

TON. NEWS 8-4-95

Cleanup of TT radioactive sites to begin this fall

By Joseph C. Genco
Staff writer

A portion of the talking, negotiating and red tape is done.

The Department of Energy has announced it will proceed with plans this fall for interim remediation of some radioactive wastes in the Town of Tonawanda.

The announcement comes in response to a request from Congressman John J. LaFalce.

Three buildings in the Linde-Praxair complex on Sheridan Drive will be decontaminated. A fourth will be demolished, and a 12,000 cubic-yard pile of contaminated materials will be removed to an out-of-state site.

Work on the \$14 million project could begin in the fall and may be completed by fall, 1996.

"In 1993, DOE had recommended keeping and maintaining wastes in Tonawanda," LaFalce said in a press release. "I objected, demanding that the recommendation be reconsidered, and in April of 1994, DOE agreed to totally reopen the question of what to do with Tonawanda wastes."

The action is potentially the first taken to remove wastes left over from the Manhattan Project of World War II from the community.

The wastes are present at three locations, Ashland one and two and Seaway Industrial park, which are both along River Road near the Grand Island bridges, and the Praxair property.

The community has been steadfast in its opposition to any wastes remaining in the town, much to the chagrin of the DOE which two years ago proposed a plan to partially excavate wastes and consolidate them on one site within a stone's throw of the Niagara River.

Town Supervisor Carl Calabrese, Richard Tobe an Erie County official who heads up "Citizens Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda," and County Legislator Charles Swanick all expressed optimism over the new work.

Another group, For a Clean Tonawanda Site (FACTS) is run by Don Finch and Jim Rauch independent of CANIT and other interests.

Mr. Rauch said that while the announcement can be viewed as good news, and the Praxair site is as good a starting point as anywhere, the Ashland I site remains the most heavily contaminated.

"It's really spectacular news from my viewpoint," Swanick said. "This settles the logjam concerning the DOE's desire to locate the material in the Tonawandas."

Swanick praised LaFalce, noting that local officials had pleaded for congressional intervention.

It was the intervention of a New Jersey congressman which led to the DOE agreeing to remove waste from that state rather than store it on site in two communities there.