

March 6, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As you know, the Portland-Montreal pipeline (PMPL) runs through Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont on its way to Montreal and to the refineries on the banks of the St. Lawrence. The original laying of this route was the result of a war time partnership between Canada and the United States. The Portland Pipe Line Corporation (PPLC), which owns the U.S. segment of the line, continues to have a strong partnership with its Canadian counterparts.

The PPLC has also been a commendable environmental steward over the past half-century.

Though there is currently no specific proposal before the public, in the past the PPLC has publically expressed interest in piping diluted bitumen crude oil (dilbit) from Canadian tar sands to the terminal in South Portland, Maine. This would reverse the historic flow – currently, the line conveys conventional crude oil northward. Additionally, it would be the first time dilbit was piped at volume through the line.

The National Energy Board of Canada recently gave final approval to the reversal of a pipeline, known as Line 9, which connects to the PMPL in Montreal. That reversal will bring Western Canada crude oil into Montreal, and has been permitted to transport dilbit (as well as other crudes). This clearly raises the possibility that the PPLC may seek to reverse the PMPL to bring dilbit from Montreal to South Portland.

My constituents have consistently expressed concern at the lack of any environmental review of a project of this nature, given that there appears to be no substantive state review process that would be triggered. Yet, this pipeline runs through very important – and ecologically fragile – parts of Maine, including Sebago Lake, the drinking water supply for the greater Portland area.

A diluted bitumen spill could have catastrophic impacts on our state. In addition to Sebago Lake, the pipeline crosses the Androscoggin River multiple times (in New Hampshire and Maine), one

of the rivers whose historic pollution inspired Senator Edmund Muskie's work to create the Clean Water Act.

We have seen the impact of recent petroleum disasters, from the tar sands spilled into the Kalamazoo River and in Arkansas, to the horrific Lac Megantic train derailment. The people of Maine should have access to information showing how dilbit could impact the integrity of the pipeline and the risk and consequences of a spill in our state. Diluted bitumen contains a different mix of chemicals and is often piped at higher pressures (and correspondingly higher temperatures) than conventional crude. Without a federal review – given that it appears no state review process is triggered – the environmental risks of such a reversal project would be unknown.

Should the PPLC seek to reverse their line, and pipe diluted bitumen southward, it is my request that the State Department require a new Presidential Permit and prepare a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. I understand that the Department has indicated to the PPLC that it should provide notification to the agency of any change of use so that a determination about whether or not to require a Presidential Permit can be made. Unfortunately, this provides relatively little comfort to me and my constituents, and therefore I would further request that the Department make a jurisdictional determination at this time regarding a Presidential Permit.

Piping diluted bitumen southward would be a significant alteration in function for this decades-old line and it would present unknown environmental risk. The people of northern New England deserve a full assessment of that risk and the likelihood of a spill if the pipeline is reversed to convey tar sands oil to South Portland.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Chris Rauscher in my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Angus King", with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator