

Community Perspectives on BWXT Nuclear Energy Canada Inc.

BWXT Nuclear Energy Canada Inc.

Abacus Data

March 2026

Methodology

This report summarizes insights from four online focus groups conducted in March 2026 with residents living within 10 kilometers of BWXT Nuclear Energy Canada Inc. (hereafter referred to as BWXT for ease of reference) facilities in Peterborough and the Toronto area. The purpose of these discussions was to better understand community awareness and perceptions of BWXT, how residents think about nuclear manufacturing and nuclear energy more broadly, and how BWXT can improve communication and engagement with local communities.

Two focus groups were conducted with residents living within approximately 10 kilometres of the Peterborough facility, and two groups were conducted with residents living within approximately 10 kilometres of the Toronto facility. In each location, one group consisted of participants recruited from BWXT contact lists, while the other group consisted of a random sample of residents living in the surrounding catchment area. This approach allowed the research to capture perspectives from both individuals who may already have some level of familiarity or connection with BWXT and those who represent the broader local community.

In total, 21 participants took part across the four discussions.

- The Peterborough general population group included 4 participants, while the Toronto general population group included 9 participants.
- The Peterborough BWXT contact list group included 4 participants, and the Toronto BWXT contact list group included 4 participants.

All discussions were moderated by Abacus Data and conducted online.

As with all qualitative research, the findings from these focus groups are not statistically representative of the broader population. Instead, they provide detailed insight into how residents near BWXT facilities think about the company, what information gaps exist, and what types of communication and engagement approaches may resonate most strongly for these communities.

Executive Summary

- 1. Awareness of BWXT varies widely across communities.** Participants connected to BWXT through mailing lists or previous engagement activities were generally more familiar with the company and its work. In contrast, many residents recruited from the broader community had limited to no awareness of BWXT prior to the focus groups. Awareness was particularly low among participants in the Toronto groups, several of whom indicated they had not previously heard of the company or were unaware that nuclear-related manufacturing occurs nearby.
- 2. Knowledge gaps about BWXT's role are common.** Even among those who had heard of the company, detailed understanding of its operations was limited. Many participants associated BWXT broadly with nuclear energy but were unsure about what actually happens inside the facility. Several participants noted that if asked to explain the company's activities to others, they would struggle to describe what is manufactured there or how those products are used.
- 3. Nuclear manufacturing is often confused with nuclear power generation.** When participants heard the term "nuclear," many said they tend to picture nuclear power plants rather than manufacturing facilities. This suggests that while nuclear energy is part of Ontario's broader public conversation, the role of companies that manufacture components for the nuclear sector is less widely understood.
- 4. Initial impressions are often neutral, with some positive associations.** In the absence of detailed knowledge, participants' initial impressions of BWXT were generally neutral rather than strongly positive or negative. Some participants expressed favourable views, particularly when they associated the company with local employment, economic contribution, or Ontario's energy system.
- 5. Historical context shapes perceptions in Peterborough.** Participants in the Peterborough groups frequently referenced the legacy of the former General Electric (GE) facility and past contamination concerns associated with the site. While most participants recognized that BWXT is a different company operating under modern regulatory frameworks, this history continues to influence how some residents think about industrial activity at the location.
- 6. Questions about BWXT are largely driven by information gaps.** Across the discussions, participants raised questions about safety procedures, environmental monitoring, transportation of materials, and regulatory oversight. However, these questions were typically framed as requests for more information rather than expressions of opposition to the company's activities.
- 7. Participants assume strong regulation but want to understand it better.** Many participants expressed confidence that nuclear-related operations in Canada are subject to strict regulations. At the same time, they acknowledged that they do not fully understand how those

systems work in practice and would welcome clearer explanations about how facilities like BWXT are monitored and regulated.

8. **Information about BWXT has relatively low visibility in daily life.** Participants across both communities indicated that they rarely encounter information about BWXT through news, community updates, or other channels. As a result, many residents rely on informal sources such as conversations with friends or family members who work at the facility to learn about its activities.
9. **Direct engagement helps build familiarity and trust.** Participants who attended facility tours, meetings, or other engagement activities reported feeling significantly more comfortable with the company and more confident in their understanding of its operations. These experiences suggest that direct engagement can play an important role in addressing questions and strengthening community relationships.
10. **Clear, accessible communication presents an opportunity.** Across the groups, participants indicated that clearer explanations of what BWXT produces, how its products are used, and how safety and environmental monitoring are managed would help address many of the questions raised during the discussions. Increasing the visibility of communications and creating opportunities for two-way dialogue were also identified as ways to strengthen understanding and trust over time.

Conclusion

The focus groups provide important insight into how residents currently understand BWXT, the questions they have about its operations, and the types of communication and engagement that could help strengthen relationships with the surrounding community.

Overall, the discussions suggest that BWXT operates in a context where awareness is uneven and often limited among the broader public. While some residents, particularly those who have participated in tours, advisory groups, or other engagement activities, have a clearer understanding of the company and its work, many others are only vaguely aware of BWXT or have little knowledge of what happens inside the facilities. In many cases, residents recognize the company name or associate it broadly with nuclear energy but are uncertain about the specific role BWXT plays within Ontario's nuclear industry.

Importantly, the findings indicate that most participants approach the topic with curiosity rather than strong opposition. Initial impressions of BWXT are frequently neutral and shaped by limited information rather than firmly held concerns. This suggests that there is an opportunity for BWXT to strengthen understanding through clearer explanations of its work, the products it manufactures, and how those products contribute to nuclear energy and medical applications.

At the same time, the discussions highlight several areas where residents would like more information. Questions about what is produced at the facility, how safety is managed, and how operations are regulated were raised consistently across groups. While many participants assume that strict regulatory oversight exists, there is limited understanding of how those safeguards work in practice. Providing accessible explanations of safety measures, environmental monitoring, and regulatory inspections could therefore play an important role in addressing common questions and reinforcing confidence in the company's operations.

The findings also highlight the influence of local context in shaping perceptions. In Peterborough, historical associations with the former GE facility continue to form part of the narrative surrounding the site. Although participants generally recognize that BWXT operates under modern regulatory standards, the legacy of past environmental concerns means that transparency and open communication are particularly important in building and maintaining trust with some residents.

Across all groups, participants emphasized that visibility and accessibility of information are key factors in shaping community understanding. Many residents said they have encountered relatively little information about BWXT in their day to day lives. As a result, awareness of the company's activities remains limited. When information about industrial operations is not widely visible, residents often rely on informal sources such as word of mouth or online discussions, which can sometimes lead to incomplete or inconsistent understandings.

Participants who had engaged directly with BWXT through facility tours, meetings, or community events tended to report more positive and informed perceptions. These experiences demonstrate the value of direct engagement opportunities in helping residents better understand the company's operations and in providing space for questions and dialogue.

Taken together, the findings suggest that many of the questions raised during the discussions stem from information gaps rather than entrenched concerns. As a result, relatively straightforward improvements

such as clearer explanations of BWXT's work, increased visibility of communications, proactive sharing of safety and oversight information, and expanded opportunities for two-way dialogue have the potential to improve community understanding and engagement.

By building on existing engagement efforts and expanding opportunities for residents to learn about and discuss BWXT's activities, the company has an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with the surrounding community and foster a more informed and constructive dialogue about nuclear related operations in Peterborough and Toronto.