces 91% of the used nuclear fuel in Canada. In all, 192 (41.5%) participants were from Ontario and 270 (58.5%) were from the rest of Canada.

Participants were randomly recruited by a professional polling firm to be as representative as possible of the Canadian adult population. There were students and grandparents, rural residents and city dwellers, people from many ethnic backgrounds, levels of education, income levels and family situations.¹ (See Appendix III of the report for a demographic comparison of participants to the total population based on the 2001 Census data from Statistics Canada.)

To prevent having a disproportionate percentage of participants with strongly held views (pro or con) about nuclear energy, all 9686 people called by the polling firm were asked questions about their support for nuclear energy. The 462 participants came from this broader group of contacted individuals. The participants’ views were relatively consistent with those of the broader population as reported in a survey Ipsos Reid did for the Canadian Nuclear Association in November, 2003. (See Appendix IV of the report for a breakdown of participants’ attitudes toward used nuclear fuel.)

These Canadians came to the dialogue sessions as unaffiliated individuals, not as representatives of stakeholder or special interest groups. All were dedicated participants, giving up a Saturday or Sunday during our Canadian winter, to spend 9 hours talking about this issue. Their participation reflects their desire to make a contribution on an important public policy issue.

¹ Men were somewhat over-represented compared to the general population at 56.9% with women making up 43% of the participants. In addition, there were fewer participants with less than high school graduation compared to Canadians generally.