

July 20, 2016

"Having specialized in underwater noise pollution and its effects since 1994, I am an internationally-recognised expert on the impacts of seismic airgun surveys on marine life, particularly whales and dolphins. I have studied whales since 1982, primarily sperm whales, and my M.Sc. (Memorial Univ. of Newfoundland), Ph.D. (Dalhousie), and post-doctoral studies (Cornell) were all in the field of whale acoustic communication in the wild. I have served as invited expert on several panels, workshops, and committees concerned with underwater noise impacts (e.g. Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, International Whaling Commission, etc.). I have also met with members of NATO, the European Parliament, the European Commission DG Fisheries, the Convention on Biodiversity, and the United Nations to discuss ocean noise issues, given many lectures on this topic and others, and published numerous peer-reviewed papers. I am currently a Research Associate in the Department of Biology, Dalhousie University, and was previously employed as Scientific Advisor by the private foundation Okeanos. I also serve as Scientific Advisor for the International Ocean Noise Coalition, and was a Scientific Expert on the German government's Antarctic Commission.

I very much applaud this government for conducting this much-needed review. Having just returned from an international conference on the effects of noise on aquatic life in Dublin, Ireland, I am again struck by how the science has advanced on this issue, including many serious impacts on fish and invertebrates, in addition to whales and dolphins, from underwater noise, particularly seismic airgun noise from oil and gas exploration. Underwater noise is recognised as a dangerous environmental pollutant by the European Union, the UN Convention on Biodiversity, the International Whaling Commission, the Convention on Migratory Species, as well as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, among others. As an ecosystem-wide, transboundary effect, it is important that it be addressed under the Canadian Environment and Fisheries acts. I am thus surprised that there is no mention in the Terms of Reference of the need to review the lack of regulation around seismic airgun surveys and noise from oil production in Canada. There is currently also the first indigenous court case being brought before the Canadian Supreme Court relating to seismic airgun surveys off Clyde River, Nunavut. I hope, therefore, that the Terms of Reference be broadened to include a review of Canada's Offshore Accord Acts, especially the lack of regulation around seismic surveys and noise from oil production in Canada's oceans. The Canadian Statement of Practice for Seismic Surveys is woefully inadequate and outdated, and not in line with current thinking internationally on what constitute adequate Environmental Impact Assessments for seismic surveys."

Sincerely,

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