ENHANCEMENT OF THE "GROSS" CHARACTER OF THE PPT BILL
August 5, 2006
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This memo has been written at the request of Senator Wagoner. The request was to provide ideas as to how the "gross" character of the PPT bill can be enhanced.

This memo does not reflect the views of the Administration and is solely meant to provide Senator Wagoner with my professional advice on these ideas.

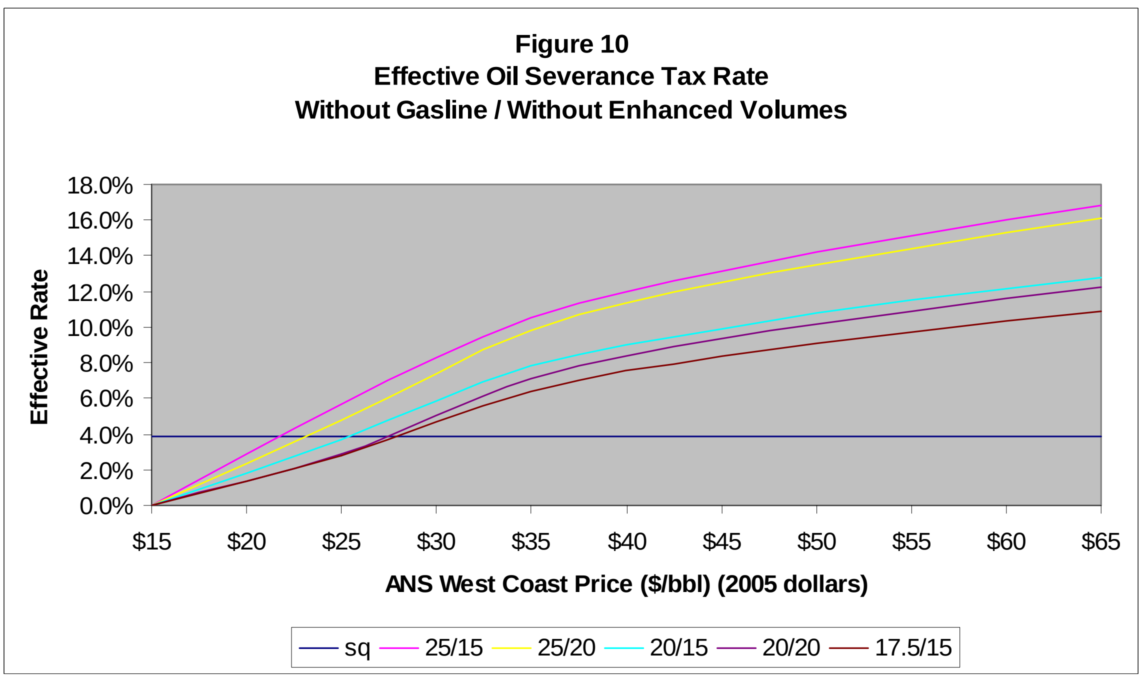
FLOOR

Considerable concern has been expressed about the fact that under some circumstances of low prices and high levels of investment, the PPT may result in less severance tax than we would have received otherwise under the current severance tax.

This can be prevented with the introduction of a "floor", very similar as was introduced in House Bill 3004.

The floor would be based on the **gross value** at the point of production of the taxable oil and gas.

Roger Marks presented to the Legislature in February this year a direct comparison between the various proposed PPT systems and the 4% average on gross that would be otherwise applicable to the year 2006.



These graphs prove that at about $ 25 per barrel the current ELF produces about the same amount as a 22.5/20 PPT.

If we assume the adoption of a 22.5/20 PPT than one could take the position that the PPT should not be less than 4% of gross when the ANS West Coast price exceeds $ 25 per barrel.

HB 3004 introduced the concept that at lower prices the North Slope oil becomes obviously less economic and it would be counter productive to continue to tax the oil industry. Therefore HB 3004 proposes a scale with a lower floor at lower prices.

This overall concept could be combined with the results of the analysis of Roger Marks as follows:

Over an ANS price of $ 25 per barrel	-- 4%
When ANS is between $ 20 and $ 25 per barrel	-- 3%
When ANS is between $ 17.50 and $ 20 per barrel	-- 2%
When ANS is between $ 15 and $ 17.50 per barrel	-- 1%
Below $ 15 per barrel	-- 0%

Each year the floor would be compared with the tax payable under the PPT and if the floor is higher, the higher amount would be paid.

Following is an example how the floor would work based on a PPT tax rate of 20% and a floor of 4%:

Gross Revenues	100	100	100
Cost deductions	40	90	120
Net Revenues	60	10	- 20
PPT Tax	12	2	-4
Floor	4	4	4
Tax payable	**12**	**4**	**4**

If the Gross Revenue based PPT is higher than the Net Revenue based PPT this extra payment can not be recovered in following years as a deduction. In other words this excess cannot be carried forward in order to be recovered in future years.

Of course, the payment of the differential between the Gross and Net Revenue based PPT cannot be taken as a deduction for the Net Revenue based PPT.

