



April, 29, 2024

Francis Scarpaleggia, MP
Chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development,
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Scarpaleggia, MP

Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada support Chief Haymond's call for more consultation, study, and mitigation measures.

On March 21 2024, Kebaowek Chief Lance Haymond told the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development that more rigorous examination, Indigenous consultation, and mitigation measures are needed to safeguard the water near a planned nuclear waste facility. The precautionary principle is applicable because the Ottawa River ("Kichi Sibi" in Algonquin) not only holds spiritual and cultural importance for the Algonquin people but is a source of drinking water for millions.

Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, the organization that will manage the proposed waste facility, proposes to permanently dispose of one million cubic metres of low-level radioactive waste in the facility as a solution to accumulated nuclear waste. Concerned groups, including some local citizens and Indigenous communities, are worried about the proximity to the Ottawa River and whether all the waste will be low-level.

Given that both the United Nations and the Canadian government have affirmed repeatedly the critical role that Indigenous and local communities are playing in the protection of the environment, the concerns of the Kebaowek First Nation are particularly germane.ⁱ

Furthermore, Article 29 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), specifically references the need for free, prior and informed consent when hazardous waste will be stored in a nation's territory. A court case filed by Kebaowek First Nation in February 2024 maintains that the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

(CNSC) did not secure the First Nation's free, prior and informed consent during the licensing process, as mandated by the United Nations Declaration Act (UNDA).

This court case will be a critical test of how much authority UNDA holds in Canadian courts. And, given that UNDA is the federal government's chosen mechanism for its legislative adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the implications for reconciliation are significant.

For these reasons, and in the spirit of reconciliation, the Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada support Chief Haymond's call for more rigorous examination, Indigenous consultation, and mitigation measures to safeguard the water near the planned nuclear waste facility.

Sincerely.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Wilson, CSJ".

Sue Wilson, CSJ
Office for Systemic Justice

ⁱ See, for instance, The Convention on Biological Diversity, *Article 8(j)*.