

CNLOPB ignoring environmental responsibilities

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For the third time in the past four years, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (CNLOPB) has granted a one-year extension to Corridor Resources' exploration licence on the Old Harry prospect in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and waived the \$1-million deposit required for a licence extension.

This extension was granted because the board has not conducted the public and aboriginal consultations required as part of the environmental assessment for this project.

For the past two years, the CNLOPB has dragged its heels despite numerous inquiries asking when and how these consultations will be carried out. The CNLOPB says it will announce plans for consultations "at a later date," not sometime soon. Does the CNLOPB intend to keep on delaying the consultations indefinitely and continue to give Corridor Resources free licence extensions?

The current licence extension for Corridor Resources is just one in a series of irresponsible actions and decisions on the part of the CNLOPB.

In 2012, the CNLOPB contracted with AMEC to update the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Newfoundland portion of the Gulf. The purpose of the SEA was to assist the CNLOPB "in determining whether further exploration rights should be offered in whole or in part for the Western N.L. Offshore Area." While the SEA was being conducted, the CNLOPB issued a call for bids, including for licences

within the Gulf. Clearly, the CNLOPB assumed that further exploration rights would be offered in the Gulf, regardless of the findings of the SEA.

The SEA update report from AMEC discussed numerous risks to marine species and the fisheries and tourism industries, the presence of many sensitive areas and endangered species, important data gaps, lack of social acceptability, and the complex and deteriorating state of the Gulf. The logical conclusion would have been that the known risks outweigh the potential benefits.

Although the authors of a report normally write the conclusions, the CNLOPB decided to write the conclusions itself. Predictably, the CNLOPB concluded that “petroleum exploration activities generally can be undertaken in the western N.L. area...”

Only two of the five Gulf provinces have set up offshore petroleum boards: Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. The Nova Scotia Board ceased any activity in the Gulf in 1999. If the CNLOPB did not have a pro-petroleum industry bias, it would also cease all activity in the Gulf.

The roles of the CNLOPB include facilitating hydrocarbon resource development in the N.L. offshore and protecting the environment. As noted in the Wells Report of 2010, these are conflicting mandates. Clearly, the CNLOPB shows by its actions and decisions that protecting the Gulf ecosystem is not a priority.

The federal and N.L. governments have abrogated their responsibilities to oversee the decisions of this appointed body. Decisions such as the recent free extension of Corridor Resources licence have been rubber-stamped by the federal and N.L. ministers of natural resources. Meanwhile, the protection of marine species and the rights of the First Nations, fishers and other residents to protect the Gulf and pursue their livelihoods are being ignored.

Given the failure of the CNLOPB to act in a responsible manner, Save Our Seas and Shores P.E.I. is calling on the federal and N.L. governments to remove the CNLOPB’s mandate pertaining to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Ellie Reddin, past chair

Save Our Seas and Shores — P.E.I. Chapter

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