FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: BLUEWATER COALITION FILES FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

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Why have six municipal councils in this region voted in the past year to be considered as the site for all of Canada's high-level radioactive waste, when such a move could have tragic environmental consequences for the Great Lakes and could negatively stigmatize the region's strengths as agricultural land and as a vacation and retirement destination? And why have they done so with little public discussion and almost unanimously?

In pursuit of answers, the Bluewater Coalition Against the DGRs will file eight Municipal Freedom of Information Act (FOI) requests immediately to obtain any discussions between Bruce County mayors and the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) regarding compensation to lure these communities into such deals, the Coalition announced at its inaugural press conference Thursday.

The FOI requests are to obtain details of correspondence or meetings between the NWMO and the mayors of the region's municipalities in the running to become a 'willing host' for a deep geological repository (DGR) for all of Canada's high-level radioactive waste -- Saugeen Shores, Arran-Elderslie, Brockton, Huron-Kinloss and South Bruce in Bruce County and Central Huron in Huron County, as well as between the NWMO and Bruce County Council.

An FOI request is also being filed concerning the agreement Kincardine already has with Ontario Power Generation (OPG) to construct a deep geological repository (DGR 1) for all of Ontario's low- and intermediate-level nuclear waste at a site less than one kilometre from Lake Huron. A joint panel is now reviewing the environmental and public impacts of that plan.

"We're questioning why so many councils have been enticed to invite a nuclear-waste dump into their communities, and we're wondering if the core of that, why they have done so, was the hosting agreement that was signed with Kincardine in 2005 over the low and intermediate nuclear waste [DGR 1]," said Brockton councillor Chris Peabody, a Coalition member and one of only two councillors across the region who voted against such proposals. "Kincardine is being given millions in compensation to host that DGR, and payments are being made to four surrounding communities (Huron Kinloss, Brockton, Arran-Elderslie and Saugeen Shores) for being supportive."

In terms of the high-level nuclear waste DGR, "All the politicians in Bruce County made the assumption that there would be a hosting agreement coming that would be significantly more than [Kincardine's] for the low- and intermediate-level waste,' said Peabody. "Now we're at Stage 3 [of the NWMO process in Brockton, Saugeen Shores, Huron-Kinloss, Arran-Elderslie and Central Huron] and we haven't see any such an agreement. How much money did these mayors negotiate in private to invite a nuclear-waste dump into their communities? The public needs to know."

Kincardine's agreement to host DGR 1 was signed in 2004 and an OPG 'hosting agreement' will pay out $35.7-million (inflation-protected) over the next 22 years to these communities-- Kincardine receives $650,000 this year, and the surrounding municipalities of Saugeen Shores, Huron-Kinloss, Arran-Elderslie and Brockton receive amounts ranging from $40,000 to $250,000. There are also special bonus payments -- $80,000 to $1.3-million in 2005 and the
same amounts in 2013, with Arran-Elderslie and Brockton receiving the smaller amounts and Kincardine and Saugeen Shores receiving $1.3-million and $500,000 respectively. Cheryl Grace of Save Our Saugeen Shores, one of the groups making up the Bluewater Coalition, says money may be complicating the issue. "We [Saugeen Shores] now get about $280,000 a year. Kincardine gets over $650,000 a year to be the host of this facility, and the way the hosting agreement reads, as long as our communities exercise their best efforts to 'support' the DGR 1 project, they will keep getting the money until 2034. In addition, in our case, we get two one-time payments of half a million dollars. So, one of our concerns is that our community, Saugeen Shores, and all these communities, may have difficulty being critical of the concept of either DGR being so close or even being built here because that would not be exercising their best efforts to support this Kincardine project and then the money would end," Grace says.

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