

F O U N D A T I O N



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Premier Stephen McNeil
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1700 Granville Street
Halifax NS B3J 1X5

Cc:

Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
Catherine McKenna, Federal Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
Jim Carr, Federal Minister of Natural Resources
Dominic LeBlanc, Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
Derek Mombourquette, NS Minister of Energy and Mining
Margaret Miller, NS Minister of Environment

July 17th, 2018

RE: PUBLIC INQUIRY ON OFFSHORE DRILLING

Premier Stephen McNeil,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Offshore Alliance* to urgently call on your government to urge the Federal Government to undertake a joint public inquiry into the environmental, socio-economic, and other impacts of offshore oil and gas exploration in Nova Scotia's Offshore.

The inadequacies of the current regulatory and impact assessment regime, the failure to consider the latest science (on risk assessment, dispersants, impacts of seismic, added risks of deepwater drilling, ocean acidification, and recovery of the fishery, to name a few), the poor state of public awareness and involvement and the magnitude of the risk to the marine biosphere and to the present and future economic base of Nova Scotia's coastal communities all demand an up-to-date, thorough public re-examination. We anticipate an inquiry of this nature could take up to two years. In the meantime, there should be a moratorium on all new oil and gas activity offshore respecting the established precautionary principle.

To date public involvement in decisions regarding offshore drilling has been woefully inadequate to non-existent. Recent incidents such as BP spilling 136,000L of Synthetic Drilling Mud (SDM) and, in 2016, Shell dropping its riser which landed metres away from the well head, and which remains on the ocean floor to this day, have increased public concern about the risks of offshore drilling in deep water and with the weather and typical conditions in the North Atlantic.

A public inquiry would, in an unbiased fashion, identify and examine current knowledge about the impact of oil industry activity in a marine environment such as that off the coast of Nova Scotia. That examination would provide the basis for recommendations concerning the advisability and management of oil and gas exploration and development in the offshore.

We have attached the terms of reference we propose for the inquiry. Our recommendations draw on two precedents: the [Georges Bank Review Panel](#) and the more recent [NS Independent Review Panel on Hydraulic Fracturing](#) (also known as the Wheeler review).

The Offshore Alliance is urging your government along with the federal government to take immediate steps to establish this public inquiry into offshore drilling and declare a moratorium on oil and gas until such a time as the report is completed and decision-makers can benefit from its recommendations to make more informed decisions in future based on the best science.

Thank you in advance for your support for such an inquiry.

Sincerely,

Peter Puxley, Campaign to Protect Offshore Nova Scotia
Gretchen Fitzgerald, Sierra Club Canada Foundation
Mark Butler, Ecology Action Centre
John Davis, Clean Ocean Action Committee
Geoff LeBoutillier, St Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association
Angela Giles, Council of Canadians

* The Nova Scotia Offshore Alliance is a growing coalition of concerned organizations, communities, and individuals determined to change the industry-captive regulatory regime which currently governs our offshore oil and gas industry. To accomplish this, we demand an

immediate moratorium on all exploration and production drilling off our coasts and a full public inquiry.