

# United States Senate

May 22, 2015

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

I urge you to engage the Canadian government and International Joint Commission (IJC) to address a recent threatening proposal to permanently store toxic nuclear waste under the Great Lakes Basin, the source of safe drinking water for 30 million Americans and one of our most precious natural resources. On May 6, 2015, Canada's Joint Review Panel issued an Environmental Assessment Report and recommended approval of Ontario Power Generation's (OPG) proposal to permanently store toxic nuclear waste less than one mile from the shores of Lake Huron. This matter presents an immediate threat to all the Great Lakes, and I ask you to use all diplomatic means available to urge the Canadian government to delay its decision-making process until the proposal has been given all due consideration by the IJC.

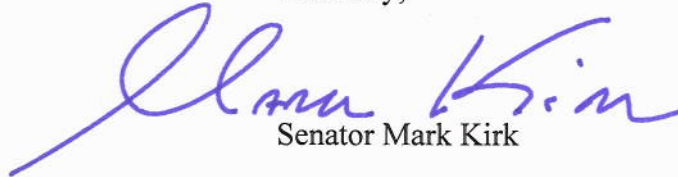
Under Canadian law, Canada's Environment Minister, Leona Aglukkaq, has 120 days following the review panel recommendation to make a final authorization decision. As a permanent repository, the Kincardine, Ontario facility would hold 7 million cubic feet of nuclear waste for thousands of years. Any leak during that time could unleash toxic material throughout the Great Lakes Basin, and contaminate the largest surface freshwater system in the world while causing irreparable damage to the more than 3,500 plants and animals that inhabit the ecosystem. Even with these serious risks to the Great Lakes, the Canadian review panel failed to consider any potential alternative sites.

The United States and Canada created the IJC, guided by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, to prevent and resolve disputes over shared waters. One of the IJC's main responsibilities is to investigate transboundary issues and recommend solutions when requested by the national governments. In the Boundary Waters Treaty, both countries agreed that neither would pollute boundary waters to an extent that would cause injury to health or property in the other country. And yet, with this Ontario Power Generation proposal Canada is on the path to permanently storing toxic nuclear waste under our Great Lakes.

As the co-chair of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force, I understand the serious threat this repository has on the long-term health of the Great Lakes Basin. We must ensure the environmental integrity of the Great Lakes for future generations to come. I urge you to use your authority to request an IJC study into this matter, to utilize Federal resources to

properly assess the risks this proposal poses to the United States, and to request that the Canadian Government postpone its final decision until both parties of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 properly consider the matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Kirk", is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Senator Mark Kirk

cc: John Kerry, Secretary, U.S. Department of State

cc: Gina McCarthy, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

cc: Gordon Walker, Canadian Chair of the International Joint Commission (IJC)

cc: Lana Pollack, United States Chair of the International Joint Commission (IJC)