

THE NORTH RENFREW TIMES

DEEP RIVER, ONTARIO

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Trust the 'experts' on NSDF, PM says

BY TERRY MYERS

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says his government trusts the "experts" when it comes to decisions around the Near Surface Disposal Facility.

Questions around the NSDF were raised in the House of Commons last Wednesday following a protest in front of the Parliament buildings by Indigenous communities and others opposed to the waste site.

Yves-François Blanchet, leader of the Bloc Québécois, said that "contrary to common sense," the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has "authorized a pit covering over a million square metres to store nuclear waste pretty much alongside the Ottawa River."

"Many people are concerned about this, including chiefs of the Anishinabek Nation, who are here with us today.

"I would like the Prime Minister to tell me, does he consider nuclear waste to be dangerous?"

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SLOPES GOLD: Wren Rauluk Dunn of MacKenzie Community School dominated the field, claiming the gold medal at the Upper Ottawa Valley and Eastern Ontario alpine ski championships at Calabogie February 9 and 19. Dunn will take part in the Ontario finals at Osler Bluff in Collingwood next week. For more, see page 18.

INSIDE:



JACKRABBITS HOLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

NO PAPER FEBRUARY 28

Please note that there will be no issue of the North Renfrew Times next Wednesday, February 28 as we take a one-week winter break. The paper will be back to its regular schedule for the next issue of Wednesday, March 6. In the case of breaking news, watch for updates on our website or new Facebook page at "NRT Today."

QUOTEWORTHY:

"I grew up watching The Simpsons and we're going to have a situation potentially of three-eyed fish."

- Story, page 9

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PLEASE RECYCLE

Trust experts

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Trudeau said protecting the "health and safety of Canadians and the environment is a top priority for this government."

He said the decision to approve construction of the NSDF at the Chalk River Laboratories was made by the "independent" Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, "which approves projects only if it determines they are safe for Canadians and the environment, and only after a thorough assessment based on evidence and consultations with indigenous and other affected communities."

"The government of Canada and the Department of Energy and Natural Resources are not involved in the commission's decisions."

But Blanchet said the Anishinabek Nation has "conclusively decided that it is not safe."

"The Quebec nation has conclusively decided that it is not safe."

"Is the Prime Minister only listening to the nuclear lobby and to the steadily shrinking Liberal nation?"

RIGOROUS ASSESSMENT

Trudeau repeated that the CNSC is an "independent scientific body that conducts rigorous assessments to ensure the safety of nuclear facilities."

"It consults with the communities concerned and bases its activities on science to protect Canadians and the environment."

"This is not a political decision," he said. "On this side of the House, we trust our experts."

The CNSC approved construction of the NSDF in a decision released January 9.

The commission said the NSDF is "but likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects, provided that all proposed mitigation measures are implemented."

The decision covers construction of the site and related facilities only.

"The commission will consider the operation of the NSDF in a future licensing process, including a public hearing, should CNL (Canadian Nuclear Laboratories) come forward with a licence application for authorization to operate the NSDF."

As described in the decision, the NSDF will have a "footprint" of approximately 37 ha and includes "an en-

gined containment mound designed to permanently contain and isolate up to 1,000,000 cubic metres (m³) of solid low-level radioactive waste, a wastewater treatment plant, and other support facilities."

The NSDF site would be located "1.1 km from the Ottawa River on a bedrock ridge which slopes away from the river."

The project has met strong opposition from environmental groups and Indigenous communities.

"We are talking about one million cubic metres of radioactive waste here. That is not a little compost bin."

Two applications for a judicial review of the CNSC decision were filed with the Federal Court of Canada the first week of February.

The first, filed by the Kebaowek First Nation (KFN), says the commission's decision was made "in a manner that is inconsistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (UNDRIP) and "in breach of the (government's) duty to consult."

The second, filed by the Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area, Ralliment contre la pollution radioactive and the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, say the commission's decision failed to meet the requirements of both the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the Nuclear Safety and Control Act.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRAVESTY

"The risk of harm from the proposed NSDF is not only a First Nations issue, it also affects all individuals, animals, plants, and waters in the vicinity," KFN Chief Lance Haymond said at the time.

"We are doing this on behalf of our People and all Canadians who depend on the Ottawa river as their drinking water source."

The issue was raised in Parliament again last Thursday.

Bloc MP Monique Pauzé said the NSDF project is "an environmental travesty and a social injustice."

"The Anishinabe communities that are

affected by this project are opposed to it, and I am proud that the Bloc Québécois was able to help Chief Lance Haymond express that opposition yesterday."

"I am proud that we added our voice as representatives of 4.5 million concerned Quebecers."

"Will the government finally say no to the Chalk River project and ensure that any nuclear waste burial project does not unnecessarily threaten indigenous communities and the people of Quebec?"

Max Serré, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, said the CNSC "approves projects only if they are safe for Canadians and the environment."

"After conducting consultations with indigenous communities and others concerned, Natural Resources Canada plays no role in the commission's decisions."

Serré said that "as this matter is subject to judicial review, we are awaiting the outcome of the decision for the process."

But Pauzé said the government "would have us believe" that the CNSC is "independent."

"That is funny, since it is the Governor in Council that appoints the president. That is just an example."

CONSULTATION

Pauzé said "burying nuclear waste one kilometre from the Ottawa River is an unnecessary risk to the drinking water of the Anishinabe people and half of Quebecers."

"We are talking about one million cubic metres of radioactive waste here. That is not a little compost bin."

Pauzé said the Montreal metropolitan area "is against the Chalk River project."

"The City of Gatineau is against it."

The indigenous communities affected are against it. Environmental groups are against it. When will the minister say no to this project that is threatening our health and the environment?"

Serré said it is "incredible" that the Bloc "does not want to recognize the independence of a nuclear safety commission that approves only projects that have been subject to consultation with indigenous communities."

"Let us be clear, Natural Resources Canada does not have a role in this. Consultations were held."

"The file is subject to judicial review and we are awaiting the results of that decision."

"In the meantime," he said, "we will continue to work together with the community and the indigenous peoples to ensure that the project is viable."