

# Open letter to Minister of Environment and Climate Change on BP offshore drilling NS

June 28, 2018

To Minister Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change:

We are writing as a united voice to urge you to halt BP's offshore drilling near Sable Island National Park Reserve in Nova Scotia. As the Minister responsible, you need to revisit the approval of BP's application in light of new expert evidence that the project's risks were not fully assessed.

"Contrary to the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's] (CEAA) Environmental Impact Statement Preparation Guidelines, the 'risks of accidents and malfunctions' have not been properly assessed, documented and validated by BP. BP's assessment of the likelihood of an uncontrolled blowout is much too low, based on the Nova Scotia exploratory drilling conditions. BP's assessment of the consequences of an uncontrolled blowout are based on unsubstantiated assessments of the times required for successful mobilization of a blowout preventer capping stack, and if required, drilling a relief well. Both the short and long-term 'consequences' of the oil and gas released to the environment have been significantly underestimated."

These are the words of Dr. Robert Bea, an expert with more than 48 years experience in engineering and management of the design, construction, maintenance, operation and decommissioning of marine systems, including offshore platforms, pipelines, and floating facilities, in his recent op-ed in the National Observer on May 8, 2018. He is a Professor Emeritus at UC Berkeley, co-director and founder of the university's Center for Catastrophic Risk Management and studied BP's Macondo well blowout disaster in the Gulf of Mexico (2010).

Minister McKenna, in your approval of BP's application you reaffirmed the CEAA's conclusion that "BP Canada's proposed drilling project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects."

Dr. Bea states this claim is not valid in light of international standards and best practices BP's Nova Scotian proposal does not meet.

Dr. Bea likens BP's Nova Scotian plans with their 2016 proposal to drill exploratory wells in the Great Australian Bight (GAB). Following his and other expert reviews of the risks associated with an uncontrolled blowout, the Australian government imposed further measures to develop "As Low As Reasonably Practicable" (ALARP) risk management requirements including a near drilling location blowout preventer capping stack and relief well drilling unit. BP then withdrew its proposals to drill offshore Australia.

Right now BP is drilling near Sable Island National Park Reserve, putting this treasured place, Nova Scotia's multibillion-dollar fisheries and tourism industries – which drive the province's economy and provide people with good, sustainable jobs – and marine life at risk. The nearest capping stack is in Norway and federal approval did not require a relief well drilling unit.

As the Minister that approved BP's application, you have a responsibility to halt BP's drilling offshore Nova Scotia and reassess this approval in light of Dr Bea's concerns.

Signatories:

The Bay of Fundy Inshore Fisherman's Association  
B.C. Sea Wolves  
Campaign to Protect Offshore Nova Scotia (CPONS)  
Clean Ocean Action Committee  
ClimateFast  
The Council of Canadians  
David Suzuki Foundation  
Divest Dalhousie  
Don't Frack PEI  
Earth Action PEI  
Ecology Action Centre  
Energy Mix Productions  
Environmental Defence Canada  
For Our Grandchildren  
Glasswaters Foundation  
Green 13  
Greenpeace Canada  
Greenspiration  
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives  
Leadnow  
The Leap  
Maritime Fishermen's Union, Local 9 South West Nova Scotia  
Polaris Institute  
Rapid Decarbonization Group  
Save Our Seas and Shores Coalition  
Sierra Club Canada Foundation  
South Shore Chapter, The Council of Canadians  
SumOfUs  
Treaty Truck House Water Protectors  
Watershed Sentinel