

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced today that Canada and the United States, culminating discussions that have been underway for some time, have exchanged diplomatic Notes concerning the establishment of a joint Canada/United States Marine Contingency Plan for spills of oil and other noxious substances.

The exchange of Notes constitutes an agreement between Canada and the United States that a joint Canada/United States Marine Contingency Plan shall be promulgated by the Canadian Ministry of Transport and the United States Coast Guard and shall be maintained in force to co-ordinate responses to significant pollution threats to waters of mutual interest. The waters to be covered in the joint contingency plan include the Great Lakes, and waters off the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts. The Plan will be applicable in Juan de Fuca and Rosario Straits among others.

It will be the responsibility of the Canadian Ministry of Transport and the United States Coast Guard to administer and maintain the Plan as promulgated or as amended from time to time. An exchange of Notes constituting this agreement was signed by the Honourable Mitchell Sharp on behalf of Canada and by His Excellency William J. Porter, United States Ambassador to Canada, on behalf of the United States.

Mr. Sharp welcomed the signing of this agreement as a positive step to establishing co-operative action to minimize threats to Canadian and United States' waters and coastlines posed by accidental spills of oil and other pollutants. The contingency plan itself, will provide for co-operation with respect to the use of equipment and for co-ordination of personnel in responding to any accidents that may occur in the waters affected by the Plan.

The Oil Spills Contingency Plan is to be signed and promulgated by the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard and the Administrator, Canadian Marine Transportation Administration, Ministry of Transport, on Thursday, June 20.