

October 15, 2009

News Release

Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry Set to Start October 19, 2009

The Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry will start public hearings Monday, October 19, 2009. The hearings will be held at Tara Place, 31 Peet Street and will begin at 9:30 a.m.

The Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry was established by the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) to determine and recommend improvements to the safety regime to ensure the risks of helicopter transportation of offshore workers in the Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area are as low as reasonably practicable. The Inquiry was announced following the March 12, 2009 helicopter crash which claimed the lives of 17 people who worked on offshore installations.

“I am looking forward to the start of the public hearings,” said the Honourable Robert Wells, Q.C., Inquiry Commissioner. “We know there is a lot of interest in the Inquiry, particularly on the part of those, and their families, who work in the offshore oil industry and use helicopter transport regularly.”

On Monday the Commissioner will make opening remarks and be followed by Inquiry counsel John Roil, Q.C. and Anne Fagan who will give an overview of the evidence to be presented.

The first witnesses will begin on Tuesday and will be from the C-NLOPB, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, and Transport Canada. All of these entities have roles in offshore helicopter safety and will explain their respective roles and duties. These presentations are expected to take two weeks.

The scheduling of other witnesses will be announced during that period.

The public hearings will be webcast via the Inquiry’s website www.oshsi.nl.ca and Rogers TV will broadcast the proceedings either live or with a slight delay.

Commissioner Wells also said he had an opportunity on October 8, 2009 to travel by helicopter to the Hibernia platform to experience helicopter transportation to the offshore and to tour the gravity-based structure.

“I believe it was important for me to make that trip by helicopter to the Hibernia GBS to gain some personal insight into how offshore employees travel to work,” said Commissioner Wells. “It was a good experience and it also provided me with an opportunity to meet with both managers and employees who shared some of their views on working offshore.”

The Commissioner, along with Mr. Roil and Ms. Fagan, also attended the Third International Helicopter Safety Symposium (HSS 2009) held in Montreal from September 29 to October 1, 2009. The Symposium

brought together regulators and the industry to discuss ways to improve helicopter safety worldwide and to report on progress made in the past three years.

The organization was formed three years ago to address the helicopter accident rate which had remained static for 20 years. Its goal is to achieve an 80 percent reduction in helicopter accident rates by 2016. Their efforts are already showing improvements.

“At the Symposium much was learned about safety and the importance of risk assessment and safety management,” said Commissioner Wells. It was noted that in order for the safety to improve, the safety culture of involved organizations must improve, with safety becoming a higher priority.

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