



Canadian Radioactive Waste Dump Proposed for Lake Huron

By Kevin Kamps and Nukewatch

In October, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) heard testimony from U.S. citizens opposed to building a low-level radioactive waste dump one half-mile from Lake Huron. Canada's Ontario Power Generation (OPG) has proposed the dumpsite for its sprawling Bruce nuclear reactor complex on Lake Huron's shore, 50 miles east of Michigan.

The unprecedented plan to permanently bury radioactive wastes in the Great Lakes basin threatens the ecology downstream for hundreds of thousands of years.

Alice Hirt, of Don't Waste Michigan in Holland, Michigan, said at the hearing, "Such extreme risks demand the highest level of scrutiny and independence, not the low-level environmental assessment proposed by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission."

OPG's proposal calls for burying all of the so-called "low" and "intermediate" level radioactive waste from eight reactors at Pickering, four at Darlington near Toronto and eight at Bruce in the Province of Ontario on Lake Huron. By comparison, Michigan has five nuclear reactors — four still operating and one permanently shut down. Most of Michigan's "low level" radioactive waste is dumped at a leaking site in Barnwell, South Carolina and in Clive, Utah. However, some is known to be buried at the local garbage dump in Waters Township in Otsego County, just south of Gaylord, Michigan.

Many Michigan towns and cities, such as Bay City, Port Huron, Detroit and Monroe, draw their drinking water from Lake Huron and points downstream — the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair, the Detroit River and Lake Erie.

"My constituents depend upon the Great Lakes as a source for drinking water," said U.S. Representative John Conyers of Michigan's 14th District, which includes parts of Detroit and the down river area. "I am very concerned about this dump leaking radioactive contamination into Lake

Huron and the potential downstream impacts this leak could have on our supply of clean drinking water," Conyers said.

The battle against the proposed dump has been joined by 23 Michigan environmental groups concerned about risks of trans-boundary radioactive contamination of the Great Lakes. U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI) has written to the CNSC and Canada's Environment Minister expressing his concern about the proposal and has asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S.-Canadian International Joint Commission to investigate.

"In the 1980s and 1990s, Don't Waste Michigan stopped a scheme by eight U.S. states to dump their radioactive waste in Michigan," said Michael Keegan of the Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes in Monroe. "We won't sit idly by as the Canadian nuclear establishment attempts to create a nuclear sacrifice zone in the heart of the Great Lakes," Keegan said.

A national coalition of Canadian environmental organizations is also fighting the proposal. The indigenous Saugeen Ojibway Nations have called on the CNSC for the proposed low-level environmental assessment to be upgraded to a Panel Review, the highest level environmental review under Canadian federal legislation.

"Our coalition of 72 grassroots groups, representing over 200,000 Michigan citizens, is very concerned about the precedent of a permanent dump for radioactive waste anywhere on the Great Lakes shoreline," said James Clift, Policy Director at the Michigan Environmental Council in Lansing.

Numerous Canadian and Michigan environmental groups called on CNSC to: expand the study area to encompass all downstream communities on the Great Lakes, including a worst-case accident scenario involving leakage of radioisotopes from the dump into Lake Huron; and consider alternatives to current large-scale radioactive waste incineration at the Bruce nuclear complex.

— *Kevin Kamps is the nuclear waste specialist with the Nuclear Information and Resource Service.*

When Subsidies End Nuclear Power Flops

By Alan Zibel

Advocates of nuclear power say it's the best way to meet the nation's growing demand for electricity without spewing pollutants or global warming gasses into the atmosphere.

But critics say that once financial incentives passed by Congress last year run out, the industry will flop.

Industry experts say it still remains unclear whether investors will lay out the huge capital costs, anywhere from \$3.4 billion to \$6 billion, needed to make a new nuclear reactor a reality.

"We're going to build new nuclear plants, but no one's really sure how much it's going to cost," said Peter Fox-Penner, principal of the Brattle Group, a nuclear power consulting firm.

The federal energy bill passed last year contained a lucrative tax credit for the first few new nuclear reactors, as well as protections against delays from licensing problems and litigation.

Still, David Lochbaum, a nuclear safety expert with the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington, DC, said there are better uses for taxpayer dollars than subsidies for nuclear power reactors. Without those subsidies, he said, companies will not be able to make the reactors feasible economically.

"The track record for the existing fleet of reactors was one of very optimistic projections and very costly reality," Lochbaum said. "That problem hasn't gone away."

But proponents say federal dollars will simply give the industry the kick-start it needs to get going again. After that the industry will be able to stand on its own without subsidies.

"Nuclear power does not need a subsidy long term," said Michael J. Wallace, president of Constellation's power generation group.

After the passage of last year's energy bill, power companies around the country have rushed to develop their own plans for nuclear expansion.

In an October speech, Dale Klein, chairman of the Rockville-based Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said he expects the list of potential sites for new reactors around the country to grow to 30 or more.

And the advent of electricity deregulation in the Mid-Atlantic States poses another challenge for the construction of nuclear reactors. In deregulated markets like Maryland, Constellation and its partners will have to pay for the cost of building the reactor without any up-front money from consumers.

"The risk is going to be to us and our financiers," Wallace said. "That's why we're going to make darn sure that we have very, very high confidence we're not going to run into problems."

By contrast, Duke Energy, which serves North Carolina, said this month that it would ask state lawmakers for the ability to charge customers for the construction of power reactors before they are built.

