

**TORONTO**



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**ATOMIC CHEQUE** Citizens stung by cost of fighting nuke dump.

*By Adria Vasil*

# newsfront

## ANTI-NUKES GET DUMPED

By ADRIA VASIL

LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE Bruce nuclear plant has always felt ominous to residents of Inverhuron, southwest of Owen Sound.

The community is already suffering childhood leukemia rates 40 per cent above the provincial average and is plagued by radiation leeching into groundwater.

Now the beleaguered town is confronting the nearby construction of the world's largest nuclear waste facility. And citizen activists are discovering to their dismay that there's a high cost to confronting the atomic industry.

When news that the area had been chosen as the site of the facility first hit, Ontario Power Generation (OPG) held public sessions to assure residents of its safety. But this wasn't enough for skeptical locals, who insisted on a second opinion, one they thought they were entitled to but didn't get under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

A local 300-member residents group took OPG and the government to court. What they learned from court documents was truly shocking: the dump's design had been revised. New plans would double the capacity for radioactive waste containers, and the containers themselves seemed, according to OPG's own numbers, only half as effective at shielding radiation.

Soon, a trail of incriminating letters surfaced. In one, the Atomic Energy Control Board (AECB) told several government departments that the impacts of the changes needed to be studied further. Even OPG's own consultant, GE Canada, told the company it needed major revisions to its environmental and safety plans.

OPG complained it couldn't afford delays, to which the AECB responded by reversing its decision and giving the dump approval.

Ratepayers thought they had a strong case in court. But after three rounds of litigation, the Supreme Court refused to hear the case last month. The group has also been ordered to pay over \$75,000 in punitive damages to both the power company and the feds.

"It sends a message: don't ever challenge the decision of a major corporation or the government," says group spokesperson Norman de la Chevrotière.

OPG spokesperson John Earl would not comment on the case but defends the quality of the dump.

"We carried out (our own) environmental assessment," he says. To residents, that's precisely the problem.