

As soon as the dimensions of the ecological crisis became known, the Government struck a senior inter-departmental committee headed by the Department of National Defence and comprising all relevant departments including External Affairs, Environment Canada, Transport Canada, Energy Mines and Resources and Fisheries and Oceans to review the options for Canadian assistance.

The committee reviewed what technical expertise and equipment was available in Canada to contribute to an effective response to this crisis. The latter included advanced skimmers, 80,000 feet of protective booms, and Innotech's highly sophisticated air-borne remote sensing device to monitor oil spills and slicks which had been used in the Exxon-Valdez crisis.

There is considerable equipment available in situ in the Gulf to protect facilities such as the desalination plants of Saudi Arabia. In addition, Aramco is already procuring equipment from the UK, Canada and elsewhere. However, the needs of smaller states in the area needed to be determined.

Our embassies in Bahrain and Qatar approached local authorities to offer Canadian technical assistance and this offer was accepted.

We see our contribution in three phases:

- a) We will assess the need, determine what others are contributing, and what the framework is for international cooperation.

Experts from Environment Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard will go to Bahrain and Qatar immediately.

We have been in touch with Mr. William O'Neill, a Canadian, who is the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization and with the United Nations Environment Program, two key UN agencies involved in the fight against marine pollution. We are urging them to ensure that international coordination is carried out with utmost haste.

My colleague, The Honourable Robert de Cotret, Minister of the Environment, is in Paris where he will attend to-morrow a meeting of OECD Environment Ministers. This issue is now on the agenda of the meeting and will be discussed.