

Saturday, March 26, 1994

Local officials criticize LaFalce's handling of U.S. plan to store A-bomb waste in area

By FARAH SAFIUDDIN
News Tonawanda Bureau

Erie County and Town of Tonawanda officials Friday accused Rep. John J. LaFalce of inactivity on a federal plan that would permanently store nuclear waste from the atomic bomb project along the Niagara River.

"I am greatly concerned by the inactivity of our federal-level delegation," said Legislator Charles M. Swanick, D-Kenmore.

But Gary Luczak, a spokesman for the Town of Tonawanda Democrat, countered that the congressman is working closely with the community and with CANiT (the Coalition Against Nu-

clear Materials in Tonawanda).

"We have a ways to go on this," Luczak said. "We have been assured by (the Department of Energy) that no decision has been made. We have been assured that every single concern that we have brought to their attention will be explored honestly and thoroughly."

However, Swanick and Supervisor Carl J. Calabrese, both members of CANiT, sent a letter to Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary claiming that the department's study of the issue was a "process with a predetermined result."

Calabrese assailed DOE project manager Ronald E. Kirk for becoming "a salesman for the federal government's cheapest option" instead of pro-

viding objective information. The two officials called for his removal from the project.

"All of my presentations have been based on fact," Kirk said. "We're not selling anything. We did a study of the site. We feel it was done in accordance with Department of Energy guidelines."

Last fall, the department completed a five-year study of the estimated 8,000 tons of contaminated wastes now at the Seaway Industrial Landfill, two old Ashland Refinery properties and the former Linde Air Products Corp. plant in the Town of Tonawanda. The Energy Department recommended keeping the

See Criticize Page B4

Criticize: Public opposes project

Continued from Page B1

waste buried at Seaway and consolidating the rest on one of the old Ashland sites along the waterfront.

At hearings, the state Department of Environmental Conservation, elected officials and members of the public unanimously opposed storing the waste in the town. CANiT has contested the Energy Department's cost figures and wants the waste taken to a facility in Utah.

Calabrese also threatened to sue the federal government if it decides to keep the waste along the waterfront, which would halt town plans for new commercial and residential development there.

"We have not seen any (comments) of a technical nature th-

would change our recommendation," Kirk said. "A substantial number of comments disagree (with DOE) and want it shipped elsewhere. . . . The department is evaluating that now."

Responses to public comments and the department's final record of decision are due out in the fall, Kirk said.