

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
7TH COUNCIL, 53RD SESSION

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 22-53

TABLED ON JUNE 25, 1974



COUNCIL OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT AND ECOLOGY

SECRETARY LARRY ELKIN □ PHONE 873-7240 □ TELEX 034-45528 □ YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T.

Yellowknife, N.W.T.,
 XOF 1HQ,
 24 June 1974.

Minutes from June 20, 1974 Meeting,
 1:30 p.m., Small Board Room,
Laing Building.

Participants

Mr. Butters (Chairman)
 Mr. Rabesca
 Mr. Parker
 Dr. Hamelin
 Mr. Elkin
 Mr. Carpenter

Guest Participants re I.B.P.

Dr. Simmons (Fort Smith)
 Dr. Lambert (Ottawa)

1. A Proposal for Ecological Sites in the Northwest Territories
-- International Biological Program.

Mr. Butters introduced the topic with reference to the motion of Mr. Searle which deferred Tabled Document #5-53 to the Standing Committee on Development and Ecology for consideration. Mr. Butters then requested the I.B.P. personnel to elaborate on their requirements.

Dr. Simmons advised that they would like to receive approval in principle from the Territorial Council for their proposal with the understanding that each individual site would at a later date be subject to consideration.

Additional information and details on the International Biological Program were provided by Dr. Simmons and Dr. Lambert in that the different types or variety of sites was explained and the level of use of typical sites was outlined. It was pointed out that the degree of protection required, would depend on the characteristics of the individual site and I.B.P. would seek Territorial advice on the type of legislation that should be applied.

Mr. Butters summarized by stating that the Standing Committee on Development and Ecology supports the establishment of Ecological Sites as presented by the International Biological Program. It was further agreed that a motion would be placed before Council seeking approval in principle to the concept as presented in Tabled Document 5-53. The motion would also include a clause requesting the administration to investigate methods by which Territorial Legislation can assist in protecting Ecological Sites on land and water in the Northwest Territories.

On behalf of the Standing Committee Mr. Butters thanked Dr. Simmons and Dr. Lambert.

2. Offshore Drilling in the Beaufort Sea

Mr. Butters reviewed with the committee members his March 19th letter to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs concerning Dr. Pimlott's report on offshore drilling in the Beaufort Sea. Mr. Butters advised that it would appear that a number of valid concerns have been raised in Dr. Pimlott's report. Mr. Butters has received a reply from the Minister which is to be distributed to committee members (copy attached).

3. CARC Conference

Mr. Butters distributed copies of the papers presented at the May 23 and 24 CARC conference entitled "Delta Gas: Now or Later?"

4. Mackenzie Valley Tour -- Alternate Project

Mr. Butters outlined the reasons behind shelving project plans to survey the Mackenzie Valley settlements. The primary basis for the decision was the lack of positive response by Committee members and the fact that it was almost too late to conduct a fully effective survey. On the last point Mr. Butters noted that if the survey was to be conducted it must be well done.

Mr. Parker felt that the "Berger" hearings might overlap and complicate any attempt to conduct the survey at the present time.

Dr. Hamelin pointed out that there was still a possibility that at a time nearer to the actual construction date a similar survey could be conducted.

The topic was concluded with the alternate proposal that the committee investigate the possibility of having a position paper prepared outlining conditions under which the pipeline would receive committee support. It was suggested that a paper of this nature could be used as a Territorial submission to the "Berger" hearings.

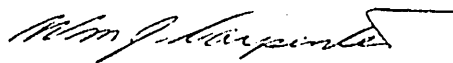
Funding for the preparation of such a paper would be sought through normal Standing Committee appropriations which were to have been used for the Mackenzie Valley survey.

Prior to making a report to Council on this proposal, the Chairman would discuss the matter further with Deputy Commissioner Parker.

