



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Abandonment of Québec's Old Harry exploration permits: Mi'gmaq, Innu, Wolastoqiyik are pleased

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The Coalition is happy to learn that the company holding oil exploration permits in the Gulf of St. Lawrence has asked the Québec Government to cancel the permits.

The exploration and subsequent exploitation of oil and gas wells in the St. Lawrence have always caused deep preoccupations and worries within the Mi'gmaq communities of the Gespe'gawa'gi, the North Shore Innus and the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk (formerly called Viger Maliseet). The principle of “water first” has always oriented Mi'gmaq thinking and decision-making regarding the treatment of natural resources on our territory.

As we have always set forth, we don't stand against economic development, whatever it is, but not at any cost. Water being the main source of life for human beings as well as for marine fauna and flora, we cannot take any risk in regard to the level of protection we must grant it. We have always opposed the oil and gas exploitation in the marine environment.

The potential risk to our fishing industries is equally worrisome. These industries would have suffered immense damage had a leak in one of the offshore oil wells occurred. The risk of contamination of such a majestic body of water as the St. Lawrence River is real and the protection measures promoted by the exploitation enterprises have never been reassuring. In that respect, the so-called strategic

environmental studies carried out by Québec and by the Canada-Newfoundland-Labrador Offshore Hydrocarbon Office in 2013 did not considered the real dangers nor the First Nations ancestral rights.

We recognize with relief that, even if the Governments of Canada and Québec refuse to close the door to future exploitation projects, no project is presently foreseen and no legislation is currently contemplated.

We will always oppose projects that are deemed threatening to the waters, their flora and fauna around the Mi'gmaq Gespe'gewa'gi, the Innu Nitassinan and the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk territory. First Nations carry a duty to protect their marine and land territories.

According to Québec's strategic environmental evaluation, a catastrophe of the magnitude of that of the Deepwater Horizon, which poured 80 million liters of oil in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, could be possible if the Gulf of St. Lawrence were opened to exploitation.

Let's recall that in 2013 the nine Innu communities of Saint-Lawrence North Shore, the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk of Lower Saint-Lawrence and the three Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq communities formed an alliance for the protection of the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence and that they demanded a moratorium on oil exploitation.

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