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Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency

News Release

Georgia Strait Crossing Pipeline Project Referred to Environmental Assessment Panel

Hull - October 4, 2000 - Canada's Minister of the Environment David Anderson, pursuant to his authority under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, today announced that the proposed Georgia Strait Crossing Pipeline project will be sent to an independent environmental assessment review panel. This decision follows a request from the National Energy Board (NEB) for a referral of the project to a review panel.

"I have decided to refer this project to a public review panel," stated Minister Anderson. "I believe that a public process will help British Columbians understand the potential impacts of this project. Public discussion and debate are crucial elements in the review process.

The Georgia Strait Crossing is a joint proposal by British Columbia Hydro and the Williams Gas Pipeline Company (Williams) to build a new pipeline to transport natural gas from Sumas, Washington (via a connection to the Westcoast Energy pipeline in British Columbia) to Duncan on Vancouver Island. The applicants intend to file an application in the fall of 2000. Although the project is a 50/50 venture between the two companies, Williams will be responsible for the design, construction and operation of the pipeline.

Following the filing by Georgia Strait Crossing Pipeline Limited of a preliminary submission to initiate the environmental assessment process, the NEB held public meetings between June 26, 2000 and July 29, 2000 in Duncan, Sidney and three Gulf Islands for the benefit of those persons interested in learning about the environmental assessment and regulatory review. Separate meetings with First Nations were also held in early August 2000.

Minister Anderson indicated that he will be seeking the views of the responsible authorities, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the

NEB, on the next course of action to be taken on the review process, including the appointment of panel members to the Georgia Strait Crossing Pipeline Panel and the related terms of reference.

The general public and interested groups are encouraged to participate in the panel review process. More information will be provided to the public in the coming weeks.

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The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is a federal agency reporting to the Minister of the Environment. Its mission is to provide Canadians with high-quality environmental assessments that contribute to informed decision making in support of sustainable development. Environmental assessment is a planning tool used to avoid or mitigate the possible adverse effects of development on the environment.

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