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Corner Brook Port Corporation Urges Government to Move Forward on Recommendations of Hydraulic Fracturing Panel Report

CORNER BROOK – Representatives from the Corner Brook Port Corporation met with members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydraulic Fracturing Review Panel earlier this week to review the Panel’s Final Report. The comprehensive report recommends that the “pause” in accepting applications involving hydraulic fracturing in Western Newfoundland should remain in effect while some of the report’s supplementary recommendations are implemented. The Corporation is pleased that the report did not recommend a permanent moratorium on fracking and urges government to move forward with the first phase of suggested next steps, referred to as red-stage recommendations in the report. The red-stage recommendations describe actions, primarily related to public policy and processes, that the Panel feels must be undertaken before the “pause” can be lifted.

The report includes a reasonable development scenario based on currently available information about the potential size of the recoverable reserves in the Shoal Point area. While not a “game changer” with respect to the fiscal position of the province, the report highlights that such a regional economic development opportunity could be very significant to the people of Western Newfoundland, and, in particular, to the people of the Stephenville-Port au Port area. The resulting income and employment opportunities could attract more residents which would help stabilize the population base and reduce the average age.

Given that the size and scope of the potential reserves in Western Newfoundland as a whole are not fully researched, the Corporation supports the recommendation to pursue further studies, including seismographic network coverage, to better understand the potential. The Corporation also supports the recommendations to address a number of gaps and efficiencies to ensure that any development proceeds in a responsible manner. These include establishing an appropriate regulatory framework for unconventional oil and gas development, creation of an ongoing public education program and establishing a buffer zone around Gros Morne National Park.

“Overall, we feel that the report is thorough, transparent and very balanced. Economic development is an integral part of our mandate and we feel that the potential for an oil and gas project or the development of an industry is worthy of serious consideration by government, particularly given the current lack of growth in the regional economy,” said Verbon Hewlin, Chair. “We support responsible resource development and the report lays out a clear and practical path forward in terms of determining if unconventional oil and gas is a viable project or industry for Western Newfoundland. We encourage the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commence the implementation of the red-stage recommendations as soon as is feasible with the goal to lifting of the “pause” at the appropriate time. ”

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