

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 13, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C. 20500

The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A3

President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau:

We were pleased that the United States and Canada agreed to intensify work to modernize the Columbia River Treaty when you met last March.

A modernized treaty regime will benefit both of our countries by strengthening flood response and creating opportunities for better management of our shared water resources to overcome new challenges. Our shared energy relationship can include cooperation on grid modernization, joint work on an upgraded inter-tie to enable more Canadian electricity to be exported to U.S. markets such as the American Southwest, and collaboration on technology solutions like artificial intelligence to improve systems' efficiency and efficacy.

The United States and Canada have long benefited from our close and extraordinarily positive relationship. We should avoid the uncertainty and potential disputes that could come from any further delays in concluding negotiations over modernization of the Columbia River Treaty.

The current flood risk management provisions change to a less-defined approach on September 16, 2024. After this date, the United States will be required to compensate Canada based on economic loss when it calls upon Canada for reservoir storage to prevent flooding in the United States. Both this scenario as well as any new obligations under modernized treaty provisions will require Congressional action. The U.S. Senate will have a condensed legislative calendar next year. Additionally, there will be many other important priorities competing for limited floor time.

The current Canadian entitlement is not acceptable to us and to many other members of the U.S. Congress. Any compensation must be reasonable and defensible for funding to be approved by the U.S. Congress.

We urge you to renew the focus of your teams to complete their work and to consult closely with the U.S. Congress and Canadian Parliament on the path ahead.

Sincerely,



MARIA CANTWELL
United States Senator



JAMES E. RISCH
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee