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The Editor
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**The Province's Goal is Scientifically Sound and Environmentally Responsible
Development of Offshore Oil and Gas Resources**

I am compelled to write in response to Senator Pat Carney's comments (May 5/04) featured in your paper. I strongly disagree with her implication that the Province of British Columbia is "rushing" into developing our offshore oil and gas resources.

The issue of the offshore has been with us for over thirty years. Maintaining the federal moratorium on oil and gas activities in B.C.'s offshore waters simply prolongs the current stage of uncertainty for all parties and will lead to lost opportunities for family supporting jobs, investment and knowledge of our marine environment.

Senator Carney is absolutely correct that not enough is known about the location, condition, and economic viability of the resource. She is also correct that very important public policy questions cannot be addressed until more is known about the resource – including potential direct and indirect benefits, and the possible as opposed to hypothetical, effect on the environment.

These questions will remain unanswered as long as the federal moratorium is in place - the moratorium is the barrier to responsible early exploration, the moratorium is the barrier to being able to address all the questions and concerns that Senator Carney mentions.

With the lifting of the moratorium, governments and First Nations can work together to develop a responsible path for development that can begin to systematically address all the issues Senator Carney has raised. The manner in which this can be done is laid out in, "The Province of British Columbia's Perspective on the Federal Moratorium on Oil and Gas Activities, Offshore British Columbia." The presentation was tabled with the Public Review of the Federal Moratorium and is available on the B.C. Offshore Oil and Gas Team web site: http://www.em.gov.bc.ca/DL/offshore/Reports/BritishColumbiaPerspectiveOnFederalMoratorium-April_15_2004.pdf

The Senator talks about science gaps. Three recent scientific studies have all concluded that given an appropriate regulatory framework, there is no reason not to lift the moratorium now opening the door for new science.

The Province is committed to pursuing new science. In fact, the Province has contributed \$30.5 million in funding, matched by \$31.9 million from the federally funded Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), toward the Neptune project to undertake research related to offshore marine science that will benefit all British Columbians. Neptune will contribute to ongoing research into safe methods to extract oil and gas from the ocean floor, and into new environmental monitoring systems.

If we are to navigate the course ahead we must start with an open mind and a will to pursue the tremendous resource potential our offshore holds, and the necessary first step is the lifting of the Federal moratorium.

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