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July 16, 2014

The Honorable Ernest Moniz
Secretary
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Moniz,

I write to express my concern regarding the proposed transportation of liquid nuclear waste from Ontario's Chalk River Research reactor to the Department of Energy's Savannah River site via the Peace Bridge, a major border crossing in my district.

In contrast to spent nuclear fuel, which can be reliably and safely transported in solid form, the prospect of shipping liquid nuclear waste is far more complicated. Such high level waste is more radioactive than spent nuclear fuel, and its liquid form could make containment in the event of a spill or other adverse event nearly impossible. Adding to these concerns, reports indicate that the type of nuclear material transport cask that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission plans to use has never been certified to carry this type of waste.

The potential danger of this proposed action is amplified by the high-risk nature of contamination in the Buffalo-Niagara region. An international border community, it is home to four international bridge crossings and the Niagara Power Project, which serves as the largest electricity producer in New York State. It also sits along two Great Lakes which represent the largest fresh water supply in the world and serves as the center point of a 500 mile radius that includes approximately 55% of the US population and 62% of the Canadian population.

A major contamination on or near the Peace Bridge would have dire consequences for the regional and national economies. Further, the proposed route would take this material through the heart of the City of Buffalo, a densely populated urban area where the consequence of contamination on public safety would be devastating.

Given these significant concerns, it is the responsibility of the Department of Energy and all relevant agencies involved in the process to thoroughly assess the safety of this action. Therefore, I urge your agency to undertake a formal environmental impact statement before proceeding. Thank you for your time and attention this matter.

Sincerely,

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress