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Minister Leona Aglukkaq  
Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency  
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Ottawa ON K1A 0H3

Minister Aglukkaq:

I am opposed to Ontario Power Generation's (OPG) plan to create a permanent nuclear waste repository in Kincardine, Ontario. Burying nuclear waste so close to the Great Lakes is an unnecessary risk and is contrary to the long history that Canada and the U.S. have of working together to protect this shared natural resource. And for this reason, citizens on both sides of the border oppose this plan.

OPG's proposal to store 52 million gallons of radioactive material less than a mile from Lake Huron poses a significant risk. Over 40 million people rely on the Great Lakes for regular drinking water and 1.5 million jobs are supported by the lakes in the boating, fishing and tourism industries. Simply, the Great Lakes would be forever changed if they were contaminated with nuclear waste. Thus, it is troubling that the OPG has failed to consider any other potential sites to store nuclear waste. Surely in the vast land mass that comprises Canada, there must be a better place to bury radioactive material than sixth-tenths of a mile from the Great Lakes.

Regardless, the U.S. and Canada have a long history of working together to protect the Great Lakes. In the 1980s, the U.S. explored several potential domestic sites to permanently store nuclear waste, including in some states that share a border with Canada or the Great Lakes. At the time, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney raised concerns with President Ronald Reagan regarding potential permanent nuclear waste sites near shared water basins. Furthermore, then Minister for External Affairs Joe Clark expressed significant opposition on behalf of the Canadian government to many of the proposed permanent nuclear waste sites in America because of their potential impact on shared resources.

Ultimately, the U.S. decided not to pursue the contentious sites. And in response, on January 16, 1986, Minister Clark released a public statement praising the decision and also opposing "any development that could present a transboundary threat to the welfare of Canadians or the integrity of the Canadian environment." Given Canada's opposition to a similar site in the U.S., it appears OPG's proposed site next to Lake Huron is inconsistent with established precedent.

Nevertheless, for good reason there is growing opposition to this plan, both in the U.S. and Canada. To date, 168 municipalities – in both the U.S. and Canada – have passed resolutions opposing the plan, including Flint, Mich., Bay County, Mich.; Toronto, Ontario; Chicago, Ill.; Wayne County, Mich.; Milwaukee, Wisc.; Essex County, Ontario; and Rochester County, New York. The Michigan State Senate also has passed a resolution opposing the Canadian nuclear waste storage site.

There's also growing opposition in the U.S. Congress. In April, I introduced a congressional resolution that would direct the President of the U.S. and the U.S. Secretary of State to make sure a permanent nuclear waste storage facility is not built near the Great Lakes. My resolution has 22 bipartisan cosponsors – 11 Democrats and 11 Republicans – representing every Great Lakes state.

Earlier this month, I also announced legislation, along with Michigan Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters, to invoke the Transboundary Water Treaty of 1909 to have the International Joint Commission study the issue in more detail, including the risks involved.

In conclusion, historically the U.S. and Canada have worked together through the Transboundary Water Treaty of 1909 to protect the Great Lakes by maintaining water levels, controlling fishing and limiting agricultural runoff. Simply, the U.S. and Canada enjoy an enduring friendship, and I am confident we can continue to work together to find a long term solution for storing nuclear waste that is outside of the Great Lakes basin.

Sincerely,



Dan Kildee  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS