

# Understanding Wesleyville

Speaking notes for Ralph Torrie  
Blue Dot Northumberland delegation to Brighton Council  
May 19, 2026

## Blue Dot Northumberland Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

That the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada direct OPG to come back with a properly scoped project description that provides a detailed analysis of the need and the alternatives to the project as required by Section 22 (1)(d) and (f) of the Impact Assessment Act [IAA].

### Recommendation 2

That more time be provided for public comment so that adequate public education can be provided on the missing components of financial cost, risks to health, safety, accidents, security and sustainability of the nuclear option under Section (1)(a) IAA.

### Recommendation 3

That Brighton supports the nomination of the host community from Port Hope to Northumberland County because impacts will be suffered throughout the County. More of Brighton's tax dollars will go into County revenues to cover the expansion of infrastructure the mega project will require.

1. My name is Ralph Torrie, and I'm speaking on behalf of Blue Dot Northumberland, a group of local citizens advocating for the preservation of farmland and the promotion of sustainable economic development in Northumberland County. <sup>1</sup>
2. Our concerns regarding the nuclear plant proposal cluster around four main themes: the economic risks and boom-and-bust impacts of a project of this size; the health, safety, and security implications for people who live and work here; the way this proposal is being pushed forward without a proper analysis of need and alternatives; and the fact that it ties Ontario to an outdated, highly centralized energy vision at a time

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of Blue Dot Northumberland's submission to the Impact Assessment Agency is appended to these notes and provides additional facts and references to source material.

when the rest of the world is moving toward more distributed, renewable-based systems.

3. The Ontario government and OPG are proposing to build what would be the world's largest nuclear power station at Wesleyville. There is no confirmed reactor design and there is no publicly released cost estimate, yet the approval process is moving ahead, and Northumberland County is the proposed host.
4. Based on recent projects and conservative international benchmarks, the plant could cost from 165 to 245 billion dollars, perhaps more, with every dollar of capital, cost overrun, delay, and debt ultimately landing on taxpayers and hydro ratepayers.
5. A megaproject of this magnitude is the economic equivalent of a hurricane. Thousands of construction workers with project-level wages flood a relatively small labour market. Local employers – farms, shops, small manufacturers, care providers – struggle to compete, lose staff, or are forced to raise wages in ways they can't sustain. When construction ends, many of those jobs and workers disappear, but the damage to the pre-existing business base can be permanent.
6. A spike in demand for rentals and houses pushes up prices and rents across Port Hope and neighbouring towns. Long-time residents, young families, and lower-income workers find themselves priced out or pushed farther away, even though they may never see a dollar of project income. When the construction workforce shrinks, you can be left with vacant units, over-built subdivisions, and owners who paid peak-boom prices.
7. Physical and social infrastructure is overwhelmed. Roads, intersections, water and wastewater plants, policing, fire, health care, schools, social services – all try to cope with the sudden increase of thousands of workers, expanding to meet the boom, taking on costs that do not vanish when the project winds down. These stresses extend for tens of kilometres from the location of a plant this size and will impact every community and every local government in Northumberland.
8. For many residents, the first visible change will not be a paycheck, but traffic, noise, and rising housing costs. Some will find new opportunities; others will find their rent going up, their commute getting longer, or their own workforce leaving for higher-paying construction jobs.
9. When the plant is built, jobs tied directly and indirectly to the project disappear faster than they arrived. Local businesses that expanded – bought equipment, took on debt, hired extra staff – now have too much capacity and some fail. Infrastructure built to

handle peak loads is under-used but still has to be maintained and renewed. Socially, there is a sense of let-down and division: some residents did well during the boom, others only experienced higher costs and disruption, and now everyone shares the hangover.

