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DATE 30 May 1996

TO/DEST. The Chair and Members of Regional Council

FROM/EXP. Director, Finance and Administration Division  
Environment and Transportation Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **DEEP RIVER - LOW LEVEL  
RADIOACTIVE WASTE FACILITY**

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### INTRODUCTION

In February of 1996, the Chair's office received correspondence from a citizens group named the 'Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County & Area' expressing their concerns for the Deep River Low Level Radioactive Waste Facility and soliciting our support against the project.

This report is to advise the Planning and Environment Committee and Council of this concern and the action that staff are taking in this regard.

### BACKGROUND

A Siting Task Force comprising of Federal Ministerial appointees was struck in 1988 to find a site to deal with low level radioactive waste from Port Hope and possibly other Ontario radioactive waste facilities. Under federal guidelines at the time, the review was performed under the 1984 Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP). To avoid unnecessary duplication and excessive costs, the project did not follow a separate Provincial Environmental Assessment. The Siting Task Force underwent a 'Consultation/Voluntary Selection Process' to select a site. Approximately 850 municipalities were invited to submit their interest in accepting low level radioactive waste. Initially both Port Hope and Deep River showed interest. Presently only Deep River is still considering this proposal. The community of Deep River held a referendum which supported housing the Low Level Radioactive Waste in return for a compensation package. The Siting Task Force has now completed its mandate having recommended Deep River as the potential site. The recommendations were forwarded to the Minister of Natural Resources Canada in November 1995.

### Information Previously Distributed

To be listed on Planning and Environment  
Committee Agenda 25 June 96

The report has undergone a Federal Inter-Departmental review since January 1996. It is our understanding that the project will be forwarded to the Federal Cabinet in the next two to three weeks for an attempt at the June agenda. Otherwise, it would be postponed to September due to summer recess. Should a go ahead be given by the Federal Cabinet, the proponent would proceed to detailed design and assessment of the site which would likely take up to four years. The proponent would also apply for licensing of the site from Atomic Energy of Canada. At the time of application to Atomic Energy of Canada, the site will then be subject to an environmental assessment under the new Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA), 1995 which dictates that an assessment is required or triggered when a federal department or agency is asked to provide a license.

Under the new Act, there are four possible types of environmental assessments:

- i) screening
- ii) comprehensive study
- iii) mediation
- iv) panel review

99% of projects fall under a simple screening or a slightly more in-depth comprehensive study. The other two possible routes are Mediation, where a mediator is appointed by the Minister of Environment Canada to help interested parties resolve issues, or the Panel Review, where further evaluation is referred to an independent and public panel. It has not yet been identified which assessment track this project will follow. Therefore, staff are concerned that the Region will not be given or may only have very limited opportunity to comment.

## DISCUSSION

The proposed Deep River Low Level Radioactive Waste Facility would house waste from facilities in Port Hope and Deep River. Staff are concerned with potential impacts on the Region's drinking water and surface water quality. The proposed site is located approximately 300 metres from the banks of the Ottawa River, near Deep River. Work done to date to assess the site and the possible impact on the Ottawa River appear to be of a preliminary nature. Staff are concerned that there was no public consultation with neighbouring and downstream communities. There was no communication to the RMOC nor to the Communauté Urbaine de L'Outaouais (CUO), the largest urban users of the Ottawa River downstream of Deep River. As well, staff have had to search out information on this project. RMOC involvement only began once a Citizen Group informed the Chair's office of this proposed project. In addition, other communities such as the CUO and the City of Gatineau also heard of the project from concerned citizen groups. On May 14, 1996 at the request of Regional staff, a presentation by the consultant took place at Regional Headquarters.

Staff cannot assess the short or long term impact of the proposed radioactive waste site on the Ottawa River with the information received to date. To properly assess the consultant's work, the Region may require the services of a specialist in this field of study. Under the CEAA, a Participant Funding Program has been established whereby concerned citizens and organizations (such as the Region) may participate in the environmental assessment. Unfortunately, the program is only available for projects which undergo mediation or a panel review.

We understand that on 07 June 1996, staff at the CUO will be providing an information report to it's Council on this topic recommending against the project until the proponent has held public consultation. Staff at the Region will attempt to obtain a copy of this report once it is available.

### CONSULTATION

Should the project be given the go ahead by the Federal Cabinet, and proceed to the detailed design stage and detailed assessment, the proponent has indicated that public consultation will occur with communities downstream and along the transportation routes.

### ACTION PLAN

Regional staff are not comfortable with the proposal as it presently stands given the following short and long term concerns:

- surface water issues
- drinking water issues
- public consultation

Staff will inform the proponent in writing of our concerns and will also respond to the Concerned Citizens Group which first brought the matter to the Region's attention. To properly assess the proposal, specialist consultants will be required and staff will request the proponent to provide the required funds for this expertise.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact J. Miller, Director of Environment Engineering, Infrastructure Capital Division at extension 2603 or myself at extension 2611.

*Approved by  
J. Yelle-Weatherall*

JBL/

cc: M.J.E. Sheflin  
J. Miller  
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