



NWT and Nunavut Premiers react to federal announcement of Arctic oil and gas moratorium

IQALUIT (December 22, 2016) – The Premiers of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories are expressing concern over this week’s announcement of an indefinite moratorium on offshore oil and gas development by the Government of Canada.

The economies of the two territories are small and depend heavily on resource development as the major contributor to GDP and source of jobs and income for their residents at the present time. Ensuring there are options for Northerners and economic development alternatives for the territories must be part of the decision making process, particularly when the decision is to close off a significant avenue for potential economic development for the foreseeable future.

“Northerners need options now,” said Premier of the Northwest Territories Bob McLeod. “People need to know that they will have choices and a realistic opportunity to support themselves and their families. They aren’t seeing a lot of opportunities in the current environment, and this decision will not do much to give them confidence in a viable future for themselves and their children.”

Premiers also expressed their disappointment at the federal government’s lack of consultation with their governments in coming to a decision that has the potential to significantly affect the future development of the two territories and the lives of its residents.

“The ban on arctic drilling licences announced this week by the Government of Canada, while an important step in environmental protection, did not invite participation from the Government of Nunavut (GN). These actions are very concerning to the GN. It is essential that Nunavummiut are engaged in and are part of the discussions to determine our territory’s environmental and economic future. Northern consultation is critical,” said Premier of Nunavut Peter Taptuna.

While Premiers welcome the commitment to co-develop a new Arctic Policy Framework, Nunavut and the NWT are facing immediate sustainability and economic development challenges that cannot wait to be addressed.

The Premiers are calling on the Prime Minister to join them in developing a vision for territorial growth and sustainability, led by the territories in consultation with the Government of Canada, to provide made-in-the-North solutions for promoting the sustainability of northern communities, protecting the environment and promoting economic growth and diversification.

All Canadians deserve to share in the opportunities and benefits of living in a sustainable and prosperous Canada, say the Premiers. Northerners need the reassurance that the federal government is equally prepared to address their needs and committed to a course of action that will lead to the development of sustainable jobs and opportunities comparable to those currently available to them, at the same time as it is taking steps to protect the Arctic environment and pursue national objectives. Premiers look forward to discussing these issues with the Prime Minister when they meet early in 2017.

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