However, any carry forward credits as a result of a tax loss based on the Net Revenue based PPT remain unaltered.

Also under this scheme companies would not loose their capital investment credits of 20%.

It is also suggested that the additional non-transferable tax credits under Sec. 43.55.024 of the proposed House Bill 3001 (FIN) will still be creditable against the Gross Revenue Based PPT if this is higher than the Net Revenue Based PPT. These additional non-transferable tax credits were meant to protect small companies and encourage companies outside Cook Inlet and the North Slope. The Gross Revenue based PPT should not harm such companies.

INCREASE THE NON DEDUCTABLE ITEMS

The more costs are being excluded from the Net Revenue calculation the more the overall calculation becomes more similar to a Gross Revenue calculation. Therefore, the Gross Revenue character of the tax can be enhanced by simply adding to the list of items that are not considered lease expenditures.

There are two important cost components that could be excluded from lease expenditures:

- Costs related to gas development under a stranded gas contract, and
- Capital maintenance expenditures.

Gas development costs under a stranded gas contract.

Much concern has been expressed about the fact that with a net revenue based system there could be a joint cost problem in Point Thomson and other similar fields if the stranded gas contract would be implemented.

It is argued that all Point Thomson development and operating costs would be deductible under the PPT. At the same time under the stranded gas contract, companies would provide a 7.25% share to the State on gross and not pay the 20% or 22.5% PPT on gas. It is perceived that Point Thomson is being cross subsidized from what otherwise would be tax on oil under the PPT.

My view is that this is not a fair comparison, since reasonably all costs can be absorbed by the condensates. Nevertheless, this issue remains a concern of the Legislators.

It would be possible to add a further item on the list of non deductible costs under proposed AS. 43.55.165 (e) of House Bill 3001 (FIN) written as follows *(non legal language):*

- "(19) 75% of the capital and operating costs associated with the Point Thomson Unit and other gas fields that are being developed under a contract under AS.43.82, with respect to working interest owners which have concluded such a contract."

The 75% is based on the energy equivalent value considering that Point Thomson may have 400 million barrels of condensates and 7 – 8 Tcf of gas. In other words, the capital and operating costs would be allocated on an energy equivalent basis between condensates and gas. It is believed that many potential gas fields on the North Slope will have condensates and that these percentages may vary. For purposes of the bill, this percentage would be simply fixed.

The 25% allocated to condensates would be deductible for PPT purposes and would receive the related tax credits.

The 75% allocated to gas would not be deductible for PPT purposes and would not receive the related tax credits.

It can be assumed that the PTU would require a $ 2.5 billion capital expenditure. Based on a 100% working interest, this arrangement would not receive a PPT tax reduction of $ 750 million during development of the field. Assuming a $ 1 billion operating expenditure over the life time of the field, it would mean that over time companies would pay $ 150 million more tax during the operation of the field.

This is a significant tax increase, but in the total scheme of PPT taxation over the next 30 years this may represent only 1%-2% more tax.

Nevertheless, it would make the economics of Point Thomson development less attractive on an incremental basis and it would therefore make the entire gas project less attractive economically.

An interesting side effect of this arrangement is that it would place Chevron and other minority interest holders in a much better position relative to the sponsors. These companies have expressed concern that they would be discriminated against relative to the three sponsors. If Chevron and others do not join the stranded gas contract or would not be able to enter into a uniform upstream contract, they would at least benefit considerably relative to the Sponsors since they would receive the full tax deductions and credits. At the same time such companies would, of course, have to pay the full PPT on their gas income and therefore it is logical to permit them these tax credits and deductions.

Deemed Capital Maintenance Costs

Another concern that is regularly expressed is that the State should not permit the deduction of costs related to replacing equipment that is becoming defective or gathering lines that need to be replaced because of corrosion or other problems. The argument is that these assets should have been better maintained in the first place.

It should be noted that in most oil and gas fields, assets will have to be replaced after the technical life of such assets has expired. Therefore, such replacements are reasonable lease expenditures and are required to protect the health and safety of the workers and to protect the environment. Nevertheless, it is possible to exclude them from the lease expenditures under AS 43.55.165 (e) if this is politically desirable. A section could be added as follows *(non legal language):*

- (20) deemed capital maintenance expenditures which shall be capital expenditures equal to US $ 0.30 per BTU equivalent barrel taxable production.

The US $ 0.30 per BTU equivalent barrel is based on reasonable capital maintenance costs of fields for which I have (confidential) information. Based on a production of 900,000 barrel equivalent per day, this means that about $ 100 million in capital expenditures per year will not be deductible for PPT purposes. Based on a PPT rate of 22.5% and a tax credit rate of 20% this means that the companies will pay $ 42.5 million more tax per year.

An interesting side effect is that companies that would have a low level of capital expenditure per barrel would feel the effect more on a relative basis than companies that would have a high level of capital expenditures per barrel. Companies that re-invest strongly are therefore harmed less by this provision than typical harvesters.