

# Bid to widen cleanup talks draws fire

*Elected officials oppose  
Tonawanda citizen group*

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The U.S. Department of Energy is moving ahead with efforts to develop a citizen group to represent the Town of Tonawanda community on the cleanup of low-level radioactive waste in the town.

But the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda, known as CANIT, a group of local elected officials, is decrying the move.

"It is nothing but a blatant attempt to circumvent CANIT's role," Tonawanda Supervisor Carl J. Calabrese said. "They are attempting to find a group that will agree with them."

At issue is the cleanup of about 8,000 tons of low-level radioactive waste dating to World War II and located at four sites along River Road and at the Praxair facility.

DOE will hold a public meeting Jan. 31 from 7 to 9 p.m. in Holmes School, 365 Dupont Ave., to discuss various criteria and values that should be used to evaluate different cleanup options, said Ronald E. Kirk, DOE site manager.

DOE originally proposed consolidating the waste at a disposal site on River Road. But the community has repeatedly asked that the waste be removed to a facility in Utah, which the federal government rejects because of its \$201 million price tag.

Now, DOE is trying to discuss with the community other cleanup alternatives, which include partially excavating the waste, or using soil treatment to reduce the waste.

"If the community doesn't want to talk about it, inaction is certainly an option because of the low-level (of radioactivity)," Kirk said.

But who within the community the government should talk to has become a debate in itself.

CANIT, which includes officials at all levels of government, insists that it is the representatives of Tonawanda. The group got a ringing endorsement from local residents who attended the last DOE-sponsored meeting in October.

DOE, however, is insisting on communicating with a broader part of the community. Kirk said that the department plans to hold a series of meetings and expects a "core group" to evolve as a representative group.

"The objective is not to exclude anyone, the object is to have broad participation," Kirk said. Regarding CANIT, he added: "If they show up, they can participate."

Some members of the local environmental community, such as Alex Cukan, head of the Sierra Club, have criticized the limited access to CANIT.

However, at a recent CANIT meeting, several members faulted their critics for living outside the town and for having a much broader agenda than CANIT, whose aim is strictly to get the radioactive waste out of Tonawanda.