



October 18, 2010

Open letter to Commissioners of the International Joint Commission:

Re: Shipment of Bruce Power's 16 steam generators to Sweden

The Council of Canadians is writing to request that the International Joint Commission (IJC) examine the issue of the shipment Bruce Power's 16 steam generators at its Fall Semi-Annual Meeting (October 19-22, 2010). The IJC was created by Canada and the US to address issues on the Great Lakes and other shared waters "to protect them for the benefit of today's citizens and future generations." While we understand that this issue is not on the agenda for the Semi-Annual Meeting, we urge the IJC to discuss the threats that this shipment poses to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

The Council of Canadians strongly opposes the proposed shipment of Bruce Power's radioactive steam generators. The Council is Canada's largest member-based advocacy organization with tens of thousands of members and over 70 community-based chapters across the country. We have 16 Council chapters around the Great Lakes and have been working to protect water nationally and internationally for the last 25 years. Maude Barlow, the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, also served as Senior Advisor on Water to the 63rd President of the United Nations General Assembly (2008-2009).

Bruce Power has made an application to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) for a licence to ship 16 100-tonne radioactive steam generators through the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway to Sweden. The licence is required because Bruce Power is unable to meet the packaging requirements set out in the CNSC's Packaging and Transport of Nuclear Substances Regulations. The total radioactive level exceeds the limits set out in the International Atomic Energy Agency's Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material by as high as 50 times.

The Great Lakes holds nearly 20% of the world's freshwater. They provide drinking water to 40 million people in surrounding areas. We are concerned that the shipment of Bruce Power's 16 steam generators puts this precious resource at risk. It sets a dangerous precedent that could encourage the shipment of radioactive waste, which does not meet national and international regulations, through the Great Lakes on a regular basis.

The International Institute of Concern for Public Health has noted that radionuclides found in Great Lakes water, including tritium, carbon-14, cesium and long-lived iodine-129, pose serious health hazards even at low levels. An accident on the Great Lakes would further contribute to radioactivity and pollution in the Great Lakes.

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Europe and Canada, once the precedent of shipping radioactive waste is established, the CNSC may be powerless to limit future shipments. Trade agreements such as these can limit countries' abilities to enact regulations that protect water resources and environmental standards.

We believe that the "precautionary principle" should be applied to this situation. Principle 15 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environmental and Development gives a general description of this principle: "In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." The "precautionary principle" is recognized by over 20 international treaties and agreements including the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area.

In the 2006 Public Comment on the Forthcoming Review by the Federal Governments of Canada and the United States of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement: A Report to the Governments of the United States and Canada, "the precautionary principle was widely endorsed as an operating principle of the Agreement." The IJC is responsible for investigating water pollution and for "measures to control the discharges of radioactive materials into the Great Lakes System" (Article VI (1b) of the Agreement). We urge Commissioners to apply the precautionary principle to protect the Great Lakes from potential pollution.

We believe water is a global commons (a shared entity) and a public trust. We ask Commissioners to examine carefully this issue and the threats that it poses to the Great Lakes. We urge Commissioners to stop the shipment of radioactive materials in order to protect the Great Lakes and other shared waterways.

Sincerely,

Emma Lui
National Water Campaigner
Council of Canadians