

Nuclear burial assailed:**DEC joins
CANIT in
opposition****By Brian Meyer
Correspondent**

The crusade against federal plans to create a sprawling nuclear waste depository in the Town of Tonawanda gained a powerful ally Wednesday when the State Department of Environmental Conservation lodges its opposition to the project.

The state's position was announced Wednesday evening at a public meeting in Herbert Hoover Middle School on Thorncliff Road. More than 130 concerned residents attended the forum which was sponsored by the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda (CANIT).

Residents and local government officials used the forum to assail a plan advanced by the U.S. Department of Energy which would see 8,000 tons of low-level radioactive waste moved from four existing sites in Tonawanda to a yet-to-be-determined site in the town.

William Todd, a Brighton Road resident, expressed fears that an earthquake could result in the seepage of nuclear waste into the Great Lakes.

"This site would be located near one of the largest fresh water supplies in the world. It's mind boggling to think that the Department of Energy could even consider storing this waste here," Mr. Todd said.

"This is a real disaster waiting to happen if this thing goes through."

The waste was shipped to Tonawanda in the 1940s for use in the World War II effort to develop the atomic bomb. This waste is currently stored at four sites: two locations on the former Ashland Refinery property, at the old Linde Corporation and at the Seaway Industrial Landfill.

Members of CANIT are prodding the federal government to remove the 351,000 cubic feet of waste and sent it to a commercial depository in Utah.

Tonawanda resident Noreen Powell said her family lives near the old Linde site.

"Because of the highly-populated area that the waste is in and its close proximity to our waterfront, the waste should be moved. The desert of Utah is a much more appropriate place for it," she said.

A number of public officials attended Wednesday evening's forum to denounce federal plans to consolidate the waste in the Town of Tonawanda. They included county Legislature Chairman Len Lenihan (D-Tonawanda), Legislator Charles Swanick (D-Kenmore), State Sen. Mary Lou Rath (R-Amherst), and county Environment and Planning Commissioner, Richard Tobe.

Assemblyman Robin Schimminger (D-Kenmore) was unable to attend the meeting, but an aide read his statement into the record. Mr. Schimminger applauded state environmental officials for joining the fight against the plan.

Town Supervisor Cari Calabrese also attended the meeting. He urged residents to write letters and make phone calls to elected leaders expressing their opposition to the project. Sup. Calabrese said it makes no sense to relocate the nuclear waste "within spitting distance of the Niagara River."

The federal government is expected to make a final decision this summer.