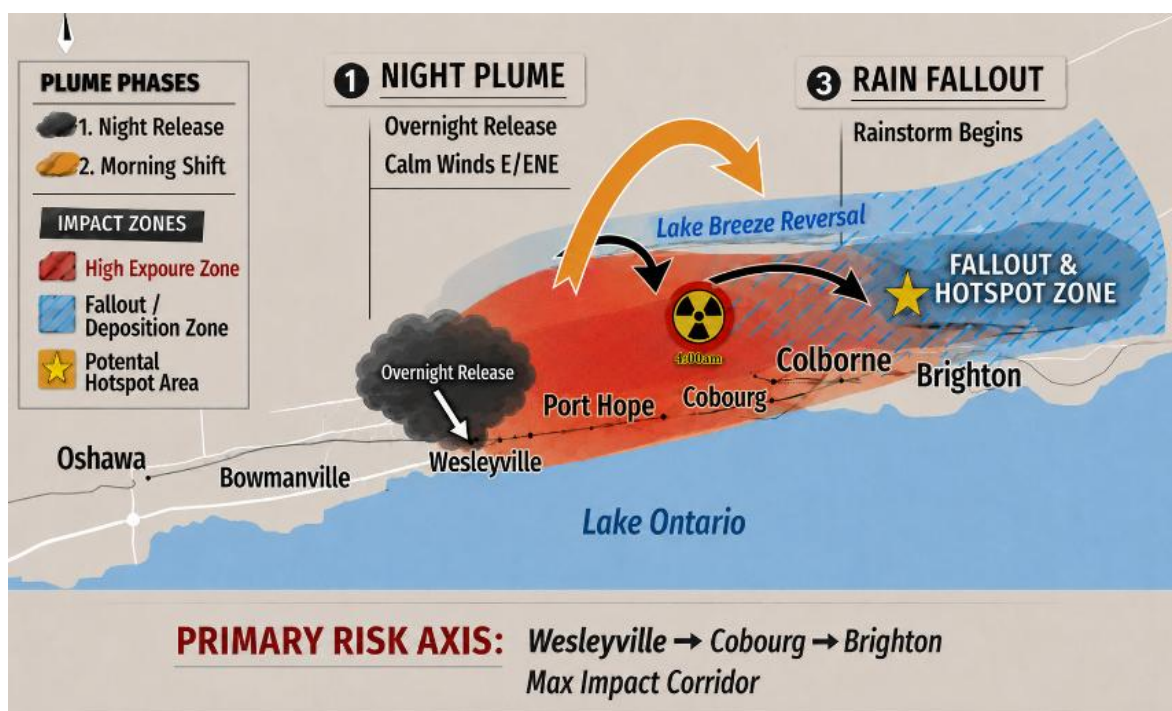
10. Because nuclear plants take so long to build, they are especially vulnerable to being overtaken by events. While we are still pouring concrete and dealing with delays and overruns, alternatives keep getting cheaper and better—wind, solar, storage, efficiency, smarter grids. Long before a ten-reactor station could be finished, the economics and the “need” used to justify it in the first place may no longer exist. We have seen this play out time and again in Ontario, including, ironically, at Wesleyville itself.
11. If the project is delayed, re-scoped, or cancelled partway through, we are left with a community that has reorganized itself around a promise that does not fully materialize, and the bust side of the boom-and-bust cycle can be especially severe.
12. Any megaproject brings these risks, but the nuclear dimension raises additional concerns. Regarding the radioactive waste generated at such plants, the issue is not only some distant underground repository; for host communities to these plants there is a more immediate concern. Once a spent fuel bundle comes out of a reactor, it is intensely radioactive and continues to generate heat; it must be robotically transferred to swimming pool like structures on site and kept under active cooling for five to ten years before being transferred to “dry” storage casks where it would remain until such time a permanent storage facility is developed. If a 10,000-megawatt CANDU station were built at Wesleyville, it would eject about 50,000 spent fuel bundles (or their equivalent) per year and Wesleyville would become host to the largest single-site inventory of high-level radioactive waste in Canada. Any permanent repository is decades away, so that waste would sit on our shoreline for many years, and when a repository does exist it will have to be transported out of Wesleyville, through our region, to its final destination.
13. When you strip away the mystique, a large nuclear station is basically an 18th-century steam engine welded to 20th-century nuclear fission. It is a fundamentally inefficient machine, with 70% of the heat generated in the reactor core being dumped as warm water into Lake Ontario. Along with all the cost and complexity come failure modes that look nothing like those of other power plants: the temperatures and pressures in the reactor core are extreme, and if cooling is interrupted or key systems malfunction, fuel can overheat and melt, hydrogen can build up and explode, and radioactive material can be dispersed into the environment, as the world saw at Fukushima. It’s a

type of Russian roulette: the probability of such a release happening at Wesleyville is small, but the consequences should it occur are large, irreversible, and uninsurable. There are about 450 large power reactors in the world and four of them have had serious fuel melting accidents that resulted in radioactive contamination of the surrounding environment – Chernobyl, and three reactors on a common site at Fukushima.

