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Citizens angry court won't allow assessment of dump

BY PETER GEIGEN-MILLER
Free Press Reporter

A citizens' group and its supporters are dismayed by the Supreme Court of Canada's refusal to hear a bid for public review of plans to build a dump for highly radioactive waste near the shores of Lake Huron.

The Iverhuron and District Ratepayers Association had sought a detailed environmental assessment of the massive dump, but the Supreme Court last week refused to hear the case.

The association has been fighting for an assessment since Ontario Power Generation announced plans for the dump in 1996. The facility for dry storage of nuclear waste from the Bruce nuclear plant is planned for the Bruce Nuclear Power Development in Kincardine.

Critics charge the dump will be the world's largest nuclear storage facility.

Normand de la Chevrotiere, a spokesperson for the association, said the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act allows independent assessments of projects with the scope and seriousness of the dump.

"It seems that this only applies when it suits the industry, not when it gets in the way," said de la Chevrotiere.

"If the world's largest nuclear waste storage facility does not merit an independent and adequate environment review, what does?"

Environmental Defence Canada, a national organization supporting the legal challenge, said the dump poses environmental and health risks.

"We're substantially disappointed that the court did not deem this sufficiently important to hear the case and let us make the legal arguments we thought we had," added Burkhard Mausberg, the organization's executive director.

Critics charge that childhood leukemia is 40 per cent above the provincial average within a 25-kilometre radius of the Bruce plant and there is nuclear contamination of ground water in the area.

The court ordered the association to pay nearly \$80,000 in court costs arising from the case to Ontario Power Generation and the federal government.

Mausberg said ordering a citizens' group to pay costs could have a chilling effect on future court challenges in public interest cases.