



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate release**

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### **OFFSHORE REGULATOR'S IMPARTIALITY QUESTIONED**

Save Our Seas and Shores, a coalition trying to protect the Gulf of St. Lawrence from offshore oil and gas development is 'uncomfortable' with the Canada Newfoundland Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board's (CNLOPB) choice to conduct the Strategic Environmental Assessment for 'Old Harry' and western NL in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

AMEC Environment & Infrastructure(AMEC) is a division of AMEC, one of the world's leading engineering, project management and consultancy companies whose clients include BP and Shell. According to the company's website, the company is on the London Stock Exchange in the Oil Equipment and Services Sector, and offers "services which extend from environmental and front end engineering design before the start of a project to decommissioning at the end of an asset's life." [www.amec.com/aboutus/at\\_a\\_glance.htm](http://www.amec.com/aboutus/at_a_glance.htm)

"We have apprehension with the Board's choice because of this company's involvement in offshore oil development." said Greg Egilsson, president of the Gulf NS Herring Federation, who represents 430 licensed herring fishermen in Nova Scotia's Gulf region.

The coalition points out that CNLOPB's Chairman, Max Ruelokke, worked for AMEC's East Coast Oil and Gas division prior to being appointed Chairman of the CNLOPB in 2006. [www.cnlopb.nl.ca/abt\\_max\\_ruelokke.shtml](http://www.cnlopb.nl.ca/abt_max_ruelokke.shtml)

These types of relationships between the regulator, the contractors and the industry have recently caused concern with respect to Keystone XL's oil pipeline development, when a State Department Environmental assessment was done by a company with ties to the promoter. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/science/earth/08pipeline.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/science/earth/08pipeline.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) [www.semityn.com](http://www.semityn.com))

"We deserve a fair, impartial hearing. Fish are surfacing deformed in the Gulf of Mexico after BP's spill; and herring fishermen in Alaska near where the Exxon Valdez spill happened, have not seen the herring come back 22 years later. We have to prevent disasters like these from happening here," said Egilsson.

The coalition notes that this environmental assessment is important because it will provide the framework to determine whether offshore development should proceed or not in Canada's ecologically sensitive Gulf, whose beauty and bounty feeds multi-billion dollar fishery and tourism industries for five provinces annually.

"Because the stakes are so high, this assessment *MUST* be transparent and respectful of science, especially the many gaps in scientific knowledge and understanding of how our ecosystems work. The BP Deepwater Horizon, an exploratory well that went horribly wrong, shows that serious long-term impacts do occur, especially during exploration. Yet the federal government is dismantling regulatory protections instead of strengthening them, and we are left at the mercy of unelected provincial boards." said Dr. Irené Novaczek, director of the Institute of Island Studies at UPEI.

"These boards have conflicting mandates for petroleum industry development, worker safety and environmental health. They have consistently focused on development, backed up by industry consultants who focus on 'mitigation' of negative impacts, instead of protecting vulnerable and poorly understood ecosystems from development," said Novaczek.

"How can they even consider risking valuable renewable marine resources to access non renewable fossil fuels, when there is an excess of bitumen coming out of Alberta? It makes no sense whatsoever," said Mary Gorman, a coastal landowner from Merigomish, NS.

"This regulator seems willing to risk our Gulf's global food supply, culture, recreation, property values, national parks and the most beautiful coastlines on this earth. But are they prepared to assume the responsibility of this risk? Who will be held accountable if this development proceeds and goes all wrong?" asked Gorman.

The Gulf of St. Lawrence is a semi-landlocked, inland sea and breeding area for over 2,000 marine species who spawn, nurse and migrate year around. Because the Gulf's waters only exchange with the Atlantic once each year, and due to its counterclockwise currents, a spill could wash up on the coastlines of all five Atlantic provinces over the course of a year.

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