

December 12, 2008

To: Nuclear Waste Management Organization

From: Walter L. Robbins

Subject: My comments on your nuclear waste discussion document - Moving Forward Together: Designing the Process for Selecting a Site:

It is a serious mistake to proceed any further with a process which is intended to ultimately lead to permanent underground emplacement of irradiated nuclear fuel waste. Why do I think that?

First, a little history here: For decades, your (the nuclear) industry has taken a number of different approaches in its attempt to achieve its unyielding, and obviously, continuing, objective of getting the waste into the ground, out of sight and out of mind.

During the late 1970's your predecessors (Atomic Energy of Canada and Ontario Hydro) attempted to find a specific nuclear waste site in central and northwest Ontario, exploring old mine shafts, drilling bore holes in various granite rock formations and, in the process, disrupting many communities in the region. The sociological fallout from those efforts was significant, to say the least.

When that effort failed, the next attempt was to downplay the siting process and to promote such activities as "geological research."

When that "foot in the door" effort failed, your industry finally turned to what was surely its trump card, sitting at the eastern edge of the Cambrian shield in the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet, near the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment (WNRE) at Pinawa, Manitoba. The Lac du Bonnet granite batholith ultimately became the URL: the Underground Research Laboratory. It quickly became very obvious that the not so hidden agenda for that batholith was the full scale underground repository, with a configuration, not unlike the diagrams you are currently projecting. The "this is only research" mantra was periodically augmented with statements from WNRE officials to the effect that if the community wanted the full scale dump, perhaps it could be arranged, and even cheerier notions that Manitoba could become the nuclear waste dump for the rest of the world. The community decided it did not care for the informal offers. Nor did the government of Manitoba when it passed legislation against any such facility within its environs.

For the history students in your midst, grim details about the Manitoba episode can be found at my Great Canadian Nuclear Waste Saga web site: <http://www.nukeshaft.ca>

Now, as an integral part of the nuclear industry, the NWMO continues in this rather compulsive exercise of locating an underground site to dump these radioactive substances, some of which, as you well know, pose dangers to living things for hundreds of thousands and even millions of years.

