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Broad Coalition Reinforces Opposition to Radioactive Steam Generator Shipment on the Great Lakes

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada—A broad coalition of groups in both the U.S. and Canada took full advantage of an opportunity provided by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) to voice continued opposition to the shipment of radioactive steam generators on the Great Lakes. The radioactive waste shipment from Bruce Nuclear Power Plant near Owen Sound, Ontario to Studsvik in Sweden – for so-called “recycling” into consumer products -- has generated a groundswell of public opposition on both sides of the border in the Great Lakes region, as well as overseas.

"The multitude of interventions and additional comments made should serve to remind the CNSC that there continues to be broad opposition to this shipment," said Michael Keegan of Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes in Monroe, Michigan. Keegan serves as U.S. co-chair of the Great Lakes United (GLU) Green Energy / Nuclear-Free task force.

Great Lakes United's "Resolution to Stop the Shipment of Radioactive Steam Generators on the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence" is posted at http://www.ccnr.org/Resolution_e.pdf. Additional documents can be found at <http://www.glu.org/en/campaigns/energy/nuclear/steam-generators>.

"Endorsers of the GLU resolution to stop the shipment of radioactive steam generators from the Bruce Nuclear Complex through the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence" is posted at http://www.ccnr.org/Resolution_NGO_sort.pdf. It includes 7 Aboriginal Organizations, 38 Local Municipal Authorities, 7 Professional Organizations, 14 Peace and Justice Organizations, 23 Environmental Organizations, and 30 Nuclear Watchdog Organizations.

In addition "Quebec Municipalities that have passed the attached resolution to stop the shipment of radioactive steam generators from the Bruce Nuclear Complex through the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence as of November 4, 2010," posted at http://www.ccnr.org/Municipality_BW_e.pdf, lists 39 Quebec municipalities that have passed the resolution against the transport.

"We have also emphasized that Bruce Power's and CNSC staff's trivialization of this proposed shipment's cargo as 'low-level' radioactive waste, representing 'no risk' to the public or environment, is false and misleading," said Dr. Gordon Edwards of Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Dr. Edwards serves as Canadian co-chair of the GLU Green Energy / Nuclear-Free task force.

"In fact, the amount of plutonium-239 inside the 16 steam generators is enough, in principle, to give more than 52 million atomic workers their maximum permissible 'body burden' of 0.7 micrograms," Dr. Edwards said. "And if the other plutonium isotopes inside the steam generator -- plutonium-238, plutonium-240, plutonium-241 and plutonium-242 -- are factored in, the

number of workers that could be overdosed is doubled,” he added.

A November 15, 2010 media release, “Steam Generators: Radioactive Cargo is Mostly Plutonium” is posted at http://www.ccnr.org/Media_Release_2010_11_15.pdf. A backgrounder prepared by Dr. Edwards, entitled “Plutonium in the Bruce ‘A’ nuclear steam generators” and submitted as part of the supplementary comments, is posted at http://www.ccnr.org/SG_plutonium_CNCS.pdf. Dr. Edwards’ supplementary comments to CNSC are posted at <http://www.beyondnuclear.org/canada/2010/11/23/broad-coalition-submits-supplementary-comments-to-cnsc-oppos.html>.

“Bruce Power’s CEO, Duncan Hawthorne, admitted at CNSC public hearings two months ago that there is no emergency plan for recovering the ship if it sinks in the Great Lakes, flippantly adding that there would be plenty of time to figure out what to do,” said Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear. “But CNSC staff admitted that the welds sealing the radioactivity within the steam generators are only dependable to a depth of 800 feet submerged underwater, exactly the depth along the Great Lakes shipment route. This means there is zero safety margin,” Kamps added.

Kevin Kamps’ and Michael Keegan’s supplemental comments are also posted at <http://www.beyondnuclear.org/canada/2010/11/23/broad-coalition-submits-supplementary-comments-to-cnsc-oppos.html>, as are those of Ziggy Kleinau, submitted on behalf of the Bruce Peninsula Environment Group, Inc., which called upon CNSC five years ago for an independent full panel review of the Bruce refurbishment project – which has now given rise to this radioactive steam generator proposal -- the most stringent environmental assessment provided under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

Seven Democratic U.S. Senators from five Great Lakes states have also called upon the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to carry out a rigorous environmental review before permitting the radioactive steam generator shipment to enter U.S. territorial waters on the Great Lakes. Their letters are posted at: <http://www.beyondnuclear.org/canada/2010/10/17-great-lakes-states-us-senators-object-to-radioactive-waste.html>. Such concern is bipartisan, as Republican U.S. Representative Candice Miller has called for stringent environmental precautions, stating “With hazardous materials, such as the type that is embedded within these generators, there must be a zero-tolerance for compromising our environment.” Congresswoman Miller’s full statement is posted at <http://candicemiller.house.gov/2010/10/miller-statement-urging-phmsa-to-begin-review-of-bruce-powers-radioactive-materials-shipping-plan-no.shtml>, and an earlier statement is posted at <http://candicemiller.house.gov/2010/10/miller-us-federal-agency-should-review-bruce-power-ltds-shipping-plan-of-radioactive-materials-now.shtml>.

The Great Lakes represent 20% of the Earth’s surface fresh water, providing drinking water for 40 million people and driving one of the biggest regional economies in the world. If approved by CNSC and the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), the proposed radioactive steam generator shipment would traverse Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair, the Detroit River, Lake Erie, the Welland Canal, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, and the Atlantic Ocean.

For additional information on this controversial Canadian radioactive steam generator proposal, see <http://www.beyondnuclear.org/canada/> as well as <http://www.ccnr.org/>.