

Prohibition Order Remains for Offshore Cape Breton

August 30, 2002

Halifax, NS - The Canada - Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board (CNSOPB) will not allow any activity within three Exploration Licences (EL's) off Cape Breton until it has received the report of the Cape Breton Ad Hoc Working Group.

The Board received, from Hunt Oil, an application for permission to conduct a seismic survey this fall on two EL's held by the company. Hunt Oil has been told authorization will not be granted for 2002 and the Prohibition Order on activity within the licences remains in effect.

Meanwhile, the Cape Breton Ad Hoc Working Group has agreed to report to the Board by the end of the year. The Working Group is made up of representatives from fisheries groups, environmental organizations, business associations, unions and three levels of government. It has held two meetings in Cape Breton in the past month to review applications for seismic surveys by Hunt Oil and by Corridor Resources.

The Working Group's advisory report to the Board will include the conclusions reached by a Science Review that is also taking place. A committee of scientists including experts from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, the CNSOPB, and independent consultants is conducting a review of existing science to provide advice to the Working Group.

The Board established the Ad Hoc Working Group in response to recommendations made in the Report of the Cape Breton Public Review. In October 2000, the Board received a joint directive from the federal and provincial governments to hold a public review of the effects of potential oil and gas exploration and drilling activities offshore Cape Breton. Dr. Teresa MacNeil was appointed Commissioner in February of 2001. She conducted the independent review including information sessions last fall and 15 days of public hearings in January of this year. Her report was presented to the Board and to the governments in March.

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