

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Another Voice: State shouldn't bail out nuclear plants

By Another Voice (<http://buffalonews.com/author/another-voice/>) | *Published August 21, 2017 | Updated August 21, 2017*

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By Charley Bowman

Like most Americans, I am watching the ramped-up war games between the U.S. and North Korea with horror, and am increasingly worried about the possibility of nuclear conflict. For those of us who lived through the Cold War, it's a familiar and unsettling feeling.

However, I'm worried about another equally alarming nuclear threat that is receiving little attention.

This spring, intense rainfall left Lake Ontario with record high water levels, flooding along its wind-swept southern shores, and costly damage to homeowners.

The damage, unfortunately, could have been much worse. Two Oswego County nuclear plants – Nine Mile Point and James A. FitzPatrick – are located on the shores of Lake Ontario. The rising lake waters came dangerously close to threatening operations at Nine Mile Point, and the flooding was one foot shy of forcing the plant into its lowest-level emergency action plan.

Officials insisted there was no real danger. Maybe so, but what about next time? The world's climate is changing: in the last 50 years heavy downpours increased 74 percent in the Northeast; 100- and 500-year floods are more frequent.

The unprecedented flooding demonstrates why Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo should close the nuclear plants, as he is now doing for Indian Point by 2021.

But instead he's going in the opposite direction and pushing a \$7.6 billion bailout plan, approved last year by the Public Service Commission, that

will keep the upstate plants running for the next 12 years, courtesy of higher utility bills for all New York ratepayers.

Cuomo doesn't have to take this path. Energy expert Amory B. Lovins says nuclear power would be unnecessary if we invested money currently being used for the plants' operating expenses into energy efficiency, like better insulation, windows and appliances. If we took Lovins' route, no \$7.6 billion bailout would be necessary.

If Ginna, FitzPatrick and Nine Mile Point closed and money equivalent to their combined operating expenses were invested in efficiency, there would be an estimated \$930 million available annually for New York's 7,500 clean energy companies. Those companies now employ 85,000 workers, mostly in energy efficiency. This new investment could create up to 16,100 new jobs annually, according to other studies on efficiency.

Meanwhile, Lovins concludes that the carbon saved by investing in energy efficiency could be twice the carbon saved had the nuclear power plants remained open, because energy efficiency "saves" enough electricity to replace both nuclear power and fossil fuel generation.

Those findings are the opposite of what Cuomo tells us, which is that we need these nuclear power plants to achieve his goal of reducing

carbon emissions 40 percent by 2030.

Climate change brings dangers we couldn't fathom a few years ago, and now threatens our nuclear power plants. In the name of safety, low carbon and job creation, let's close them.

Charley Bowman is co-chairman of the Environmental Justice Task Force of the Western New York Peace Center.

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