



Savannah River Site Watch

**Savannah River Site Watch  
October 3, 2016**

**Shipments of Liquid High-Level Nuclear Waste from Canada to Savannah River Site Suspended Until at Least February 17, 2017**

*--- see October 3 news release below on effort today in Canada on the waste shipment issue ---*

As a result of discussions between lawyers for public interest groups demanding a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Department of Justice lawyers, an agreement has been reached to postpone shipments of liquid high-level nuclear waste from Canada to the Savannah River Site until February 17, 2017, while the court ponders a way forward with the controversial matter.

Several environmental groups, including Savannah River Site Watch, filed a lawsuit in August 2016 seeking a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of the proposed waste shipments from Ontario to SRS. DOE has refused to prepare an EIS and only prepared a "Supplement Analysis," which was conducted in secret and with no public input. The lawsuit also called on DOE to analyze the option of managing the waste in Canada (and thus not ship it to SRS for processing and dumping into the aging waste tanks).

The groups contend that the best option from a nuclear non-proliferation perspective is for the highly enriched uranium in the waste to be downblended to low-enriched uranium and the waste managed in Canada. Canada would pay \$60 million to DOE to receive the waste. In a telling indication that the payment to process the waste in H-Canyon at SRS is the driver for the proposal, the deal is being pursued by DOE's Office of Environmental Management (EM) and not by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). NNSA is the branch of DOE that implements and carries out nuclear non-proliferation projects.

See "JOINT MOTION FOR SCHEDULING ORDER" agreed to by the parties in "UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA - **Agreement Concerning Liquid High-Level Nuclear Waste Shipment Postponement to at least February 17, 2017- from Canada to SRS - and Schedule for Filings, September 20, 2016:**

[http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/joint\\_motion\\_for\\_scheduling\\_2\\_-\\_sept\\_30\\_2016\\_agreement-1.pdf](http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/joint_motion_for_scheduling_2_-_sept_30_2016_agreement-1.pdf)

"The court-agreed delay in the shipment of liquid high-level nuclear waste from Canada to SRS is a victory for the effort demanding that DOE prepare an Environmental Impact Statement on the proposal and analyze the viable option of treating the waste in Canada," said Tom Clements, director of SRS Watch. "For over three years since our initial request, DOE has staunchly refused to allow formal public input into a full EIS on the unnecessary import of highly radioactive waste liquid waste from Canada and we are optimistic that our initial victory in halting the shipments will yield the EIS we are seeking."

On Friday, September 30, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Representative Brian Higgins joined in the call on DOE to prepare an EIS on the shipment:

**“SENATOR GILLIBRAND & CONGRESSMAN HIGGINS URGE U.S. DEPT. OF ENERGY TO CONDUCT NEW ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PRIOR TO TRANSPORT OF RADIOACTIVE LIQUID MATERIAL VIA THE PEACE BRIDGE THROUGH WESTERN NEW YORK”**

<http://higgins.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/senator-gillibrand-congressman-higgins-urge-us-dept-of-energy-to-conduct>

Meanwhile, in Canada, SRS Watch has today joined with other Canadian and US groups in sending a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau, President Obama and the Great Lakes Executive Committee calling for a delay in the shipment and for a full Environmental Impact Statement on the transport and option of downblending the liquid high-level waste in Canada. See SRS Watch quote in the release below:

MEDIA RELEASE – CANADIAN COALITION FOR NUCLEAR RESPONSIBILITY

**Liquid Nuclear Waste Convoys A Threat to the Great Lakes Basin**

For Immediate Release  
October 3, 2016

Over two dozen non-governmental organizations from Canada and the United States are asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Barack Obama to postpone or cancel an unprecedented series of shipments of highly radioactive liquid waste from Ontario to South Carolina along public roads and over bridges crossing the Great Lakes watershed. The groups are demanding that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be published and circulated in both countries, to allow for scrutiny from other government departments and the public. In addition, the groups are insisting that proper notification to the public be given through the Great Lakes Executive Committee (GLEC), as required under the terms of the 2012 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA).

The Great Lakes Commission and International Joint Commission are meeting in Toronto this week. “There is enough time for the governments to fulfill their duties under the Great Lakes 2012 Agreement and to respond to the demands of Sierra Club and dozens of other environmental groups to prepare and circulate an independent and meaningful Environmental Impact Statement that considers alternatives to this risky proposal,” said Christine Elwell, Green Energy Campaign, Sierra Club Canada Foundation.

A lawsuit was recently launched in U.S. federal court calling for an injunction against the proposed shipments. On September 20, 2016, the U.S. Department of Energy stated on the record of the suit that it was withholding shipments until after February 17, 2017, "in order to ensure compliance with all legal and contractual obligations" – in other words, until the federal judge has had the opportunity to rule on the merits of the lawsuit.

The liquid in question is now stored in a large double-walled tank called FISST (Fissile Solutions Storage Tank) at Chalk River, Ontario, containing 23 000 litres (6000 gallons) of

an intensely radioactive and highly dangerous acidic solution. FISST holds a bewildering variety of radionuclides that are created when uranium is irradiated in a reactor. The liquid also contains a quantity of weapons-grade Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) – essentially the same material as the nuclear explosive that was used in the Hiroshima Bomb.

“Nuclear authorities in both countries have disguised the true nature of this liquid waste by calling it Highly Enriched Uranyl Nitrate Liquid (HEUNL)” said Dr. Gordon Edwards, President of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility. “In fact uranyl nitrate is only one of dozens of radioactive compounds in the liquid, and that liquid is more than 17,000 times more radioactive than the uranyl nitrate alone. Such high-level radioactive liquid has never before been transported over public roads anywhere in North America.”

There are safer, faster and cheaper ways of dealing with the waste that have already been used in Canada and elsewhere, such as solidification and down-blending. “There are 20 other tanks of liquid radioactive waste at Chalk River, whose contents are being solidified and stored on-site as solid waste,” said Dr. Ole Hendrickson of the Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County. “Moreover, since 2003, the liquid waste that would have previously gone into the FISST tank has been routinely solidified, and up until 2011, Chalk River Laboratories was committed to solidifying the liquid contents of the FISST tank as well.”

Plans call for 100 to 150 truckloads of liquid waste over a period of several years, from Chalk River, Ontario, to the US Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site in South Carolina, along secret routes with heavily armed guards. The ostensible purpose is to “repatriate” the US-origin weapons-grade uranium to avoid any chance of its use in nuclear weapons, according to a program launched by President Obama in 2009. However, it was never originally intended to ship the material in liquid form.

Tom Clements, Director of Savannah River Site Watch in South Carolina, observed that “The safest and cheapest way to address proliferation concerns is to eliminate the weapons-grade uranium at Chalk River by down-blending it, leaving only low enriched uranium (LEU), which is not nuclear-weapons-usable material. In February 2016, Indonesia was given permission to down-blend its stock of US-origin liquid weapon-grade uranium, thereby eliminating any need to transport the material back to the USA. The same can be done with the Chalk River liquid waste, as was explicitly intended by the Canadian authorities in 2011.” The Indonesian down-blending operation is already completed, just a few months after US Department of Energy permission was given.

The Niagara councilors are unanimously opposed to these shipments coming through the Niagara region. Gracia Janes, from Niagara-on-the-Lake, is the Environment Coordinator of the National Council of Women of Canada. She pointed out “our regional councilors represent close to 500,000 people. Being on the edge of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, with the unique tender fruit lands growing the best peaches in Canada, if not North America, we are very conscious of what an accident and liquid spill would mean.”

Janet McNeill of Durham Nuclear Awareness added, “Our governments must do as the Regional Municipality of Niagara Region has done: take the time to examine all the facts very carefully, put this plan under a microscope that involves investigating alternatives,

and do all that in an open process, involving the public, and not under the sole jurisdiction of the nuclear industry and its all-too-compliant regulator, so that we can trust that the risks involved and the alternatives available are being fully examined & properly investigated.”

