

Review and Feedback on Debates

The following reviews of the eight part debate regarding nuclear power generation were published in the May 5, 2010 edition of the Mile Zero News and Banner Post

Cosmos Voutsinos Canadian Nuclear Society

The CNS is a NON PROFIT organization supported by the fees of individual members. We accepted your invitation to participate in this debate without the illusion that we would ever be able to convince our antinuclear opponents that nuclear power is useful and safe. We have convinced ourselves, not because nuclear energy is spotless, but because we have taken the time to evaluate its costs and benefits relative to existing sources of power.

We called upon experts in the fields discussed, but our opponents were not convincible. We did confirm this on many occasions before and during the debate. They believe that they know energy matters and nuclear power better than we do and that everything about nuclear power is bad, bleak, and extremely dangerous.

Any information to the contrary is ignored or considered to be biased or a lie. For example, they ignore the fact that we work in these plants every day, live with our families close to them and encourage our children to follow the same line of work. It has been explained to them that NATURAL BACKGROUND RADIATION is much higher than the radiation emitted from nuclear plants – and this includes the Three Mile Accident – but they have chosen to ignore this. They don't appreciate the fact that there is natural background radiation in which humanity has survived and evolved over the centuries. They read reports of mishaps in nuclear plants and freak out since they don't have a way to put into perspective the significance of the numbers they read. One could see throughout the debate that our opponents were working with a prepared list of bullet points which many times had nothing to do with the particular topic being discussed. So why did we decide to participate in this debate against all these odds? During the October 21/09 debate in Peace River, I noticed that in addition to the usual 200 anti-nuclear activists, a 500 strong (60%) silent and open-minded majority attended the debate with the genuine desire to learn. We participated in this debate for you, the silent majority. The information that we have provided is accurate and factual. Last October, I left a technical package that details the significance of background radiation. If you did not get one, log on to www.energyintegration.ca and download the booklet titled: "[Roadmap for a Comprehensive Energy Policy](#)". This publication also puts energy issues into perspective.

Duane Pendergast Canadian Nuclear Society

I'd first like to thank Jason Glabik for this opportunity to provide factual professional information on nuclear energy. I also thank our opponents for their review and compilation. The points they make provide an excellent summary of over half a century of dedicated resistance to the harnessing of nuclear energy. They express well the attitude

that no risk, however small, is worth the tremendous benefits to humanity that can be derived from bountiful energy for the foreseeable future. It has been a daunting task for my technical and professional colleagues to respond, and I thank them for doing that very well. Of course we have not been able to cover in detail all the counter points made nor could readers be expected to maintain interest if we did. The environmental assessment stage of any nuclear project will go into the exhaustive detail needed to quantify all kinds of impacts on local communities and the environment and determine acceptability.

I would like to remind readers there is a very positive side to the development of nuclear energy. Let's step back from the details and consider that. Basic knowledge of the physics and chemistry of the materials around us, developed over the past couple of centuries has helped us to understand and demonstrate how a tiny fraction of those materials could become an essentially boundless energy source. Albert Einstein apparently expressed his enthusiasm for the culmination of these discoveries by writing: **“If you succeed in using the nuclear- physical findings for peaceful purposes, it will open the way to a new paradise”**.

The technology is difficult, and there are risks. Still, subsequent to Einstein's musings, in the short time of just over half a century, we have developed the ability to harness nuclear energy to the point that it provides a substantial fraction of the energy we use. The industry which has developed around basic concepts of physics and chemistry not only provides tremendous energy related benefits – it has done it safely and reasonably cost effectively in comparison with the depleting fossil fuels we currently depend on. Future generations will need the abundant enduring energy nuclear technology can provide.

In closing, I ask readers to reflect on these broader goals and to keep an open mind with respect to the opportunities being presented to them as part of humanity's quest for long term prosperity in harmony with our environment.

**Adele Boucher Rymhs, President
Coalition for Nuclear Free Alberta**

On behalf of the Debaters who are members of the Coalition for Nuclear Free Alberta, I would like to thank the Mile Zero News for initiating the series of debates on nuclear power. We feel this offered a tremendous service to your readers to “hear both sides of the story.”

You deserve much credit for establishing a balanced format for the debate -it allowed a fair playing field for proponents and opponents, and included a wide range of topics about nuclear.

We greatly appreciated the opportunity you provided us to enlarge on the reasons why we believe that nuclear power is not necessary in Alberta now, or at any time in the future.

We were disappointed that no local proponents of nuclear power felt enough conviction to respond to your request for input into this debate.

We were especially appalled that Bruce Power relied on the Canadian Nuclear Society to debate the issue that they have foisted upon our community. Surely someone within such a large corporate entity was capable of supporting the rationale for their proposed plant - even if it was only on the topic of Economics.

It was strange to find no Bruce Power rep would debate the merits of Green Energy after the company's media campaign that its project will include new technology such as wind, solar and hydrogen.

Again, we commend Mile Zero News for providing such balanced, timely and relevant coverage of the nuclear topic in the Peace Country - you are a leader in the media field.

Feedback from the Editor, Jason Glabik

The nuclear issue in the Peace Country is a tough one. There are two highly polarized sides, with a bunch of folks in the middle who are either undecided or don't care anymore. Regardless of what we report, numerous letters to the editor and advertising from both sides paint different pictures of the issue. An unbalanced nuclear debate has been taking place in the region for over two years, we at the newspaper decided it was time for some balance. Normally this comes from our reporting. But many from each side of the issue think we are slanted to the cause of the other side. Myself and this newspaper have been called pro-nuclear just as much as we have been called anti-nuclear. A formal written nuclear debate removes the reporting from the equation. We wanted to inform the public with something that was undeniably balanced.

The idea for a written debate came to me during a discussion with Peace River Coun. Don Good about a spoken debate held last October. Good made the point that any media reporting on a spoken debate would likely not give a clear picture of the debate. Coalition for Nuclear Free Alberta President Adele Boucher Rymhs was part of the preliminary discussion regarding the debate, along with Cosmos Voutsinos of the Canadian Nuclear Society, Alberta Branch. Both provided solid input into the process.

We had to develop a written debate that would be 100 per cent fair to each side. After sending out numerous e-mails, I allowed each side to choose speakers. Pat McNamara, who did not respond to repeated requests for a 400 word feedback, was the organizer for the opponents of nuclear power while the Canadian Nuclear Society, namely Duane Pendergast and Cosmos Voutsinos organized for the proponents of nuclear power. In terms of organizing writers, I put the ball in their court.

Another challenge was having the debate written the week before it would be published. I had decided early on that if the debate had been entirely completed before being published, that one enterprising individual would put it out on the Internet and all my work would have been in vain, as no one would have followed the debate in the newspaper. This meant that all the writers had to be scheduled and had a strict timeline to follow over a week. Space was also an issue. The debate was designed to take exactly a page in the newspaper. That meant eight or more pages dedicated over an eight week period.

As a result of the written nuclear debate, the Canadian Nuclear Society has asked me to give a presentation at an upcoming Nuclear Education and Outreach conference in Calgary. I have asked local groups for their position on nuclear power as part of my presentation. While many in our region are sick of hearing or reading about this contentious issue, you'd be surprised how interested outsiders are.

Information for the conspiracy theorists: the CNS will be footing the bill for my plane ticket to the conference, as travel by vehicle will not be possible in the timeframe available.

As a regular citizen, or a representative of a group that will be effected by the proposed nuclear power plant, feel free to send me your feedback on the written debate or information for the CNS conference to milezeronews@mackreport.ab.ca or phone 780-332-2215.