

WE THE NUCLEAR FREE NORTH



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Informed and Unwilling: No Nuclear Waste for Northwestern Ontario Northern Ontario Alliance Signals Growing Opposition to Nuclear Waste Burial Plans

Kenora District - A new Northern Ontario alliance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous volunteers and organizations is delivering a clear message across Northwestern Ontario: the risks of nuclear waste transportation and burial are too high and the voices of Northern Ontario residents must be heard.

This week, *We the Nuclear Free North* delivered information cards to almost 30,000 households, farms and businesses from Upsala to the Manitoba border outlining key concerns and offering information and support to those who want to learn more about the scheme to bury all of Canada's high-level nuclear fuel waste in an area between Ignace and Dryden. The group has also launched a [website](#) as an information resource for those who are looking for reliable information about nuclear waste and the prospect of it being buried in Northwestern Ontario from sources that are independent of the nuclear power companies that generate and own the radioactive waste.

“The Anishinaabe people have lived in Treaty #3 Territory since time immemorial. We know and are taught that our land, water and our language are most important for the survival of our culture. Grand Council Treaty #3 leadership have the responsibility to preserve this,” said Elder Peter White, Ki'eshgitabaaning Cultural and Healing Lodge, Grand Council Treaty #3 Area.

“The Manito Aki Inakonigaawin, Great Earth Law must be honoured and respected to protect our Sacred Resources for the many generations yet to come. We are all connected through waterways, land and relations. So, what affects one First Nation will affect all our First Nations. The lives of our children and future generations are too precious to be used as a nuclear experiment and should not have this DGR-burden put on their shoulders.”

The nuclear waste burial project proponent, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), is a corporation made up of provincial utilities that operate nuclear reactors. The NWMO is proposing to send multiple truckloads of highly radioactive waste to its selected site every day for at least forty years. The NWMO is currently studying a site in the Revell Lake area, in the District of Kenora, and another site in Southwestern Ontario, in Bruce County.

The NWMO submitted a plan to the federal government in 2005, outlining a siting process with the end goal of a deep geological repository for all of Canada's high-level waste. Recent media reports identify former Prime Minister Chretien as part of a [secretive for-profit project to import foreign radioactive wastes](#). Chretien was the Prime Minister when the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act was passed without any prohibition of nuclear waste import, despite urging to include one.

“In my opinion, this is not the kind of development the people of Northwestern Ontario want,” said Fred Melanson, who was on municipal council in Ear Falls during the NWMO’s investigation of that community. “Burying nuclear waste is a high-risk experiment. Condemning future generations to the risk of radioactive contamination would be a huge tragedy.”

The Revell Lake area is being studied as the potential site for a deep geological repository for all of Canada’s high-level nuclear fuel waste, which is the irradiated fuel waste from reactors in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. The irradiated fuel waste is one million times more radioactive than the original uranium used as fuel, and some of the hundreds of different radioactive isotopes contained in the fuel will remain radioactive for millions of years. Even a low level of exposure to radioactive materials can be harmful to human health.

Charles Faust explained the group’s concern over the risk of the region’s water becoming contaminated: “The study area is at the height of land, spanning two important watersheds. The geology of Northwestern Ontario means it is hard to predict how contaminants move through groundwater or where they will surface in lakes or rivers. But with the Wabigoon and the Lake of the Woods water systems both downstream, this is a big concern for Northwestern Ontario.”

“This is not an issue for one community - it is an issue for the entire region”, commented Dodie LeGassick, a spokesperson for Environment North.

“We’re very concerned about the exposure of residents along the transportation route, particularly if there was an accident. Ignace should not get to decide whether 22,000 trucks hauling radioactive waste drive through Nipigon, and through Shuniah Township (just east of Thunder Bay), and all of the other many communities along the route. It is thousands of kilometres from the reactor sites to the Revell Lake area, and the residents and communities along the way will bear the transportation risks.”

The group points out on their web site (WeTheNuclearFreeNorth.ca) that there is no other operating deep geological repository for high-level nuclear waste anywhere in the world and provides information about technical and scientific uncertainties that surround the controversial concept.

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Contact: Elder Peter (Alo)White, Mide’Kiwenzie (807) 407 9000
Fred Melanson (807) 222-2178
Charles Faust (807) 633-0202
Dodie LeGassick (807) 473 9608 or (807) 630 8176
Brennain Lloyd (705) 497 0373 (office) 705 493 9650 (cell)

We the Nuclear Free North is an alliance of people and groups opposed to transporting and then burying highly radioactive nuclear waste in Northwestern Ontario

www.WeTheNuclearFreeNorth.ca nuclearfreenorth@gmail.com 1 855 225 8055 (toll free)

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