

January 14, 2015

CNL opens new \$55M hydrogen lab

by Terry Myers

The future of the Chalk River labs begins now.

Senior staff and project managers from Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) were joined by elected officials and special guests last Thursday to mark the completion of the new Hydrogen Isotopes Technology Laboratory at Chalk River.

The \$55 million project represents a “major upgrade in nuclear science and technology capacity” for CNL and shows the federal government's commitment to the future of the labs, guests heard.

“This is truly an exciting day for Canadian Nuclear Laboratories,” said company president and CEO Dr. Robert Walker.

“CNL and its predecessor AECL have been Canada's leading nuclear technology organization for over six decades, and now we're building the next six.

“With the facility renovation and equipping of (the hydrogen isotope laboratory), the government of Canada has demonstrated its commitment to the revitalization and renewal of our cutting edge research infrastructure and its confidence in the people who work at CNL right here in the Ottawa Valley.”

Walker said the new laboratory will enable CNL to conduct “state of the art research to ensure a clean and healthy environment for Canadians through the development of and use of clean energy technologies” such as fuel cells.

“The work that we will be carrying out within these walls builds on CNL's global leadership position in hydrogen technologies and it enables us to develop safe and secure options for Canada's future energy needs,” he said.

“And in addition it gives us the foundation to leverage and direct our capabilities into other industry sectors and in international markets.”

Walker said the hydrogen isotopes laboratory also represents “one of the first major capital investments by the government of Canada in our infrastructure as we transition into our new government owned, contractor operated (GoCo) management model.”

Noting the giant lift crane on site overlooking the new \$100 million multipurpose laboratory centre under construction nearby, Walker said “this is about building our future.”

“We have here in the room a number of our scientists, engineers and technologists who are literally waiting to turn on the keys” on the new laboratory, he said.

“That will happen very shortly, and I say, (when it does,) stand back and just watch the wonder.”

Also on hand for the ceremony were Saskatchewan MP Kelly Block, parliamentary secretary to Minister of Natural Resources Greg Rickford.

Block said it was “truly a privilege to join you here this afternoon” and to see “our government's investments in nuclear research first-hand.”

Block said Canada is renowned for the development of peaceful applications and latest innovations in nuclear science and technology and “today we are witnessing an innovative application of the world-class expertise resident at the Chalk River laboratories.”

Block said that over the last five years, the federal government has committed \$325 million to renew existing infrastructure and build new facilities for CNL.

“But these investments in buildings and new technology are meaningless without the talented men and women who carry on a long tradition of research and development excellence (at Chalk River),” she said.

“On behalf of Minister Rickford, I want to congratulate our many partners on the successful completion of this world-class facility and to wish the management and staff here the greatest success as you pursue new and exciting research opportunities.”

Local MP Cheryl Gallant said the money being spent at Chalk River is “an important part of our nuclear strategy and more than investment in bricks and mortar or even the latest technologies.”

“It is a vote of confidence in the women and men, many talented people, who are carrying out a long tradition of research and development excellence,” she said.

“This investment will allow some of Canada's brightest minds to continue to pursue research related to the safe operation of nuclear reactors as well as developing alternative clean energy technologies.”

Gallant said it was a pleasure to tour as the renovations to the laboratory were happening, “but this is a happy day.”