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UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2  
Canada

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

As a Minnesotan, I consider your country and our Canadian neighbors to be vital partners in promoting environmental protection along our shared international border. One area I am particularly concerned with is our shared water resources along the Minnesota-Ontario border between the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and Quetico Provincial Park.

As your government is well aware, a Chilean mining conglomerate, Antofagasta, and its subsidiary, Twin Metals Minnesota, has submitted a mine plan to the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management to develop a copper-sulfide ore mining operation within the Superior National Forest, footsteps from the BWCAW. This proposed mine is within the Rainy River Drainage Basin which flows into the BWCAW and then into Quetico Provincial Park. In 2016, the Obama administration determined copper-sulfide ore mining in this location posed an unacceptable environmental risk to the BWCAW. This determination resulted in a withdrawal of federal lands from mining and the refusal to renew mineral leases. This action was reversed by the Trump administration in 2017.

I have grave concerns about copper-sulfide ore mining in the Superior National Forest's fragile ecosystem and reject that notion that a mine processing 20,000 tons of earth daily for twenty-five years in a fragile ecosystem can be done without poisoning our countries' shared wilderness and water resources. As a result, I included language in the Department of State funding bill for fiscal year 2020 that has been signed into law that directs the State Department to study the impacts on Canada from mining in the Rainy River Basin. The language also asks to identify how our governments will work together to monitor cross-boundary pollution if mining is allowed to take place. The actual language accompanying Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 is as follows:

*Rainy River Drainage Basin.*—The Committee supports the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty and the goal of limiting pollution of boundary waters. The Committee is concerned that decisions made by the United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Interior to approve mineral leases in the Superior National Forest will result in an operational sulfide-ore copper mine that risks polluting the waters within the Rainy River Drainage Basin flowing into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Ontario, Canada's Quetico Provincial Park. Therefore, the Committee directs the Department of State to submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations not later than 60 days of enactment of this Act detailing: the characteristics of the Boundary Waters-Quetico ecosystem and the hydrology of the Rainy River Drainage Basin and its impact on Canada; U.S. Government plans to monitor and mitigate the risk of acid mine drainage originating in the Superior National Forest polluting Canadian waters; and United States efforts to inform the Government of Canada on the potential for cross-boundary pollution resulting from sulfide-ore copper mining in the Superior National Forest.

Mr. Prime Minister, I deeply value the vital relationship between our countries, as well as the shared obligation to protect the irreplaceable natural resources we maintain in partnership. The 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty is explicit in detailing our respective obligations and I fully intend to work to ensure that the waters and wilderness our citizens share is protected for generations to come. It is my strong hope that your government will exert its views on this matter to the State Department to ensure that our countries are working in collaboration to protect the shared Minnesota-Ontario waters from irreparable damage from copper-sulfide ore mining.

Sincerely,



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

cc: Canada's Counsel General/Minneapolis