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For further information:

Gordon Edwards, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, (514) 839 7214  
Christine Elwell, Sierra Club Canada Foundation, (647) 338 6363  
Janet McNeill, Durham Nuclear Awareness, (647) 207 3208  
Ole Hendrickson, Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County, (613) 735 4876  
Tom Clements, Savannah River Site Watch, (803) 240 7268  
Gracia Janes, National Council of Women of Canada, (905) 468 2841

**Notes:**

- 1) Press Release October 3, 2016  
[http://ccnr.org/GLWQA\\_Media\\_Release.pdf](http://ccnr.org/GLWQA_Media_Release.pdf)
- 2) Letter to GLEC Co-Chairs September 30, 2016  
[http://ccnr.org/GLWQA\\_cover\\_letter.pdf](http://ccnr.org/GLWQA_cover_letter.pdf)
- 3) Letter to Prime Minister Trudeau and President Obama September 30, 2016  
[http://ccnr.org/GLWQA\\_6\\_GE.pdf](http://ccnr.org/GLWQA_6_GE.pdf)
- 4) Background (a) three citations (b) links to other resources  
[http://ccnr.org/GLWQA\\_additional.pdf](http://ccnr.org/GLWQA_additional.pdf)
- 5) Excerpts from the 2012 GLWQA - Christine Elwell  
[http://ccnr.org/GLWQA\\_Excerpts.pdf](http://ccnr.org/GLWQA_Excerpts.pdf)
- 6) Complete media package  
[http://ccnr.org/GLWQA\\_pack.pdf](http://ccnr.org/GLWQA_pack.pdf)

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**DC District Court Agreement Concerning Liquid High-Level Nuclear Waste Shipment Postponement to at least February 17, 2017- from Canada to SRS - and Schedule for Filings, September 20, 2016:**

[http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/joint\\_motion\\_for\\_scheduling\\_2\\_-\\_sept\\_30\\_2016\\_agreement-1.pdf](http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/joint_motion_for_scheduling_2_-_sept_30_2016_agreement-1.pdf)

**Court and relevant background documents are linked here:**

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/waste-transportation/>

**Lawsuit filed seeking to block truck shipments of highly radioactive liquid wastes from Canada to South Carolina - August 12, 2016:**

***COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE RELIEF, PRELIMINARY AND PERMANENT INJUNCTIONS;***

***Exhibit A*** (February 27, 2013 public comment letter, to DOE, Re: Need for New Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Unprecedented Import from Canada to the Savannah River Site of Liquid High-Level Waste Containing Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU); Possible Programmatic EIS Needed if Shipments from Other countries are being Eyed);

***Exhibit B*** (March 2013 Supplement Analysis, by Savannah River Site, Spent Nuclear Fuel Management, U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Environmental Management, Savannah River Operations Office, Aiken, South Carolina; DOE/EIS-0279-SA-01 and DOE/EIS-0218-SA-06);

***Exhibit C*** (Amended Record of Decision (ROD), March 29, 2013, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Spent Nuclear Fuel Management at the Savannah River Site, David Huizenga, Senior Advisor for Environmental Management [FR Doc. 2013-07994 Filed 4-4-13; 8:45 am], Federal Register, Vol. 78, No. 76, Friday, April 5, 2013, Notices, pages 20625 to 20628);

***Exhibit D*** (Rep. Higgins letter to Secretary Moniz, July 16, 2014; U.S. Congressman Brian Higgins (D-NY-26), Committee on Homeland Security, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, to Ernest Moniz, Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy);

***Exhibit E*** (AG Schneiderman letter to Secretary Moniz, July 25, 2014; State of New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman, letter to Ernest Moniz, Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy);

***Exhibit F*** (DOE/EIS-0218-SA-07, Supplement Analysis for the Foreign Research Reactor Spent Nuclear Fuel Acceptance Program, Highly Enriched Uranium Target Residue Material Transportation, U.S. Department of Energy, November 2015).

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