

Offshore Oil And Gas Negotiations/Five Year Science Based Review

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to update this Assembly on negotiations toward the shared management of oil and gas resources in the NWT offshore, along with our ongoing work to undertake a 5-year science-based review of the federal moratorium on offshore oil and gas activity in arctic waters.

Mr. Speaker, the Devolution Agreement commits Canada and the GNWT, with the participation of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, to undertake negotiations for the management of oil and gas resources and the sharing of revenues in the offshore. Canada made a similar commitment to the Government of Yukon.

Northerners should be in charge of decisions about the future of the North and need the opportunity to grow the NWT economy based on the responsible development of the NWT's rich reserves of natural resources.

As Members are aware, negotiations began in April of this year in Inuvik. Since that time, two additional negotiation sessions have been held, one in Yellowknife in May and one in Calgary in June. An approach to guide ongoing negotiations has been agreed upon and will anchor the negotiation across the federal and NWT election periods.

Negotiations are set to resume in January 2020, but work will continue with ongoing discussions and preparation for negotiations to continue until then.

Mr. Speaker, concurrent with negotiations, a separate table has been established to oversee the 5-year science-based review process for the federal moratorium on offshore activity in the Western Arctic, which was unilaterally imposed by Canada in 2016 without any consultation with our Government.

Parties to this table include Canada, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the GNWT and the Yukon. This provides the GNWT and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation with direct input into the science-based review, and also the decision on whether or not the moratorium will be lifted following the completion of the 5-year review.

Mr. Speaker, this work is a priority of our Government and is a Mandate item. To show our commitment to this important work, we have established a small “Office of Devolution Initiatives” within the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, comprised of three staff. This office will lead our work on this file, along with work associated with a review of the transitional provisions under the Devolution Agreement with respect to the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT remains committed to ensuring that northern decision makers have a strong role in resource management decisions that will directly affect NWT residents. Decisions cannot, and should not, be made unilaterally from Ottawa. Our work to negotiate an offshore resource and revenue sharing regime in the Beaufort region is a tangible step towards empowering Northerners through self-determination.

I look forward to the work ahead, and hope that this important work will be successfully completed early in the life of the 19th Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.