

MEDIA RELEASE

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From: **We the Nuclear Free North**



World Water Day Prompts Submission to Parliamentary Committee on Risks of NWMO's Nuclear Waste Project to Water

Thunder Bay – A Northern Ontario alliance concerned about a risky project to transport and bury nuclear fuel waste has chosen [World Water Day](#) to submit their brief to a parliamentary committee studying freshwater.

[We the Nuclear Free North](#) submitted the ten-page brief to the [Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development](#) today, outlining the set of risks the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) project poses to the lakes, rivers and groundwater of Northern Ontario. The Committee is carrying out a [comprehensive study](#) of the role of the federal government in protecting and managing Canada's freshwater resources in Canada.

The opposition group points to the risks during transportation, processing and burial of the highly radioactive nuclear fuel waste, including from operations at the site of the proposed deep geological repository.

“The NWMO plan is still largely theoretical, but according to their own limited descriptions of the operating period, it is evident that freshwater in the area of the site will be impacted”, explained Wendy O’Connor, one of the report authors.

“Water used for washing down the nuclear waste transportation packages will become contaminated with radionuclides. According to the NWMO’s published details, that water will be sent to a settling pond and then released to natural water bodies in the vicinity of the site, as will the contaminated water that will be pumped from the underground repository”, said O’Connor.

“Despite assurances from the nuclear industry, it remains entirely possible that the nuclear waste itself, deposited underground, will contaminate the deep groundwater in the near or long term – contamination that will eventually reach surface water in the vast watershed”.

The NWMO’s candidate site in Northwestern Ontario is located half-way between Ignace and Dryden. Because it is at the height of land for the Wabigoon and the Turtle River systems, there are concerns about releases to the downstream communities, including Rainy River and Lake of the Woods. The group notes that if and when the radioactive releases occur from the deep geological repository there will be no means to reverse the impacts.

World Water Day, held on 22 March every year since 1993, is an annual United Nations Observance focusing on the importance of freshwater.

“It’s ironic that the UN theme for World Water Day in 2024 is [“Water for Peace”](#), given the level of division and conflict that the NWMO’s proposal has brought to our region”, commented Kathleen Skead, a member of Anishinaabe of Wauzhushk Onigum Nation, one of several downstream Treaty 3 communities.

“Hopefully people will pause today and recognize that water is life and the NWMO’s promise of money is not worth the risk. Water is vital for all forms of life.”

The brief is posted [HERE](#).

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