



CANIT, State reinforce opposition to DOE's local waste storage plan

by PATRICK KEYES

The message from residents of the Town of Tonawanda to the U.S. Department of Energy is a familiar refrain: get out of town.

(See editorial on page four)

The message was echoed by a small but enthusiastic crowd at a public hearing Wednesday sponsored by the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda. The meeting was held to add to the already growing public comment against the DOE's plan to store radioactive waste from four Tonawanda sites in one newly constructed cell near the Niagara River.

While the DOE has said it will weigh all comments equally, one comment that came in that day certainly will carry a lot of weight. Thomas C. Jorling, head of the state's Department of Environmental Conservation, gave the state's position on the matter by saying they want to see the waste removed and sent to an out-of-state site.

"That's just great news and it couldn't have come at a better time," said Richard Tobe, head of

Erie County's Department of Environment and Planning and chairman of CANIT. "This group's position is to hopefully alter the decision of the DOE and so far we've felt there has not been enough chance to offer comment from our perspective."

Tobe cited several reasons for last week's meeting following a public hearing set by the DOE on Dec. 1 of last year. He mentioned that there wasn't adequate time for review of the proposal to store waste from four radioactive waste sites in the town into one newly constructed clay-capped cell on what is known as the Ashland I site, adjacent to the Niagara River.

"There also wasn't enough time for people to speak at the meeting," Tobe added, explaining that CANIT's position had to be submitted in writing because it was too long to be read aloud. "We want to see all of the material excavated and we want to see it taken out of Tonawanda."

At this meeting, Tobe said a similar situation in the Chicago area was resolved in favor of local

opponents to the DOE's plan to store the waste in a new cell there. That gives officials here hope for a change of heart by the federal officials.

The DOE's cost estimates for transporting the waste was questioned. Federal officials say it will cost more than \$200 million, while Erie County Legislator Charles Swanick, a CANIT member, said his discussions with Conrail officials cut that cost estimate by nearly \$13 million.

Tobe said the DOE's current plan calls for 2 percent of the total cleanup funding available to take care of 18 percent of the waste by volume from across the nation located here.

Several residents spoke out against the DOE proposal, with some people with technical expertise citing the volatile nature of the material in Tonawanda and the dangers of the federal plan.

The comment period on the proposal closes Feb. 10, with a final record of decision set for later this summer by the DOE's Washington directors.

State joins fight vs. DOE plan

by PATRICK KEYES

The head of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has urged the U.S. Department of Energy to remove the radioactive waste from four sites in the Town of Tonawanda.

That official state position, announced by Thomas C. Jorling, head of the DEC, and Assemblyman Robin Schimlinger, a member of the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda, could have a serious impact on the DOE's plans for the material.

While the DOE is recommending that the waste be partially excavated and stored in a newly constructed cell at what is known as the Ashland I site, one of the nine criteria for the final decision is state acceptance. When added to strong community opposition, another criterion, DOE may be forced to look at other options.

In his letter to Dr. Tara O'Toole, assistant secretary of the DOE, Jorling said the "radioactive waste materials from this remedial action should be disposed of in an out-of-state DOE or commercial disposal site, such as the Envirocare site in Clive, Utah."

Jorling said that change would be consistent with DEC's recently developed cleanup guidelines for state waste sites which calls for unrestricted use of all formerly contaminated properties.

Schimlinger called the federal response to the situation "long overdue" but noted that he could not accept the current DOE plan.

"I am very pleased that New York State is standing up for Western New York's interests and opposing DOE's proposal," Schimlinger added.