

# Residents urge U.S. to remove nuclear waste

## *Town of Tonawanda assails cleanup proposal*

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News Tonawanda Bureau

Get it out of town.

That was the seemingly unanimous reaction by Town of Tonawanda officials and residents Tuesday night to a proposal by the U.S. Department of Energy to clean up four local radioactive sites and store the waste in a facility in town.

About 250 people showed up for the public hearing on the Energy Department's \$59 million proposal to clean up four sites along the Thruway and River Road that were contaminated during the Manhattan Project to develop the atom bomb.

Fears about containment failure, contamination of the water supply and the economic impact on the town dominated the public comment period.

The department's proposal addresses the former Linde plant on East Park Drive, two properties of the former Ashland Oil refinery and the Seaway Industrial Landfill on River Road. It would excavate most contaminated waste, except that buried in the Seaway Landfill, and store it at a facility on one of the Ashland sites.

Tonawanda Supervisor Carl Calabrese said a facility along the Thruway would interfere with plans to relocate River Road and to open up the waterfront to park, commercial and residential development.

Councilman E. William Miller said the town could lose as much as \$1 million annually in revenues from lost development.

"This was not really a study, but a process with predetermined results," Calabrese charged.

The department did not want to remove the waste from Tonawanda for fear that other communities nationwide would want the same treatment, he said.

"The storage facility could also fail to contain the waste due to poor design, maintenance or an act of God," said Richard M. Tobe, commissioner of the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning. Tobe serves as chairman of the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda. The group consists of 13 elected officials.

Ronald E. Kirk, site manager of the Energy Department, said that similar facilities in Niagara Falls and in the western United States have operated for years without failure. Nonetheless, the coalition would like the waste removed to a recently-licensed commercial facility in Clive, Utah. Kirk said that the added cost — almost \$140 million — and the transportation risks did not make that plan acceptable.

The coalition, however, claimed that the department's transportation costs and risks are inflated and there could be additional federal funds available to remove the waste from Tonawanda.

Ralph Krieger, president of Local 8215 of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union at Linde, has repeatedly contended there is more contamination than the government admits.

"They said there is no health effects, but I've buried a lot of health effects in the 8215," he said, referring to numerous cancer deaths among workers. He said eight co-workers are now struggling with cancer.

The public also will be able to submit written comments until Jan. 11. The Energy Department will respond to the comments after 30 days and then make a final record of decision.