— *This article appeared in Baltimore Business Journal.*

Toshiba's Nuclear Cash Cow

By Paul Vos Benkowski

China's booming economy, Russia's push for economic stability, the European Union's lack of energy resources and the U.S.' gluttonous appetite for energy has placed the nuclear industry in a most advantageous position. There is more demand for nuclear power than there is supply and there is more cash than there is responsibility. A cash cow to be sure, and the profiteers are queuing up around the world.

First in line is the Toshiba Corporation of Japan. The company is poised to carve a third of this cow for itself after purchasing the nuclear arm of Westinghouse Electric from British Nuclear Fuels on February 6, 2006 for \$5.4 billion. Industry watchers hardly batted an eye at the staggering cost as China is planning to build 32 new reactors over the next 15 years, and U.S. companies Duke Energy and Progressive Energy plan on using Westinghouse-designed reactors for their upcoming utilities. Presently, 40 percent of the world's nuclear energy suppliers already use Westinghouse technology. The International Energy Agency estimates that \$200 billion will be spent on nuclear power by 2030. How could they lose with oil costing money, lives and

Nuclear Power Can't Save the Climate

The environmental group Friends of the Earth deplores the International Atomic Energy Agency's proposal to add nuclear nightmares to the global climate crisis.

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Friends of the Earth Europe has chastised the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for pushing a global energy policy that would promote a nuclear revival while still condemning the world to catastrophic climate change. The policy was outlined in the IAEA's new "World Energy Outlook," published November 7. Friends of the Earth Europe has declared the proposals dangerous, a threat to the climate and economically unviable.

Frank van Schaik, nuclear energy campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe, said:

"Nuclear power is not the solution to the problems of climate change and energy security. Nuclear power remains the most dangerous form of energy. An accident like the 1986 explosion of the reactor in Chernobyl in Ukraine could happen every day. And the question of what to do with highly radioactive waste remains unsolved. We can secure the supply of energy 10 times cheaper through investing in energy savings instead of new nuclear power. On a level playing field, nuclear power is economically insane." (See: "Nuclear power: economics and climate protection potential," Rocky Mountain Institute; Jan. 2006.)

Friends of the Earth Europe has demonstrated that beyond burdening future generations with a dirty legacy for centuries, new nuclear power comes at a high financial cost for society, if the real costs of nuclear power are properly taken into account. These costs include century-long waste treatment, management and storage, the decommissioning of old reactors and the costs of potential accidents. Not a

sovereign states while alternative, safe energy sources are struggling for acceptance?

That few people profit while many lose is nothing new, yet when the profits come at a cost of health and livelihood there can be no gain worth the further proliferation of nuclear reactors.

The profiteers don't lose, the rest of us do — we who work in the uranium mines and reactors; we who pay utility bills; and we who live near reactors and unsafe storage facilities. We experience compromised health, safety and whatever clean environment we have left. We lose money through federal taxes that cover reactor accident insurance (insurance companies refuse to take the risk) and cover the deficit in funding to shut down, dismantle and clean up reactor sites. A case in point is the recent \$143 million award granted three east coast nuclear facilities after a suit was filed against the U.S. government for failing to take away their private waste reactor fuel rods. The cost of isolating radioactive waste for millions of years is not even part of today's equation. Yet another hefty price for taxpayers to pay toward a nefarious industry.

single nuclear power station has ever been built without massive government subsidies.

The European Commission has recently started investigations concerning illegal state aid for a nuclear power reactor currently under construction in Finland. Also, contrary to the claims in the World Energy Outlook 2006, uranium is a finite resource that, even if nuclear energy capacity was kept at present levels, would last only 50 years, according to "Nuclear Power: Myth and Reality—The Risks & Prospects of Nuclear Power," by Gerd Rosenkranz. (See the series of articles at: www.boell.de)

New nuclear reactors will diminish the world's chances to avert the growing climate crisis. Money invested in energy-saving measures and renewable energy can achieve far greater emission reductions than if invested in nuclear power.

Friends of the Earth Europe welcomes the acknowledgment by the World Energy Outlook 2006 that policies and measures to increase energy efficiency will yield financial savings exceeding initial extra investment costs for energy producers and consumers. But the report does not give sufficient prominence to cutting energy waste and exploiting the full potential of increasing energy efficiency.

Jan Kowalzig, climate campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe, said:

"We need drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the economic and environmental repercussions of catastrophic climate change. But the recommendations of the IAEA's World Energy Outlook 2006 would lead to soaring emissions for decades. The report's suggestions for reducing energy waste are far too weak, and it lacks proposals for strong and effective policies to move away from dirty energy production into an era of renewable energies."

Friends of the Earth Europe also exposed the myth that nuclear energy is an energy source free of greenhouse gas emissions. Nuclear power emits as much CO₂ as a modern gas-fired co-generation plant. When assessing the overall emissions, the whole lifetime of a nuclear power station needs to be part of the equation, including fossil fuels burnt during uranium mining, processing and transportation, building the nuclear power station and its decommissioning, as well as long-term waste management, storage and treatment.

The German Environmental Ministry has said this about the nuclear fuel chain, "If one takes into consideration the mining of [uranium] resources, the transportation, the building and maintaining of nuclear reactors, the distribution of the electricity and the necessary additional production of heat, then nuclear power does often look worse for climate protection than other forms of energy production.

"A modern gas-fired power station in connection with heat production [co-generation] can be more favorable for the climate. Even better for the climate are renewable energies and most of all the efficient use of energy."

— *Friends of the Earth Europe*