

Statement

GREENPEACE

Shell's retreat from Canadian Arctic creates space for Arctic protection

8 June 2016 (Toronto) – Reacting to the news that Shell is relinquishing its controversial exploratory permits in Lancaster Sound, removing them as a barrier to the creation of an expanded marine protected area, Greenpeace Arctic campaigner Alex Speers-Roesch said:

“Coming on the heels of Shell’s historic defeat in the Alaskan Arctic and its withdrawal from bidding on Arctic exploration licenses in Norway, this move sends a strong message that the oil industry’s Arctic dream has turned into a nightmare. The company is experiencing Arctic shell shock, and slowly coming to terms with the fact that Arctic oil is simply a bad investment.

“The evidence indicated these permits had actually expired years ago. It’s a bit fresh of Shell to claim it’s relinquishing them voluntarily to support Arctic protection. This is their attempt to score some brownie points and exit from the scene gracefully, rather than having the permits pried from their hands by force, which is what would have happened to them otherwise.

“Canada’s Arctic waters are still threatened by the oil industry, with some companies clinging to plans to carry out seismic blasting in the waters of Baffin Bay, right next to Shell’s now-defunct permits, despite the dangers it poses to wildlife and strong opposition from Inuit. It’s time for both government and industry to acknowledge that Arctic oil exploitation is incompatible with climate action and the new realities of global energy markets, and stop these seismic tests from happening.”

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For more information:

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NOTES:

In April, Greenpeace released documents obtained via access to information legislation which suggested that 30 oil exploration permits held by Shell in the eastern Canadian Arctic since 1971 — which overlap with a proposed marine conservation area — had expired decades ago.

[Copies of Shell's permits](#) appear to show they were last renewed in 1978, for one year only. This on its own isn't damning evidence, but the documents obtained by Greenpeace Canada indicate the government has no record of communicating with Shell to renew the permits after 1978, suggesting the permits in fact expired in 1979. [Legal research](#) by University of Calgary law professor Nigel Banks into the status of the permits supports this view, and notes if the permits were renewed such correspondence should exist. Furthermore, [emails](#) between Erin Ryder of NGO Parvati.org and a director from Indigenous and Northern Affairs, the body responsible for the permits, suggests the government was actually aware it has no record of the permits being renewed, but thought they should remain valid because “both industry and government have continuously treated the 30 Shell Permits as being valid.”

In 2015 Shell announced it was cancelling its multi-billion dollar oil exploration in Alaska in the US Arctic. In April 2016 Shell pulled out of an Arctic exploration licensing round in Norway.