

Peterborough letter: Take a look at what happened in West Valley, N.Y.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Local residents opposed to the nuclear firm BWXT's application to do uranium pelleting in Peterborough protest outside BWXT on Monaghan Road on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020 in Peterborough, Ont. Citizens Against Radioactive Neighbourhoods (CARN) organized the protest. - CLIFFORD SKARSTEDT , Examiner file photo

It is disturbing that only Coun. Dean Pappas seems to be concerned about the nuclear license being sought by the fox overlooking the General Electric henhouse. Clearly no one in this area is familiar with the horror stories that abound both in the U.S. and elsewhere in relation to nuclear use. One that occupied many years of my life was the saga of **West Valley, N.Y.**

Here in the beautiful rural/farming area East of Lake Erie the Getty Oil Company started a small, private reprocessing facility for nuclear waste in the 1960s. This seemed like a good idea since at that time all the

brilliant minds that had found out how to harness the atom had not been able to figure out how to clean up toxic wastes generated by the process of fissioning uranium.

Actually, we are now some 75 years into the atomic age and this problem still exists and, indeed, is edging closer to critical with the waste products of Ontario's nuclear reactors piling up on-site because no one wants to risk burying them where they could leach into our water supply, such as Lake Huron.

Just one of the high-level wastes, plutonium, created by the fission process, has a half-life of a quarter million years. At the **West Valley** installation plutonium was being stored in a garden shed behind an eight-foot wire fence, easy access for terrorists of that era who could also find simple instructions on how to make a radioactive bomb in science books.

Also, this plant was leaking radioactivity from low-level wastes into the tributary of a major stream that runs into Lake Erie just above the water intake for the City of Buffalo's drinking water. Fortunately, the U.S. regulator responded to public alarm over this situation by declining to renew Getty's license.

However, I came to Canada before the costly cleanup of this site ended up, I believe, stuck on the taxpayers of New York state. There was never an explanation of the increased level of miscarriages and other possible effects of this careless handling of dangerous materials.

So, to those opposing the permission to manufacture uranium pellets in Peterborough, and those who are clearly unaware of the threat this proposal could pose, I suggest you research **West Valley** so you can judge for yourselves the level of truth in nuclear proposals.

Joan Reeves, Water Street