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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

January 14, 2005

The Editor

A number of news agencies have written speculative editorials on provincial offshore oil and gas initiatives without first contacting the Ministry or me for information. I am writing to reaffirm our government's commitment to the responsible development of west coast offshore oil and gas resources.

Federal and Provincial independent science panels have concluded that there are no scientific or technical barriers to safe development of our offshore resources. More importantly, these reports identified areas where both levels of government can address issues to ensure environmentally safe and scientifically sound development.

To work on these issues, this government established a dedicated Offshore Oil and Gas Team to work directly with the people most likely affected. To date we have partnered with coastal communities and First Nations in over \$1.8 million in educational and information initiatives. Over the past two years I have led two teams of First Nations and coastal community leaders on fact-finding missions... to Cook Inlet, Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico...giving participants a first hand view of the industry at work with communities.

BC's commitment to science is underscored by a \$2 million grant to the University of Northern British Columbia for a number of studies addressing points of the provincial science panel's recommendations. Further studies have been completed by the University of Victoria to further refine resource information, The BC Innovation Council for labour and training analysis, and a pilot study with a first nation on traditional knowledge.

At the invitation of coastal communities the BC Team is beginning to explore options around the development of regulatory and management measures, the need and timing of necessary science, environmental assessment, and jurisdiction and ownership issues.

Unlike the east coast, BC is clearly in a different position with regards to ownership and jurisdiction and stands to benefit substantially both socially and economically from safe and sustainable offshore development.

We have established relations with the Federal government and continue to cooperate with them as they move through their decision processes with respect to the moratorium. Following the end of the federal review process last November, the BC Team, again, suggested a coordinated effort to address environmental, science, education, jurisdiction, regulatory and management topics. Although we have not yet had a reply, it is our hope that the federal government will agree to work jointly and cooperatively.

Regardless, the province continues to take a principled approach to systematically address all these factors with the full and active participation of First Nations, coastal and academic communities. Our commitment today remains as strong as it was yesterday, last month, and last year.

Richard Neufeld  
Minister of Energy and Mines