

Georges Bank drilling faces Canadian questions

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(Source: Gloucester Daily Times)By Richard Gaines, Gloucester Daily Times, Mass.

Sept. 06--Although the Nova Scotia government has announced an extension of a ban on oil and gas drilling in the Canadian sector of Georges [Bank](#), a cornucopia of fish and seafood that Canada shares with the United States, government leaders say that no bill has yet been drafted to give the ban legal standing, according to an anti-drilling organization.

"We met with the premier of the province (Darrel Dexter) and two cabinet secretaries," said Denny Morrow, a leader of the NoRigs3 Coalition, which successfully lobbied the government earlier this year to pledge to extend the [oil and gas](#) drilling ban in the Canadian sector of Georges.

"We didn't get any comfort," said Morrow. "The premier was not aware of any legislation."

He said while legislation can be repealed or amended, a law has "moral force" shows greater commitment than a pledge, which so far is what the anti-drilling interests have been left with.

"All we have going on is announced intention," Morrow said.

The action on the Canadian side is considered pivotal to future U.S. activities in its much larger section of Georges, which is one of the North Atlantic's great ecological nurseries and richest producers of fin and shellfish.

Dexter acknowledged as much in announcing the decision to extend the moratorium for three years, but he also made clear that there are long-term possibilities for drilling and oil exploration on Georges. Although the United States has not authorized any off shore oil exploration or extraction in the Northwest Atlantic, Canada has been aggressive in approving drilling along the Maritime provinces.

Georges has been the off limits exception for Canada.

Canada's 10-year moratorium on drilling, which would have expired in 2012, was extended by proclamation in May through 2015.

Weeks earlier, President Obama announced an ambitious drilling plan for the U.S, but the president took waters north of New Jersey, including notably the shallow shelf of Georges, out of consideration.

The potential for oil drilling has long been a concern for Gloucester fishermen and backers of the New England industry.

In June, more than 300 people turned out on Gloucester's Good Harbor and Pavilion beaches to join in a national "Hands Across the Sand" demonstration calling to end all drilling for oil off U.S. shores.

The demonstration, which coincided with similar efforts at more than 800 beaches around the country, also segued with the city's annual St.