

CNSC Approves Renewal of AECL's Chalk River Site Operating Licence

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CNW Group
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Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) is pleased to report that the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) has approved its application to renew the Chalk River Laboratories Site Operating Licence for a period of 63 months.

The new licence period goes into effect August 1, 2006 and is valid until October 31, 2011. The previous 38-month licence period expired on July 31, 2006.

The new operating licence was granted following a two-day CNSC hearing in Ottawa held April 26, 2006 and June 28, 2006. During this time, AECL experts, CNSC staff – who recommended the proposed licence renewal be approved – and 37 community stakeholders made written submissions and/or oral presentations to the CNSC.

"I am very pleased the Commission has accepted the CNSC staff recommendation to renew the Chalk River operating licence," said Robert Van Adel, AECL President and Chief Executive Officer. "The 63-month licence period demonstrates that the Commission is satisfied that we are a qualified licensee and that we will meet all necessary health, safety and security requirements, as well as Canada's international obligations."

The Chalk River Laboratories Operating Licence lists 14 separate nuclear facilities, including the National Research Universal (NRU) reactor. The new licence contains a number of new conditions that will require diligent management and tracking by AECL. These involve environmental protection, waste management and decommissioning, fire protection, quality assurance and safe operation of the NRU reactor.

As the world's largest producer of radionuclides, the NRU reactor is a multi-purpose research reactor and is Canada's premier facility for nuclear power and materials research. It also produces for MDS Nordion the majority of the world's medical isotopes, including molybdenum-99 and several longer-lived isotopes that are used for medical imaging and cancer therapy to the benefit of 70,000 patients per day.

Brian McGee, AECL's Vice President of Nuclear Laboratories, said, "AECL takes its responsibilities under the new licence seriously and we are committed to safe operation throughout the licence period."

"We would like to thank the community leaders and stakeholders who participated in the hearing for their continued support," added Mr. McGee. "We greatly appreciate the level of support for and interest in AECL as expressed by community stakeholders and we will continue to engage in dialogue with the public and interest groups throughout the new licence period."

To enhance communications with key stakeholders and surrounding communities, AECL has launched an Environmental Stewardship Council. Comprised of representatives from area municipalities, environmental organizations and members of the public, the Council will discuss a range of topics of mutual interest; provide advice on remediation and/or improving AECL's environmental and operational performance; and establish a framework for ongoing interaction with community stakeholders.