

OIL AND GAS

Hebron opens St. John's office

By **TARA MULLOWNEY**
THE TELEGRAM

The Hebron offshore development reached another milestone Wednesday, as it officially opened its project office in downtown St. John's.

The project's 20-member team — including the project, procurement, business and technical managers — moved into the spacious office, located on the seventh floor of Atlantic Place, Monday, just down the hall from partner Chevron and in the hub of the oil and gas industry offices in this province.

"We felt it was important to be downtown in the centre, close to our co-venturers as well as some of our potential contractors and suppliers," said Hebron business manager Lynn Ann Nicholosi. The plan is to increase the project team to 40 members by the end of the year, providing a minimum of one million person hours of activities before initial oil production.

"Our focus right now is on the front-end engineering design from the technical perspective, some with C-CORE, as well as some international companies," Nicholosi explained. "Our other focus here is on early procurement. We just issued an expression of interest for our gravity base structure and front end engineering designs last week, and in addition to that, we've got our development plan."

Earlier this month, the team started holding information sessions with local contractors. ExxonMobil, which leads the oil companies in the project, hopes to file a development plan application with the offshore board by the end of the year.

Project sanction by the partners is

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scheduled for the first half of 2012, when construction of the production platform — which will include a gravity base structure (GBS), to be built at Bull Arm, Trinity Bay, and later installed on the Grand Banks in 92 metres of water — is scheduled to begin, employing about 3,500 people at its peak. The companies are aiming to develop 566 million barrels of Hebron crude by late 2017.

Last month, ExxonMobil filed the Hebron project description with the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (CNI OPB), which is reviewing the document and has initiated the environmental assessment process.

"Each step we take gets us closer to project sanction and ultimately peak construction employment," Natural Resources Minister Kathy Dunderdale said Wednesday. "Today represents another exciting milestone in the development of the project, and we look forward to the valuable local benefits this will provide to the people of the province."

The Hebron oilfield, located in the Jeanne d'Arc Basin, about 350 kilometres southeast of St. John's, has an expected lifespan of 20 to 25 years.

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Hebron business manager Lynn Ann Nicholosi poses at the project's newly-opened office in Atlantic Place Wednesday afternoon. — Photo by Tara Mullenwey/The Telegram

MUNICIPALITIES