14. It would be foolhardy to ignore such risks, especially for the communities, farms, orchards and wildlife sanctuaries downwind from the proposed plant. As a minimum it is another reason for the most rigorous review of the purported need for and alternatives to the proposed plant at Wesleyville – why take any risk if it is unnecessary?

Population within 50 km of Wesleyville

| Census Division       | Population       | Percent within 50km | Population within 50 km |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Northumberland County | 89,365           | ~100%               | <b>~89,000</b>          |
| Durham Region         | 696,992          | 81%                 | <b>~565,000</b>         |
| Peterborough County   | 147,401          | 36%                 | <b>~53,000</b>          |
| Kawartha Lakes        | 79,247           | 22%                 | <b>~17,500</b>          |
| Hastings County       | 136,721          | 6%                  | <b>~8,200</b>           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>1,149,726</b> | <b>64%</b>          | <b>~732,700</b>         |



15. The diagram above illustrates the most likely dispersion pattern for airborne releases from a plant at Wesleyville, based on typical regional wind patterns along the north shore of Lake Ontario. It assumes a nighttime release under stable atmospheric conditions with light westerly winds, producing a concentrated plume moving east through Port Hope and Cobourg toward Brighton. A subsequent daytime lake-breeze reversal is shown returning the plume inland, with potential for rain-driven deposition (“hotspots”) along the same corridor.
16. There is also a renewed concern regarding the chronic public health impacts of proximity to nuclear plants. Just last month, a major new study led by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health concluded that U.S. communities closer to nuclear plants had higher cancer mortality rates than those farther away. The authors estimate that roughly 115,000 cancer deaths over the study period – about 6,400 per year – were statistically attributable to proximity to nuclear plants. It is the first comprehensive, modern-era analysis of cancer mortality in North America that indicates that living near large nuclear stations is associated with a measurable increase in cancer deaths, especially for older people. Host communities deserve a precautionary approach and full transparency, not blanket reassurances.
17. A plant of this size also becomes prime critical infrastructure in any future conflict or cyberattack scenario, as we have seen with nuclear sites in Ukraine. Concentrating such a vast amount of nuclear capacity at a single lakeshore site in Northumberland County makes our communities vulnerable to those risks.
18. Nuclear plants, including Ontario’s current fleet of CANDUs, require on-site armed security forces. The American nuclear technology being considered for Wesleyville utilizes enriched uranium, and this elevates the threat level and the required response preparedness: not just more cameras and fences, but permanent on-site, heavily armed anti-terrorist and SWAT-style response teams, and armed convoys moving nuclear fuel and other sensitive materials through our region under the protection of specialized, militarized security forces, increasingly provided by private firms. That would be a permanent, visible feature of life in and around Northumberland County.
19. The Impact Assessment Act requires that the need for and the alternatives to the Wesleyville proposal be considered in its assessment, yet the current project description does not do that, and OPG states quite bluntly in their project description that they are not considering alternatives. Blue Dot Northumberland’s first recommendation is that the Impact Assessment Agency direct OPG to come back with a properly scoped description that does that work. The failure of OPG and its

predecessor Ontario Hydro to thoroughly and rigorously establish the need for and evaluate the alternatives to their past capital expansion plans has been the Achilles heel of power planning in Ontario for decades, even at one time leading to the de facto bankruptcy of the utility. If history repeats and this plant ends up as a half-finished abandoned asset, no community in Ontario will suffer more from the fallout than Northumberland County.

20. A megaproject of this magnitude will stress the physical and social infrastructure for tens of kilometres in all directions, yet only Port Hope is receiving support to prepare.
21. We note that in spite of the short time (30 days) the IAA allowed for public comments on OPG's project description, that by the deadline of February 11, over 800 submissions on the proposal had been received by the IAA, mostly from local residents and organizations, the overwhelming majority of which expressed opposition to the plant, support for alternatives, and the need for a thorough testing of OPG's position that the plant is needed and alternatives need not be considered.
22. This proposed plant is extraordinary in scale, cost, and risk. The proposed need for it should be tested by the Impact Assessment Board. The costs, risks, and benefits of alternatives should be thoroughly analyzed and compared. The assessment should take the time needed to allow for a fulsome review and for public education on the financial, health, safety, security, and environmental implications of a project which, if it proceeds, will irreversibly change life in Northumberland County for generations unborn.