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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TEXT OF AN AIDE-MEMOIRE, DATED AUGUST 18, 1971,
TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
REGARDING THE MOVEMENT OF OIL TANKERS

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

AIDE-MEMOIRE

The great concern of the Canadian Government regarding proposals to transport oil by tanker from Alaska to the Puget Sound area has been made known to the United States Government on a number of occasions during the course of this year. The most recent occasion was at a meeting of United States and Canadian officials in Washington on June 29. At that meeting a proposal was elaborated in an Aide-Mémoire for detailed consultations to be held as soon as possible, as had been discussed by Canadian Ministers with the Secretary of State, Mr. Rogers on June 10, to explore the various implications of the proposed oil movements.

In a response of July 9 the Department of State suggested that, as an alternative to holding further meetings at that time, any additional information which the Canadian authorities might have to offer be conveyed in written form. It remains the Canadian view that it would be advantageous to discuss certain specific aspects of the likely environmental impact of the implementation of proposed plans for oil movements from Alaska, but in the meantime certain technical and other material has been prepared touching upon the principal questions raised in the Canadian Embassy's Aide-Mémoire of June 29.

Attached as Appendix I is a study entitled "The Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Oil Transport Between Valdez and Cherry Point Refinery". This document is accompanied by a general commentary (Appendix II) highlighting certain conclusions suggested in the study covering Canadian waterfront property values in the area and postulated costs in the event of a mishap to a supertanker in the Strait of Georgia system. It will be seen that the main paper (Appendix I) is supported by five Annexes dealing with the impact of oil spills under the following headings: Wildlife; Property, Parks and Recreation; Fisheries; Industry; Physical Consequences of Two Hypothetical Oil Spills. This material demonstrates that a major oil spill arising from large tanker operations would have disastrous effects for the environment and ecology in the Canadian (as well as United States) coastal area, that a great deal of the damage would be beyond capacity to prevent or repair, and that much of the damage would be of a nature not measurable in any economic terms.

Appendix III is an analysis of the international legal situation as it would pertain to the operation of an oil tanker route into the Puget Sound area. This analysis shows that while under established international law damage in Canadian territory from events occurring in United States territory would give rise to clearly valid claims for indemnity, there nevertheless remains the problem of how in present circumstances anyone could obtain prompt and adequate compensation.

In general terms, as outlined on earlier occasions, the Canadian Government is convinced that if the full economic costs of the substantial environmental risks are taken into

account it will be found desirable to avoid introducing large and hazardous tanker movements into the inner waters of the Pacific Coast. The Canadian Government is concerned, moreover, that there has so far been no indication of plans to provide for compensation, however negligible the risks of damage from oil spills may be judged to be by United States experts. As expressed by Canadian Ministers to Secretary of State Rogers on June 10 it is the view of the Canadian Government that the proposed oil shipments should by-pass Pacific coastal waters adjacent to Canadian territory. It is appreciated that United States residents in the Puget Sound area may be able to accept significant risks of damage from oil spills as a "trade-off" against the assumed economic benefits from oil supplied by tanker to the Cherry Point refinery; however, no persuasive case has been made to justify Canadians accepting these serious risks (demonstrably likely to have greater impact in Canadian than in United States territory) without any benefits to offset them.

In its Aide-Mémoire of July 9 the Department of State alluded to the question of joint contingency plans to deal with potential oil spills. Since there is a difference of view between the Canadian and United States Governments as to the nature and magnitude of oil tanker movements that should be permitted in the future in the inner waters on the West Coast, there does not exist at this time any agreed and workable basis for the establishment of a joint contingency plan in that area. The Canadian Government would, however, be prepared to exchange technical information as the first step in examining the situation on the Atlantic Coast.

In the June 29 discussion, in the context of the expressed Canadian opposition to the proposed tanker movements in the inner coastal waters, the United States side enquired about alternative sources of oil supply for the States in the Pacific northwest. In order to explore this aspect of the question the competent Canadian authorities would be prepared to discuss the technical and other factors which might affect the continuing contribution to the oil needs of the region from Canadian sources.

In the light of all the foregoing considerations it is the position of the Canadian Government that the United States Government should take whatever steps might be necessary to exclude the proposed substantial increase in the movement of oil by tanker into the coastal waters adjacent to Canada.

Washington, August 18, 1971.