

Energy Company Drops Lake Huron Nuclear Waste Plan Following Saugeen Ojibway Nation Vote

By [Native News Online](#)

Global Research, February 12, 2020

[Native News Online](#) 4 February 2020

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

After years of debate, Ontario Power Generation has dropped a plan to store nuclear waste underground near Lake Huron.

The Canadian energy firm said it would not move forward with plans to develop a permanent nuclear waste disposal site in the town of Kincardine, Ontario, where it also operates the Bruce Nuclear nuclear plant. The proposed storage facility would have been 2,200 feet below grade and less than a mile from Lake Huron.

The decision came after a resounding ratification vote by members of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation on the issue. Of the 1,232 ballots cast, nearly 86 percent voted against the proposed project.

Ontario Power Generation had committed to the Saugeen Ojibway Nation in 2013 that it would not build the so-called deep geologic repository (DGR) facility without the support of the tribes.

“OPG will explore other options and will engage with key stakeholders to develop an alternate site-selection process,” OPG CEO and President Ken Hartwick said in a statement.

“We were not consulted when the nuclear industry was established in our Territory,” the Saugeen Ojibway Nation wrote in a statement. “Over the past forty years, nuclear power generation in Anishnaabeking has had many impacts on our communities, and our Land and Waters, including the production and accumulation of nuclear waste.”

Collectively, the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation and the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation are referred to as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation.

“This vote is a historic milestone and momentous victory for our People,” said Chief Lester Anoquot of the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation. “As Anishinaabe, we didn’t ask for this waste to be created and stored in our Territory, but here it is. We have a responsibility to our Mother Earth to protect both her and our Lands and Waters.

“We must work diligently to find a new solution for the waste,” Chief Anoquot said.

The decision by OPG to scuttle the nuclear waste facility was met with cheers from tribes

and politicians, including U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee (D-Mich.), who has worked on the issue since joining Congress in 2013.

“Today’s announcement is a huge victory for protecting our environment and our economy that relies on the Great Lakes,” Kildee said in a statement.

The proposal to store millions of tons of nuclear waste in Kincardine “never made sense,” Kildee said.

“Nuclear waste remains radioactive for thousands of years, and burying it next to the Great Lakes would have threatened our economy and clean drinking water for over 40 million people. Surely in the vast land mass that comprises Canada, there has to be a better place to permanently store nuclear waste than on the shores of the Great Lakes,” he said.

Aaron Payment, chairperson of the Michigan’s Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, cheered the decision in a statement issued yesterday.

“The Sault Tribe, along with the rest of the tribes in Michigan, is pleased to see Ontario Power Generation give up on this terrible idea to build a nuclear waste storage site on the shores of the Great Lakes,” Payment said. “Since 2017, the tribes in Michigan have supported our relatives in the Saugeen Ojibway Nation in their concerns over this proposal. In addition, any threat to the Lake Huron fishery that is posed by disposal of nuclear waste so close to the Great Lakes is of deep concern to us all.”

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