



GREENPEACE



The Federal Government must respect BC, recommit to offshore oil moratorium

One year anniversary of review process prompts week of action calling on cabinet to confirm no oil exploration, extraction nor oil tankers off Pacific Coast

22 November 2005 (Vancouver) Coastal conservation and environmental groups today launched a week of public action to urge the federal government to honour the results of their own review process and re-commit to the 33-year-old moratorium on offshore oil and gas activities off the coast of British Columbia.

The week of action launches with an aerial art display in Victoria on the 22nd where protesters will stand in formation of the words Oil Free Coast, building to rallies at Members of Parliament offices across the nation on the 23rd and climaxing with a strong public event in Vancouver on the 25th.

"The Government of Canada spent \$1.5 million of taxpayer's money and the people of British Columbia spent a huge amount of time and effort coming from all parts of the coast to participate in the review," said Ken Wu, Campaign Director of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC) in Victoria. "We believe that the Prime Minister and his BC Ministers must honour the results from their own public input process and publicly recommit to the moratorium."

On 19 November last year, the results of the public review and First Nations engagement processes were submitted to cabinet and showed overwhelming support for maintaining the moratorium. 75% of 3700 respondents wanted the moratorium maintained, while only 23% wanted it lifted.

The moratorium forbids exploration, extraction and oil tanker activities related to oil and gas in areas under federal jurisdiction on the Pacific Coast.

The BC offshore is home to globally important and unique populations of sea birds, rare living glass sponge reefs and a vibrant economy of fishing and tourism. Oil and gas activities directly threaten this natural heritage as well as the constitutionally protected traditional resources of First Nations.

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“Experiences like the Terra Nova spill on the East Coast which killed thousands of sea birds and the recent announcement by Environment Canada that they will reduce the level of environmental assessment required for exploratory wells are perfect examples of why the moratorium is the only thing protecting this coast,” according to Oonagh O’Connor, Campaign Coordinator for the Living Oceans Society.

The groups all support increased scientific research on the coast to support sustainable management of coastal resources. They note however, that current efforts to push through seismic testing do not qualify.

"Seismic testing is not science, it is exploration," said Jay Ritchlin of the David Suzuki Foundation. "Blasting high intensity sound into the marine environment represents a real threat to whales, crabs and fish and has no place in this rich coast."

The groups demand that the federal government re-affirm the moratorium and demonstrate that the time and money put into the review was not wasted. A recommitment to the moratorium would show the thousands of participants in the federal process that they were heard and their time and efforts were worthwhile.

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