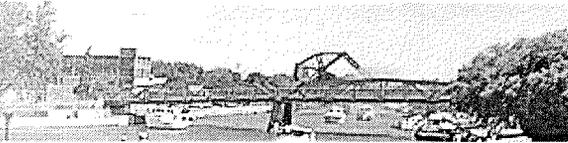


TONAWANDA NEWS



OUR VIEW: Army Corps wrong on landfill

The Tonawanda News

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— Was it any surprise that the Army Corps of Engineers is trying to lowball the Town of Tonawanda on the issue of radioactive waste in the Seaway landfill off the 190?

The corps has time and again, on a multitude of projects, lobbied on behalf of the most cost-effective environmental remediation measures possible. It's almost a given these days that if there are two options, the Army Corps is in favor of the one that will provide the smallest hit to its bottom line.

We're all for judicious spending and would never encourage a government entity to spend more than it needs to on a given project, but considering this region's tragic legacy of Love Canal, erring on the side of caution is the best policy. Yes, even if that means it costs more.

Engineers from the corps presented three options during a public hearing last week. The first would be the removal of all radioactive substances in the landfill and their cross-country shipment to a radioactive waste storage facility. It would cost about \$130 million — a significant amount of money to be sure.

A second, middle-of-the-road option would have some of the material removed (anything that's less than 10 feet underground or outside the landfill's boundary) with the remainder left there and capped. This would cost \$80 million.

The third option, which costs the least and is backed by the Army Corps, would remove only a minimum of the radioactive material in question and rely on the landfill cap to prevent any seepage into groundwater and surrounding properties.

Here's what we know: All landfill caps will breach eventually — like anything else, they won't last forever. It might not be for 100 years, but it's a question of when, not if. When that happens, residents and surrounding businesses in the town will be affected. Depending on how badly, it could cost those tasked with cleaning it up far more than the preventative \$130 million it would take to clear the land of radioactive waste.

It's the prudent choice, and the cost shouldn't be a concern when public health is a question. "Good enough" isn't a good enough option.

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