The Department of External Affairs, the Department of Fisheries and the Environment and the Department of Transport released jointly today the texts of studies relating to the effects on Canada of the proposed Pittston Company oil refinery at Eastport, Maine.

As a result of conclusions reached in these studies, a letter was sent by the Department of External Affairs to the Pittston Company on December 1, informing the Company that it would not be possible for the Canadian Government to agree to the movement of large volumes of pollutants through Head Harbour Passage, the marine approach to Eastport. The letter, which was tabled in the House of Commons on December 6, affirms a position maintained publicly by the Canadian Government since 1973. This position also has the full support of the Government of New Brunswick.

The first study, prepared by the Department of Fisheries and the Environment, is entitled "An Environmental Risk Index for the Siting of Deep Water Oil Ports", December 1976. It comprises a comparative analysis of the navigational risk and environmental vulnerability of twenty-two Canadian oil port sites and approaches on the Atlantic Coast, including Head Harbour Passage. Using any of several weightings of the factors involved, the Passamaquoddy area in which the Passage is sited emerged as by far the least acceptable area for tanker operations, both "because the value of fisheries and aquatic bird resources in the region is so high" and due to "the high level of navigational risk associated with the passage".

The full report is available from Ocean and Aquatic Science, Department of Fisheries and the Environment, Ottawa.

The second study, prepared by the Department of Transport, is entitled "Eastport Ship Terminal System: Accessibility and Ship Safety, Preliminary Analysis and Assessment", November 1976. While conceding that "Head Harbour Passage could probably be negotiated by a well-found, well-equipped, well-manned, and carefully-navigated VLCC (very large crude carrier)" under ideal climatic and marine conditions, the study concludes that:

> "The degree of navigational risk associated with the continuous year-round supply of crude oil and product distribution from the refinery poses a serious threat to the ecology of the region... While highly sophisticated aids to navigation can certainly increase the navigator's awareness of track and heading deviations, it should be emphasized that even with massive dredging, the approaches to Eastport would remain "winding", the currents "extremely difficult to judge" and weather conditions cannot as yet be controlled. In consequence, the risk of pollution remains high and is environmentally unacceptable."

...2