



NWT OFFICE OF THE REGULATOR OF OIL AND GAS OPERATIONS

Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations

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Jonathon Michel  
Director, Aurora Campus  
Aurora College  
PO BOX 1008  
INUVIK NT X0E 0T0

April 20, 2023

Dear Jonathon Michel:

**Notice of Non-Compliance: Failure to Abandon the Aurora Training Well G-04 (WID1915)**

On August 2, 2020, I was designated as Regulator by the Commissioner in Executive Council pursuant to section 121 of the *Oil and Gas Operations Act* (OGOA), through Regulator Designation Order R-111-2020. I am currently the Regulator.

Aurora College owns the Aurora Training Well G-04 (WID1915) (the well) in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. Aurora College holds Operating Licence NWT-OL-2014-019 and you are identified as the Responsible Officer on the Operating Licence.

The well was drilled, used for training, and suspended in 2001.

The abandonment deadline for the Aurora Training Well G-04 was set in August 2017, after the *Well Suspension and Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes* (Guidelines) were issued by the Regulator under section 18 of the *Oil and Gas Operations Act*, effective February 1, 2017.

On August 31, 2017, the Chief Conservation Officer, appointed by the Regulator under section 4 of OGOA, sent an Assessment of Suspended Well – Compliance Notification to Aurora College for the well. At that time, the well was identified as in compliance with the Guidelines and the *Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations*. The assessment reminded Aurora College of the requirement to abandon the well by January 31, 2023, if it was not brought into production, and to submit an abandonment plan for the well to the OROGO by January 31, 2021.

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Updated assessments were sent to Aurora College on May 31, 2019, and July 29, 2020. Each assessment reiterated the January 31, 2023, abandonment deadline and the January 31, 2021, deadline for submitting an abandonment plan to OROGO.

On December 10, 2020, OROGO sent Aurora College a letter reiterating the requirement to submit an abandonment plan for the well to OROGO by January 31, 2021.

On February 5, 2021, OROGO sent Aurora College a letter identifying that the abandonment plan had not been received and was overdue. The letter requested the plan be submitted to OROGO by February 22, 2021.

On March 16, 2021, another assessment was sent to Aurora College, reiterating the January 31, 2023, abandonment deadline for the well.

On March 19, 2021, Aurora College sent a letter to OROGO stating its intention to abandon the well by January 31, 2023, and requesting an extension to April 2, 2021, to submit the abandonment plan.

Also on March 19, 2021, the Senior Technical Advisor, Mike Martin, contacted the consultant identified by Aurora College, Canadian Petroleum Engineering Inc. (CPE), to provide information on the requirements for the abandonment plan and the requirements for future applications for Operations Authorizations and Well Approvals. The Senior Technical Advisor also offered to provide additional information and support as needed to CPE.

On April 6, 2021, OROGO received Aurora College's abandonment plan. The plan indicated that Aurora College would:

- Submit an Operations Authorization (OA) application for well monitoring and abandonment operations by December 1, 2021;
- Submit a Well Approval application for the well abandonment by March 4, 2022; and
- Complete the well abandonment by July 19, 2022.

Aurora College did not submit its OA application as committed on December 1, 2021, and did not contact OROGO to propose a new schedule for submitting its applications and completing the well abandonment. The Regulator contacted Aurora College by letter on December 3, 2021, and by email on December 16, 2021, January 12, 2022, and January 25, 2022, requesting an update on the status of its planned submissions and offering a pre-application meeting to answer any questions Aurora College might have about the process.

On January 28, 2022, in response to a letter reminding Aurora College of the requirement to renew its Operating Licence, Aurora College wrote to OROGO that it would be in touch soon about the well abandonment. However, it did not contact OROGO to arrange a pre-application meeting or submit its OA and Well Approval applications for the well abandonment.

