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Governor Schwarzenegger's visit offers opportunity to protect North American coastline from new oil drilling

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VANCOUVER — California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's visit offers an unprecedented opportunity for British Columbia to prove itself an environmental leader by extending the provincial moratorium on coastal oil drilling, according to the David Suzuki Foundation and the Living Oceans Society.

"California's extended moratorium on coastal drilling for fossil fuels helps protect the Pacific coast," said Oonagh O'Connor of the Living Oceans Society. "Oregon and Washington's support for a continued ban leads us to hope B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell would want to extend that protection along Canada's Pacific coastline as well."

The Congressional moratorium along the U.S. coasts has been in place for 26 years, and now the three west coast states have asked the President and Congress to continue it in perpetuity.

"The moratorium works in tandem with California's leadership on tackling climate change," said David Suzuki Foundation climate change specialist Ian Bruce. "Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels is crucial to any climate change policy. Opening up oil and gas drilling in B.C.'s coastal waters would negate progress made through B.C.'s much-anticipated climate action plan."

In addition to their support for the offshore drilling moratorium, all three states have committed to alternative energy sources instead of increasing their dependence on fossil fuels.

"This visit creates a historical opportunity for Premier Gordon Campbell to join the West Coast Governors and create an international agreement that will protect both the climate and the health of our oceans," Ms. O'Connor said.

Mr. Bruce concurred, adding, "In the absence of federal leadership on climate change and marine protection, this would be an impressive statement to the world, and a lasting legacy for the Premier and the B.C. government."

-30-

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