



March 1, 2024

Mayor Rob Ferguson  
Town of Atikokan  
120 Mark St, Atikokan, ON P0T 1C0

Sent by email [rob.ferguson@atikokan.ca](mailto:rob.ferguson@atikokan.ca)

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

**Re: Transportation and Burial of Nuclear Waste in Northwestern Ontario**

This year is going to be decisive. Later in 2024 the nuclear power industry will decide whether Northwestern Ontario will become the resting place for all of Canada's high-level radioactive waste.

As municipal leaders, have you asked your residents if they support our region being used in this way?

For the last decade, an organization of nuclear power companies called the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) has been conducting a siting process to identify a location for a "deep geological repository" (DGR) in which they intend eventually to abandon all of Canada's stockpiles of high-level radioactive fuel wastes.

We have six key concerns about the NWMO project, which are also described in the attached backgrounder:

- There is a significant risk that there will be radioactive releases from the NWMO's operation, including from the processing plant at the DGR site, and from the DGR itself.
- For more than 50 years there will be 2-3 trucks per day hauling the highly radioactive waste to the site on a route that passes through or near your municipality; each shipment will release low levels of radiation, and an accident could result in much higher releases; there is no safe level of exposure.
- The NWMO is using the Township of Ignace as a proxy decision-maker, while municipalities along the transportation route and downstream are put at risk, but are shut out of the decision on "willingness" (except for Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation, the closest downstream First Nation, with whom the NWMO has also engaged).
- The NWMO's "plan" is largely conceptual; no detailed description has been released since 2021 when a preliminary transportation plan and a "conceptual design report" were published.
- The NWMO reserves the option of initiating transport of radioactive waste to their selected site *before* determining if the geology of that site is appropriate, and before the DGR has received final approval.
- There is no other deep geological repository for high-level radioactive fuel waste anywhere in the world that has been approved or brought into operation.

Early in 2020 the NWMO announced that it would focus on two communities: South Bruce in Bruce County in Southwestern Ontario, and Ignace in Kenora District in Northwestern Ontario. Last August the NWMO announced a delay of its site selection from 2023 to 2024 and is now saying it will announce its selected site later in 2024.

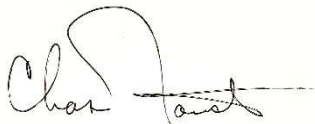
No community should be asked if it is “willing” to accept a project before there is comprehensive information available on what the project will include, how it will be carried out, and how the community can participate in the process. It is essential to this process that the results of an independent environmental assessment be available. However, only one municipality in all of Northwestern Ontario is being asked if they are willing, and the one that is being asked – the Township of Ignace – is more than 40 km away from the proposed site and in a different watershed. Several First Nations and municipalities have already passed resolutions expressing their opposition to the NWMO project because of the many risks and unknowns. Will you do the same?

We reach out to you as elected officials and municipal leaders in Northwestern Ontario. We are asking you to speak with your residents about their concerns, and then express those concerns by passing a resolution on behalf of your community. A sample resolution is attached.

Please let us know how we can assist you. We would be pleased to provide you with additional information and analysis, either through presentations to Council or more informally. We can also connect you and your fellow Councillors with independent experts who can answer your questions and provide you with technical analysis. More information is available on our website at [www.wethenuclearfreenorth.ca](http://www.wethenuclearfreenorth.ca).

Thank you for taking the time to read through this detailed letter and the attached backgrounder.

Sincerely,



Charles Faust  
Nuclear Free Thunder Bay  
Thunder Bay  
Bay



Dodie LeGassick  
Environment North  
Kakabeka Falls, Municipal District of Thunder



Brien Polak  
Sunset Country Spirit Alliance  
Oxdrift, Municipal District of Kenora



J. F. Kimberley  
North West Nuclear Watch  
Atikokan, Municipal District of Rainy River

***We the Nuclear Free North*** is an alliance of organizations and residents opposed to the transportation and abandonment of high-level radioactive waste in Northern Ontario. Formed in 2020, we are committed to learning and sharing information and engaging with our fellow residents and decision-makers across Northern Ontario about the risks this project brings. Visit [www.wethenuclearfreenorth.ca](http://www.wethenuclearfreenorth.ca) or call 1-855-225-8055 to learn more.