

OIL-SPILL STOPGAP PLAN

The Minister of Transport, Mr. Don Jamieson recently announced an interim federal contingency plan for handling oil and toxic materials spilt in Canadian waters. It is designed to deal with "spills" in waters under federal jurisdiction to ensure support to provincial contingency plans and to form the basis for negotiation with the provinces of a more comprehensive national plan.

The plan divides Canada into five main areas: the northern regions (including the Canadian Arctic), the East Coast, the West Coast, the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. The Prairie Provinces, though not included in the plan, will receive federal assistance if they require it and will be covered in the comprehensive national plan under development.

The Canadian Government assumes full responsibility for response to pollution incidents in the Canadian Arctic, in the waters off the East and West Coasts under federal jurisdiction, and in international waters where Canadian interests are affected.

In the Great Lakes region, because of federal, provincial and United States jurisdiction, the Canadian Government will respond to major spills in co-operation with the Ontario and U.S. Governments. In addition to the Federal Government's existing interim contingency plan, a comprehensive plan has been developed and approved as part of the intended agreement between Canada and the U.S. for joint action against pollution in the Great Lakes, which is now being prepared for approval by the two governments.

In waters under federal jurisdiction, the response to spills will be initiated by co-ordinators on the scene, who will be responsible for handling clean-up operations using local resources or, if the job is too big, calling for increased federal assistance.

Action on pollution in provincial or joint provincial and federal waters will be initiated, in most cases, by municipal or provincial officials. If incidents of pollution are beyond the capability of local authorities to handle, the full resources of the Federal Government can be made available on request.

FEDERAL CLEAN-UP TEAM

An interim interdepartmental committee has been set up to establish and maintain the federal capability to respond to a major spill. Its responsibilities include development of a containment and clean-up team which could be moved to the spill on short notice. Personnel, specialized equipment and fast transport will be drawn from the Ministry of Transport, the Department of National Defence and the Department of the Environment.

The committee is also responsible for fostering research and development in areas related to distribution and disposal of pollutants and initiating liaison with provincial governments to offer support and to develop with them a permanent national contingency plan.

Detailed technical information to assist in

combating spills has been prepared in the form of a manual by a technical working group of the Interdepartmental Committee on Water.

OTHER MEASURES

Local co-operative groups, representing the various levels of government, and the oil industry, have been established in various centres throughout Canada.

The Ministry of Transport is investigating the feasibility of providing a capability in Coast Guard ships on both coasts and the Great Lakes to combat spills. Equipment would include skimmers (slick-lickers), booms, barges, pumps, hoses, gas engines and spares.

Various types of equipment and supplies of absorbents, such as peat moss, are located at Fort Hawkesbury, Dartmouth and Charlottetown, and additional equipment is being assembled for storage at Vancouver and Hamilton. Peat moss has been stored at Resolute Bay, and certain vessels which operate in the Arctic have been fitted with suction and discharge hose pipe and pumps.

Planning is under way for the strategic stock-piling of clean-up material at St. John's, Newfoundland, Quebec City, Hay River (Mackenzie River) and at Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

Personnel of the Canadian Coast Guard are being briefed and trained in clean-up techniques as they are developed.

COSTS

According to a recommendation contained in the interim federal contingency plan for handling oil and toxic material spills, costs involved in cleaning-up pollution incidents should be borne by the polluter.

The document states, however, that "the nature of a pollution incident is such that it is not practical to decide on cost responsibilities at the time of the incident. The important thing is to effect a containment and clean-up...with all due haste and to provide a mechanism whereby the cost-sharing can be worked out after the fact".

Costs associated with a pollution incident can be considered in two categories:

- (1) operating costs, which include material and personnel costs associated with containment and clean-up; and
- (2) preparedness costs, including the personnel and material costs associated with the maintenance of the contingency planning organization, such as stock-piling strategic materials, research and trials of containment and clean-up techniques. These costs would be borne by the departments of government responsible for various aspect of preparedness.

Most expensive items would be capital and operating costs. Special arrangements would be made for funding, including the provision of an effective accounting system.