

## United States Senate

November 30, 2016

Gordon Walker, Canada Section Chair  
International Joint Commission  
234 Laurier Avenue West  
22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, ON K1P 6K6

Lana Pollack, U.S. Section Chair  
International Joint Commission  
2000 L Street, N.W.  
Suite 615  
Washington, D.C. 20440

Dear Chairman Walker and Chairwoman Pollack,

As the body that assists the Governments of Canada and the United States to examine and implement air quality solutions, I request that the International Joint Commission (IJC) investigate the cumulative public health impact of air pollution along the United States-Canadian border in Wayne County, Michigan and Essex County, Ontario. This study is critical to inform future actions that will better protect human health in a region that is vulnerable to high levels of pollution.

As you are probably aware, air pollution continues to be a major problem in Southeast Michigan. Detroit has the highest rate of asthma in young children among the 18 largest cities in the United States, affecting over 12 percent of children or approximately 24,000 kids under the age of 11. Air pollution makes asthma symptoms worse and can trigger attacks. Despite this well-documented problem, only a few years ago, three-story high piles of petroleum coke lined the banks of the Detroit River in the open air, causing particulate matter to blow into the homes, businesses, and lungs of those living in the neighborhood close by.

Currently, a portion of Wayne County does not meet federal sulfur dioxide air quality standards, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality only recently submitted their plan to reduce emissions. In addition to sulfur dioxide, a number of harmful air pollutants are emitted into densely populated areas on both sides of the Detroit River. Wayne County – particularly Southwest Detroit, Dearborn and Downriver – and Essex County, Ontario are home to an oil refinery, international crossings, multiple industrial facilities and power plants, and more. These sources emit pollutants such as particulate matter, ozone, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and nitrogen oxides that have severe respiratory and cardiovascular health effects

Wayne County and Essex County residents deserve to know the cumulative impact that these multiple air pollutants have on their health. Residents in this region are exposed to a combination of pollutants and there is growing concern that this exposure is detrimental to their health, despite the area meeting individual pollutant standards. Additionally, the Detroit Riverfront continues to face threats from new pollution sources. For example, there have been recent proposals to store uncontained metallurgical coke along the riverfront despite residents' opposition to yet another source of fine particulate matter in the area.

In light of these issues, I urge the IJC to investigate the cumulative impact that exposure to multiple air pollutants has on human health along the U.S.-Canadian border. I also ask that the IJC begin to identify the most serious air quality threats and provide recommendations for actions that would better safeguard human health in this region. Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

Cc: Secretary Kerry, Department of State  
Director Frieden, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention