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STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE JEAN CHRETIEN
CONTINUING COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS ON THE CONSTITUTION

OFFSHORE RESOURCES

In the remarks I made at the outset of our discussions here, I indicated that the federal government had thought carefully about the positions it had taken during the last set of constitutional negotiations, particularly concerning resources. On the question of the offshore, in reviewing the concept of concurrent jurisdiction, which had been under discussion at that time, we have come to the view that it would give rise to many kinds of difficulties for all governments.

The Government of Canada recognizes, nevertheless, that the coastal provinces have a great interest in the resources lying off their shores. Each coastal province would like to have a significant influence on the rate of development of those resources, so that as far as possible, the development would take place in line with the province's social and economic need. Each coastal province would like also to derive important benefits from the "spin-offs" of development.

I believe these are reasonable goals for the provinces to seek. Moreover, I believe that each coastal province has a claim to some special share of the revenues which may be derived from the resources off its shores.

The federal government is of the view that these provincial interests can best be met by new administrative arrangements in which each coastal province could be appropriately involved in offshore resource management — perhaps an improved version of what we worked out a few years ago with the Maritime Provinces. A revenue sharing agreement could be part of such an arrangement. I would be ready to argue that it should be a different deal — some may say a better deal — than we previously offered the Maritimes, particularly if we could work out an arrangement under which the flow of revenues could begin to move towards other parts of Canada once the coastal province in question reached some reasonable level of affluence compared to other provinces.