News from Beyond Nuclear

For Immediate Release, February 19, 2016

Contact: Kevin Kamps, Beyond Nuclear, (240) 462-3216

Beyond Nuclear thankful for hard won, indefinite delay on Great Lakes nuclear waste dump

Grassroots movement vows to redouble efforts to nip the ‘DUD’ in the bud

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada and Washington, D.C., U.S.A.—Late yesterday afternoon, the Canadian federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, issued the following statement, a Public Notice entitled Deep Geologic Repository Project — Ministerial Request for Additional Information, posted at the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency website:

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, today requested additional information and further studies on the environmental assessment for the proposed Deep Geologic Repository (DGR) Project for Low and Intermediate Level Radioactive Waste in Kincardine, Ontario.

After considering the Joint Review Panel Environmental Assessment Report, the Minister has requested that the proponent, Ontario Power Generation, provide additional information on three aspects of the environmental assessment: alternate locations for the project, cumulative environmental effects of the project, and an updated list of mitigation commitments for each identified adverse effect under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 (CEAA 2012).

Ontario Power Generation has been asked to provide the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, by April 18, 2016, with a schedule for fulfilling the information request. The Minister will contact the Panel, at a future date, regarding its role in the review of the additional information and studies.

The Minister's request for information from the proponent has paused the timeline for an environmental assessment decision to be issued, as per section 54(6) of CEAA 2012. At a later date, the Minister will seek a further timeline extension from the Governor in Council.

Kevin Kamps, Beyond Nuclear’s Radioactive Waste Watchdog, released the following statement in response:
“While we had hoped the Canadian federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, would have outright rejected Ontario Power Generation’s (OPG) insane scheme to bury radioactive waste on the Great Lakes shore, we are nonetheless thankful she is taking a more careful, hard look at this unacceptable proposal.

Minister McKenna’s request for more information on alternate locations for the project is most sensible. Canada is the second largest country in the world, in terms of geographic land area. OPG’s choice to target a water-soluble limestone formation on the Lake Huron shore makes no sense. As Mayor Mike Bradley of Sarnia, Ontario has pointed out, siting a Walmart in Ontario would have required a more thorough comparison of alternative sites than OPG has undertaken on its Deep Geologic Repository (DGR) for radioactive wastes originating at 20 reactors across the province.

Minister McKenna’s request for more information on the cumulative environmental effects of the project is most appreciated. That very subject formed the basis of Beyond Nuclear’s official intervention in the years-long Canadian federal Joint Review Panel Environmental Assessment (JRP EA) proceeding. We pointed out that the Great Lakes, the drinking water supply for 40 million people, is already heavily burdened with radioactive and toxic nuclear activities, from uranium mining and milling at Elliot Lake, to uranium processing and fuel fabrication at Port Hope, to operations at dozens of reactors on both sides of the border, and the consequent on-site storage of radioactive waste, and even radioactive waste incineration at Bruce Nuclear Generating Station (NGS), the targeted site for the now indefinitely postponed DGR as well. [See the International Institute of Concern for Public Health map of Great Lakes Region Nuclear Hot Spots for an overview.]

Northwatch and the Canadian Environmental Law Association deserve special thanks for the leadership they have provided to the public interest and environmental movement opposing the DGR during the JRP EA proceeding. Others who played vital roles in the resistance to the DUD in this proceeding include Eugene Bourgeois, one of Bruce NGS’s nearest neighbors; Dr. Frank Greening, a retired OPG scientist; and Dr. Gordon Edwards of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility.

Minister McKenna’s request for an updated list of mitigation commitments for each identified adverse effect under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is also most revealing. Very recently, a coalition of 80 Canadian and U.S. environmental groups called for a rejection of the DGR, due to just such blatant violations of legal requirements. OPG’s inability to submit a legally sufficient application is grounds for rejecting its DGR proposal once and for all. In fact, just since May 2015, well over 100 groups, from both Canada and the U.S., have urged Environment Minister McKenna and her predecessor, on multiple occasions, to do just that. In addition, a broad coalition of environmental groups and concerned citizens expressed
unconditional opposition to the DGR, when mitigating conditions, with largely open-ended deadlines, were proposed by the JRP.

We would like to thank all those who have fought for 15 years to prevent this unacceptable DUD (short for Deep Underground Dump, a phrase coined by Dave Martin of Greenpeace Canada, our preferred alternative name for the DGR).

Kay Cumbow of Michigan first alerted Americans to the DGR risk a decade and a half ago, and recently helped co-found Great Lakes Environmental Alliance (GLEA) in Port Huron, very actively committed to stopping the DUD, amidst its broader environmental scope of concerns. From a small number of voices in the wilderness, the anti-DUD movement has grown to an international national groundswell of resistance.

Neighbors to the proposed DUD have done remarkable work for years. Save Our Saugeen Shores filed a lawsuit in opposition to the JRP recommendation that the DUD proceed. Stop the Great Lakes Nuclear Dump has collected 93,000 petition signatures, and has had a major role in the collection of 184 resolutions from across the Great Lakes Basin, representing a population of 23 million people, expressing opposition to the DUD. Sum of Us gathered another nearly 60,000 petition signatures against the DUD.

A bipartisan, bicameral coalition of legislators in the State of Michigan, and in the U.S. Congress, has also done important work to protect the Great Lakes for years on end. Michigan’s U.S. Senators, Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters, deserve special thanks for their leadership, as do U.S. Representatives from Michigan, Dan Kildee and Candice Miller. They not only activated a large number of “the Great Lakes State” of Michigan’s congressional delegation, but also a bipartisan, bicameral coalition of congress members from the other seven Great Lakes states. In the Michigan State Senate, Senator Hoon-Yung Hopgood deserves special thanks for introducing an anti-DUD resolution that passed unanimously at both the committee and full State Senate levels. Michigan State Representative Sarah Roberts deserves special thanks for introducing an identical companion resolution in the State House. And Michigan State Senator Phil Pavlov has also been very engaged on this issue.

We are hopeful that the environmental injustice of the DGR will never be visited on the Saugeen Ojibwe Nation, upon whose land Bruce NGS is located. We thank SON for standing strong and withholding its consent for the dump, effectively a veto on the proposal, as acknowledged explicitly by OPG. We are thankful to other First Nations, such as the Anishinabek Nation, and the United Tribes of Michigan, for standing in solidarity with the SON.

While we are thankful for this postponement of the Canadian Environment Minister’s decision on the DUD, we will continue to community organize for the ultimate defeat of the Great Lakes shore radioactive waste dump proposal. But beyond that, we will also strive to block the DGR for all of Canada’s high-level
radioactive wastes, similarly targeted at numerous locations in the Great Lakes Basin. We will also strive to end the four-decades-long “low” and “intermediate” level radioactive waste importation, to Bruce NGS, from a dozen reactors east of Toronto (the Pickering and Darlington nuclear power plants). And we will also work to permanently shut down the eight operable reactors at Bruce, as well."

For more information on Beyond Nuclear’s and others’ work to nip the DUD in the bud, please see our Canada website section.

--30--