

Date: March 27, 2026

Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources Briefing Note.

Subject: Project Oqwatn – Restoring Canada's Marine Offshore Energy Service Capacity Through Indigenous Ownership and Leadership

Key Message

Canada has lost its ability to service offshore energy vessels domestically due to vessel size growth, forcing work overseas. At the same time, the increasing federal fleet remains in Canada but is constrained by limited docking capacity while the offshore wind industry is advancing, requiring more ships in the area.

Project Oqwatn restores offshore energy industry capability, relieves pressure on federal fleet maintenance, and delivers Indigenous participation at scale.

The Problem

- Offshore energy industry support vessels have outgrown existing Canadian infrastructure
- Newdock serviced **9–10 offshore vessels annually** in the early 2000s; **0 in 2025**
- Federal vessels remain in Canada but are **competing for limited dock space** – increasing problem

The Solution: Project Oqwatn

- Expansion of majority Indigenous-owned Newdock (St. John's Dockyard)
- **28,000T shiplift** capable of servicing modern offshore and federal vessels
- Enables Canada to **repatriate offshore energy industry work** and **reduce federal bottlenecks**

Indigenous Leadership

- Only **Indigenous majority-owned shipyard** in Canada at national scale
- Ownership includes major Atlantic Indigenous Partners:
 - Qalipu First Nation
 - Membertou First Nation
 - Miawpukek First Nation (option to acquire interest)
- Indigenous ownership embedded in infrastructure and operations
- Scalable model for **economic reconciliation in strategic sectors**



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Why It Matters

- Strengthens **energy security** and reduces reliance on foreign yards
- Supports **federal fleet readiness in a year-round, ice-free harbour at the edge of the Arctic**
- Retains high-value jobs and industrial capability in Canada

Recommendation for the Committee

That the Government of Canada:

1. Recognize marine sustainment infrastructure as **strategic national infrastructure** tied to energy security and defence readiness
2. Support the expansion of Newdock (**Project Oqwatn**) as a priority investment
3. Advance **Indigenous-led ownership models** in major infrastructure projects