5. Other Business

- A. The Secretary was requested to try and obtain copies of the presentations made to the preliminary hearings held by Justice Berger for the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Hearings.
- B. Mr. Butters would review with members the draft Council motion concerning ecological sites once it was received from the Secretary.

The Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.


Wm. J. Carpenter,
A/Secretary,
S. C. O. P. B.



OTTAWA, Ontario. K1A 0H4

Mr. Tom Butters,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on Development
and Ecology,
Council of the Northwest Territories,
Box 1069,
Inuvik, Northwest Territories. XOE OTO

Dear Mr. Butters:

As he promised in his acknowledgement of April 4, my Executive Assistant has brought to my attention your letter of March 19, about Dr. Pimlott's report on offshore drilling in the Beaufort Sea, and my announcement that offshore drilling will not be allowed there before the summer of 1976. I'm sorry for the delay in replying.

The first point you raise - whether or not man-made drilling structures in the Beaufort Sea can withstand the pressures of the ocean ice pack circling the pole - is precisely the problem being studied by the oil and gas operators who are considering drilling operations there. It is also one of the main concerns of the Government agencies responsible for approving these operations. Solutions to this problem have not yet been fully developed, and, in fact, they may never be fully developed unless commercial quantities of oil and gas are discovered in the Sea. You may rest assured, however, that should the need arise, this matter will be resolved before any development approvals are granted.

To date, the construction of four temporary man-made islands in the Beaufort Sea has been approved, to be used as foundations for drilling rigs engaged in exploratory work. In addition, three offshore exploratory floating drilling systems have been granted conditional approval to drill exploratory wells in the Sea during the ice-free periods. If commercial hydrocarbon reserves are discovered, research and engineering studies will have to be done, to find a way of developing these reserves. Of course, the oil and gas companies need some assurance that commercial reserves of oil and gas are present before they will agree to invest in this research, and they will obtain this through the exploratory drilling. Also, the studies to be done will benefit from the experience gained and data gathered during the construction and operation of the man-made islands.

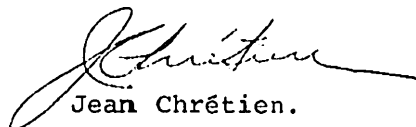
A proposal for an exploratory drilling unit - a mobile single-columned drilling platform called a monopod - that would operate all year, was submitted by Imperial Oil Limited. I am informed that the force of the ice on this structure is of greater significance than on the temporary man-made islands or on the ice-strengthened exploratory drilling units during the open water periods in the Sea. The supporting documents provided by Imperial Oil Limited have been assessed by my engineers, with officers of the National Research Council, and they tell me that the design criteria meet the most severe conditions that can be expected. Of course, there are always some risks in activities that have never been done before, but generally, those associated with oil and gas structures in the Arctic will be the greatest for the sponsoring companies - these are the financial risks. The risk of environmental damage or loss of life will be low, and less than those in conventional oil and gas operations or in other major construction projects.

In your second question about the effect of salt water on the equipment associated with offshore drilling platforms, I believe you are referring to exploratory drilling units (either the barge - or ship-type) that may drill temporary exploratory wells during open water periods. Since this equipment is designed to work in salt water, we don't expect any serious problems in this regard. Neither are we particularly worried about the ice crystals in the water; it is the solid ice floes and the icebergs that are our main concern. The subsea equipment associated with these systems is housed so that there are no moving parts exposed to sea water. If ice crystals are present, however, special provisions may be necessary at the water intakes, such as lowering the intakes below the ice crystal layer, heating the intakes, screening out the ice crystals, removing intake screens, or allowing the crystals to pass through the pumps. In any case, we don't think this problem will be a serious one; the amount of sea water used in offshore drilling operations is relatively small.

As for your comments regarding Dr. Pimlott's concern about the effectiveness of backup and standby equipment, may I refer you to paragraphs two, three and four on page 11 of his report.

I would appreciate it if you would bring my letter to the attention of the members of your Committee. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,


Jean Chrétien.