

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 1, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write with concern regarding the recent request by Plains LPG Services to obtain a permit to operate and maintain facilities it has acquired pertaining to pipelines at the U.S.–Canada border (St. Clair Pipeline border facilities) and at the Detroit River. As the agency with jurisdiction over approval of cross-border facilities, we ask that you, at a minimum, suspend this request until further information from the public can be submitted about the potential impact or threat the pipes pose to the Great Lakes.

Concern for the environment and the Great Lakes should be the first priority when considering Plains LPG's plan. As you know, most of the pipelines to be used for this transport pass through the St. Clair River and at least one was constructed in 1918 – nearly 100 years ago. Safety protocols, manufacturing innovations, and engineering advancements in the energy industry have significantly improved since the pipelines' construction, making the continued use of these lines potentially precarious. This concern is compounded by the fact that just last year Plains LPG's parent company, Plains All American, was unable to prevent the spill of approximately 3,000 barrels of crude oil, which damaged the ecosystem near Refugio Beach in Santa Barbara County, California.

The perceived hastiness and lack of transparency with which this process is moving forward is concerning. While there was a 30-day comment period published in the *Federal Register* about this proposal, there were very few comments submitted by the public and there was a multitude of concerns from various individuals and organizations that they were unaware of the opportunity to provide feedback. These stakeholders – local residents, environmental groups, academics, local governments, and industry – are sure to weigh in if given the opportunity. It is these voices that the State Department would benefit from hearing on such a multifaceted issue as ensuring the protection of the Great Lakes. Moreover, this additional time would be opportune for Plains LPG to provide more clarity into its plans for these pipelines – the specific product it will transport, the pipelines it will use, and any other preemptive efforts it will take to ensure the integrity of the pipes are not breached.

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The Great Lakes provide 20 percent of the world's freshwater drinking supply, hundreds of thousands of jobs in the region tied to the \$7 billion recreational fishing and \$16 billion recreational boating industries, and a home to more than 3,500 species of plants and animals. The St. Clair River connects to Lake Huron in the north and Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River

to the south. The Detroit River is the source of drinking water for three to four million people. Considering the swift currents of the St. Clair River, any type of breach in the pipelines would be quickly swept downstream and could potentially have a negative impact on the quality of the drinking water for millions. Surely, the health of the Great Lakes – as well as the health of those who rely on it for safe drinking water – is worth taking the time to fully assess the risks involved in such an undertaking and allowing the input of the public at the same time.

We understand that the next step in this process is to commence an interagency review. In the coming days, we will also be contacting those agencies expressing our concern with this proposal. We eagerly await your prompt reply and look forward to speaking with you about this soon.

Sincerely,



Rep. Candice S. Miller



Rep. Debbie Dingell

cc: Gina McCarthy, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
Maria Therese Dominguez, Administrator, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Canada
Gordon Walker, Chair, Canadian Section, International Joint Commission
Lana Pollock, Chair, U.S. Section, International Joint Commission