

Chief Lance Haymond 3 minute opening statement

Start with a few words in Algonquin.

Good morning everyone. I'm Lance Haymond, Chief of the Kebaowek First Nation, one of 11 Algonquin First Nations whose people have lived in the Ottawa River Watershed since time immemorial.

I'm pleased to share the podium this morning with Elizabeth May, my fellow chiefs, and Water Commissioner Autumn Peltier.

In our language the Ottawa River is called Kitchi Sibi, or "Great River" in English. Kitchi Sibi is sacred to our peoples and it is at the heart of our unceded homeland.

Our land has never been surrendered through treaty, and our people never consented to the "nuclearization" of the Chalk River site for the past 75 years. During that time, there have been two serious nuclear accidents. The site has been severely contaminated with radioactive materials that will be dangerous for all life far into the future.

Now the Government of Canada, through its private-sector contractor, is promoting a giant radioactive waste mound less than one kilometer from the Ottawa River. **In our view this is insanity** to put such deadly waste in a huge pile on top of the ground, right beside the river.

Studies show the mound would leak during and after construction. After a few hundred years, it is even expected to degrade due to erosion and other natural processes. CNL's own studies predict this.

We and our sister First Nation, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabe, have been involved in consultations with the dump proponent and the nuclear regulator over the past year. These consultations seem to have been an **afterthought for the promoters of this dump**. The consultations

with us began after the FINAL licensing hearing for the facility in June 2022.

Our team has done detailed ground truthing on the site where CNL wants to put the giant dump. The team learned a great deal on visits to the site this past winter and spring. They collected samples for analysis. They identified an endangered tree species. They set up webcams and took drone footage. Their discoveries about the wildlife and endangered species living on the proposed dump site are very interesting and important. It is shocking to us that the proponent never did this research and seemed unaware of these things. The team's findings are summarized in this booklet (hold up a copy). I have some copies to share and it is also available on our website.

I would like to be very clear. The Kebaowek First Nation does not consent to the construction of this radioactive waste dump on our unceded territory. We believe that consultation has been inadequate and that our Indigenous Rights are threatened by this proposal.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says that Indigenous Peoples must provide their free prior and informed consent BEFORE radioactive waste is stored or disposed of in their territory. We have not given our consent.

Kebaowek First Nation is calling for the NSDF project at Chalk River to be canceled. The focus at Chalk River must shift to real cleanup of the site that does not leave a toxic legacy.

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### **Chief Dylan Whiteduck - 3 minute opening statement**

Greeting in Algonquin

Good morning everyone. I'm Dylan Whiteduck, Chief of the Kitigan Zibi First Nation. Along with Kebaowek First Nation, we were singled out last year for consultation, AFTER the final licensing hearing for the nuclear waste dump wrapped up in June 2022.

We have many concerns about this proposed nuclear waste facility called NSDF.

We are concerned about **the site for the proposed dump**. At no time in our consultations has anyone provided any justification for putting it so close to Kitchi Sibi. We have received NO satisfactory explanation for why other sites well away from the river were not considered.

We are concerned about **the type of facility**. In our view a landfill doesn't make sense for radioactive material that will be hazardous for thousands of years.

We are concerned about the **addition of new harmful impacts** on top of existing effects from 75 years of nuclear activities on the site. The Chalk River nuclear site was created without our free, prior and informed consent and we have never agreed to its continued operation. We have consistently expressed our opposition to further nuclear development in Algonquin territory.

We are concerned that the CRL site is **contaminating the surrounding land and waters** with radiation and other hazardous materials. We worry about radioactive materials getting into our air and water and affecting wildlife and the health of our people.

We are concerned that **deforestation and blasting** to create the dump threatens endangered species such as wolves, Blandings turtles and Black Ash trees.

And we are concerned about the **loss of spiritual sites that are very important to us** such as Oiseau Rock (Bird Rock?) known in

Algonquin as “Migizi Kiishkaabikaan” and Point au Baptême due to the nuclear hazard.

In our final joint submission with Kebaowek First Nation, we point out that the federal government has **failed in its duty to consult with us**. We also point out that approving this dump would violate UNDRIP, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, as already mentioned by Chief Haymond.

In conclusion, I echo Chief Haymond’s statement that we do not consent to the construction of the NSDF in our territory. We believe that consultation has been inadequate and that our Indigenous Rights are threatened by this proposal.

Thank you.

3 minutes

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Grand Chief Lisa Robinson - opening statement

A few opening words in Algonquin

Good morning everyone. I’m Lisa Robinson, Chief of the Wolf Lake First Nation and Grand-Chief of the Algonquin Nation Secretariat that encompasses Wolf Lake, Timiskaming and Algonquins of Barrière Lake First Nations.

The disposal of nuclear waste and its potential impact on Aboriginal rights is of great importance to the Algonquin Nation. Future generations will have to contend with the decisions being made presently.

Today, as leaders, it is our duty to preserve and protect the land and Mother Earth for future generations.

We cannot risk the destruction of our aki and our sibi, our land and our water, which are life-giving for all of us as human beings on Mother Earth.

Protection of water is of the utmost importance to First Nations. Water is required for life and therefore any disposal facilities must meet the highest standards of environmental and water protection. Yet, we have learned that the proposed NSDF does not meet international safety standards.

In our Anishinaabe worldview, Algonquin people have inherent responsibility as caretakers of the earth. And that inherent responsibility is one of our inherent Aboriginal rights which are protected by the Canadian Constitution, Section 35.

I would also like to say that we support and recognize the declaration made by our Iroquois and Anishinabek Nation Brothers and sisters in 2018. Their declaration on the transport and abandonment of radioactive waste had five key points including no abandonment, better containment, more packaging, monitoring, retrievable storage, and away from major water bodies. The NSDF would fail to meet all of these key points but most concerning is the close proximity of the proposed facility to the Kitchi Sibi, less than 1 kilometer.

As an Anishinaabekwe, I carry with me great responsibility as a mother, as a woman, as a Chief, as a leader, to protect the water for today and for the generations ahead. As women, we are responsible for the water teachings and the protection of the water as it provides for all of creation.

We do not agree with the Near Surface Disposal Facility proposed on our title territory alongside the Ottawa River. The potential exists for this facility to cause catastrophic effects on the Indigenous nations.

Consultation has been (sorely) inadequate, but the nuclear regulator seems poised to approve the project without our consent. We view

this situation as clearly inconsistent with the federal objective of advancing Reconciliation.

Thank you.

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## **Grand Chief Savanna McGregor - Three minute opening statement**

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Greeting in Algonquin

Good morning everyone. I'm Savanna McGregor, Grand Chief of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to share our perspective as Anishinabe People and our concerns about the proposed nuclear waste dump.

I'll start with a bit of history.

For over a century, Canada's Aboriginal policy was aimed at eliminating our governance systems, extinguishing our rights, disregarding our treaties and assimilating our people into settler society.

We have faced intergenerational trauma, displacement from our unceded territory, and historical exclusion from decision-making at the Chalk River Laboratories site.

Canada's colonial policies have contributed to ongoing discrimination faced by our people.

However, we are resilient. We continue to resist colonial erasure. We are actively working at revitalizing our traditional knowledge, language, practices and laws. To do this revitalization work, we must connect with the land, as it forms a central part of our Indigenous identity

The Algonquin people have a stewardship vision for our lands and waters. We aim to ensure that all forms of life can live free from threats of potential harm across generations, in a healthy and safe environment.

In our Anishinabe tradition Women are Keepers of the Waters and Men are Keepers of the Fire. Men's firekeeping teachings include the Earth's internal fire. Traditional knowledge teaches that the heat from the burying of nuclear waste would change the Earth's internal fire and that the nuclear energy leaching into the water, and then flowing into living forms, would disturb all life.

But no Algonquin communities were ever consulted about the construction of the Chalk River Nuclear Site. Now, our communities are expected to accept in our territory the wastes this facility has generated as well as other wastes brought in from elsewhere. It is known that the proposed waste mound would leak radioactive materials into the Ottawa River or Kitchi Sibi as it is known in Algonquin.

This is not acceptable to us.

Algonquin Anishinabe people deem water sacred: it is the element of life that circulates through all living beings and ensures all life on earth.

We continue to prioritize protecting the Kichi Sibi and its water, the sacred wealth, from any threat to its wellbeing. That is why we strongly oppose this ill-conceived plan and do not give our consent for its construction.

Algonquin Anishinabe people are not alone in opposing the giant radioactive waste dump at Chalk River. Hundreds of civil society groups and individuals have spoken out against it.

More than 150 municipalities have passed resolutions of concern or opposition including Gatineau, Ottawa and Montreal. And the Assembly of First Nations passed a resolution opposing the dump in 2018.

So many voices are calling for a halt to this careless plan. But will we be heard? I sincerely hope so.

Thank you.