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Equiforce and Office to Advance Women Apprentices NL Welcome Bay du Nord Milestone and Highlight Importance of Workforce Readiness

St. John's, NL – March 4, 2026 – Equiforce and the Office to Advance Women Apprentices (OAWA-NL) are welcoming the announcement that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and project partners Equinor and BP have reached an agreement to advance the Bay du Nord offshore oil project, calling it an important milestone for the province's energy sector and broader economy.

The agreement outlines life-of-field benefits, royalties and an equity option for the province. Early estimates suggest the project could generate billions in revenue for Newfoundland and Labrador and support thousands of jobs during development and operations.

Equiforce CEO Abbie Hodder and OAWA-NL Executive Director Lori LeDrew attended the announcement and said projects of this scale represent both economic opportunity and a clear reminder of the importance of workforce readiness.

Equiforce was founded in 1997 as the Women in Resource Development Corporation during the early years of Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore oil industry, with a mandate to ensure women could participate in the opportunities created by projects like Hibernia and the broader growth of the sector.

"Nearly three decades after our founding, that mandate remains just as relevant," said Hodder. "Major resource developments like Bay du Nord depend on a strong and capable workforce, and building those talent pipelines requires intentional effort."

Today, Equiforce works with employers, industry partners and governments to strengthen workforce participation in sectors such as energy, natural resources, ocean industries and infrastructure. This includes preparing women for in-demand careers, supporting employers with data-driven equity and inclusion insights and solutions, and introducing the next generation to in-demand industries through STEMforGIRLS programming.

"The opportunities created by Bay du Nord will require *all of us*, and should benefit *all of us*," said Hodder. "Equiforce is excited to partner with government and industry to help ensure women and other underrepresented groups are fully engaged in the workforce that will support this next phase of offshore development."

OAWA-NL says the project also highlights the importance of strengthening apprenticeship pathways so women can access skilled trades careers connected to major developments like Bay du Nord.

“Large-scale projects like Bay du Nord create tremendous opportunity in the skilled trades,” said LeDrew. “Strong apprenticeship pathways will be essential to building the workforce these projects require, and initiatives like this present an important opportunity to increase the number of women entering and completing apprenticeships in Newfoundland and Labrador.”

OAWA-NL was established in 2009 to support female apprentices in underrepresented skilled trades and to address low apprenticeship completion rates in Newfoundland and Labrador. During the surge in industrial activity from 2011 to 2016, OAWA-NL—working in collaboration with industry stakeholders, unions, and training institutions—played a key role in advancing women’s participation in skilled trades. As a result of these efforts, the proportion of female apprentices grew from approximately 5% to 14% over just five years.

“As projects like Bay du Nord move closer to development, the demand for skilled tradespeople will only grow,” LeDrew said. “OAWA is very encouraged by the deliberate inclusion of skilled trades apprenticeship targets, 10 per cent for construction and 15 per cent for onshore operations. Expanding participation in apprenticeship, including increasing the number of women entering and completing trades training, will be an important part of meeting that demand.”

Equiforce and OAWA-NL say they look forward to continuing to work with industry and government partners to help ensure the province is ready for the opportunities ahead.

“Newfoundland and Labrador has the expertise, the experience and the workforce potential to support projects like this,” said Hodder. “Equiforce and OAWA-NL are ready to play a role in helping that workforce grow *equitably*.”

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