

National Inuit Leader Says Canada Should Invoke a Temporary Moratorium on Offshore Oil Drilling in the Arctic Until Specific Environmental Safeguards are in Place

May 26, 2010 – Toronto, Ontario – National Inuit Leader Mary Simon spoke at the Economic Club of Canada today. In her address she stated that she has written to the Prime Minister regarding the environmental safeguards surrounding offshore oil and gas drilling in the Canadian Arctic. “Against the backdrop of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Inuit are seeking an immediate pause on drilling in the Beaufort Sea in order to take stock. We also seek a commitment that any future drilling proceed only on the basis of the best safeguards used internationally, and the adoption of supplementary environmental protection measures that address unique Arctic vulnerabilities.”

The measures listed by the national Inuit leader support public statements made by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) in a May 19th press release, and a Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources on May 13th.

“We want to ensure that the timing and pace of Arctic oil and gas development balance two primary considerations – the energy security of Canadians and improving the wellbeing of Inuit – while contributing to a larger Canadian and global strategy to reduce carbon emissions,” Simon stated at the noontime address.

In a speech tailored to the business crowd, Ms. Simon combined a historical Arctic narrative with a contemporary economic message – that the North is open for business now that Inuit have settled comprehensive land claim agreements. Further, “Much of Canada’s mineral potential is within Inuit Nunangat,” stated the ITK president. However she also underlined the disparities that exist between Canadians living in large urban cities in southern Canada and the small remote communities in the Arctic.

“The most basic and needed infrastructure for Inuit is housing. If governments were to do one thing that would have a domino effect in improving Inuit health, and increasing education rates, it would be to solve the Inuit housing crisis. We need substantial financial expenditure to solve this problem,” stated Ms. Simon.

Quelle/Source:

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