On March 4, 2022, I issued direction to Aurora College to:

- Confirm by 4 pm on March 9, 2022, when it intends to abandon the well in keeping with the January 31, 2023, deadline established in the Guidelines; and
- Submit complete applications for an Operations Authorization and Well Approval for the abandonment of the well no later than 100 days before it intends to begin abandonment operations.

On March 9, 2022, Aurora College confirmed that it would submit complete applications for the OA and Well Approval no later than 100 days before the proposed beginning of abandonment operations and that it intended to abandon the well before January 31, 2023.

On April 14, 2022, another assessment was sent to Aurora College, reiterating the January 31, 2023, abandonment deadline for the well.

On October 5, 2022, Senior Technical Advisor Mike Martin met with Aurora College in Inuvik to discuss the application requirements.

On October 21, 2022, Senior Technical Advisor Mike Martin and I met with Aurora College and Lorne Hammer, CPE, to further discuss the application requirements. During that meeting Aurora College committed to providing a deadline for submitting applications to OROGO by October 28, 2022. Aurora College did not provide this information.

On November 1, 2022, I issued a notice to Aurora College requiring a firm deadline for Aurora College's submission by November 4, 2022.

On November 11, 2022, Aurora College submitted its schedule for the well abandonment. The schedule stated that the OA application would be submitted on December 13, 2022, and the Well Approval application would be submitted on December 15, 2022. The schedule allowed 65 days for OROGO to review and approve both applications and stated that the well abandonment would occur between March 20 and 23, 2023, rather than prior to January 31, 2023, as Aurora College had committed to on March 9, 2022.

On November 18, 2022, I responded to Aurora College's schedule noting that it provided significantly less than the 100 days for review of both applications which Aurora College had committed to on March 9, 2022. Given the schedule, OROGO could not commit to completing its review before March 20, 2023.

On November 21, 2022, CPE wrote to OROGO stating it would make its "best efforts to submit a detailed OA application by December 7, 2022, and delay the actual well abandonment to the week of March 27, 2023" to allow additional time for OROGO's review. I confirmed these deadlines with Aurora College on November 25, 2022.

On December 9, 2022, Aurora College submitted its application for an Operations Authorization (OA) for the abandonment of the well (OA-2022-001-AC) and, on February 12, 2023, Aurora College submitted its application for a Well Approval for abandonment of the well (ACW-2023-AC-G-04-WID1915).

However, by March 28, 2023, due to its failure to respond to the Regulator's inquiries, Aurora College had not obtained the OA and Well Approval required to abandon the well. Aurora College did not abandon the well in accordance with either the January 31, 2023, deadline established in the Guidelines or the March 31, 2023, deadline it proposed in its applications.

On April 13, 2023, CPE wrote to OROGO on behalf of Aurora College requesting an extension to the abandonment deadline for the well to August 31, 2023. On April 20, 2023, I denied this request.

**Therefore, I give notice that Aurora College is non-compliant with the Regulator's direction to abandon the Aurora Training Well (WID1915) by January 31, 2023, as established in the Guidelines issued under section 18 of OGOA.**

Failure to comply with the direction of the Regulator may result in further enforcement activity, up to and including an order by the Regulator under section 20 of OGOA.

Failure to comply with an order of the Regulator made under OGOA is an offence under section 114(1) of OGOA, which provides, in part, that every person is guilty of an offence who fails to comply with an order of the Regulator made under OGOA and is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding \$1,000,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to both (section 114(2) of OGOA).

In addition, upon being convicted of an offence, the court may order that person to comply with the order (see section 115 of OGOA). If an offence is committed on or continued for more than one day, the offence is considered to be a separate offence for each day on which the offence is committed or continued (see section 116 of OGOA).

Sincerely,



Pauline de Jong  
Regulator

- c. Glenda Vardy Dell, President, Aurora College  
Lorne Hammer, Canadian Petroleum Engineering Inc.  
Ron McCosh, Canadian Petroleum Engineering Inc.