



Comments on the draft scoping document
for the

**Electromagnetic Geoservices Canada, Inc. – Western Newfoundland
Controlled Source Electromagnetic Survey (2017)**

presented to the

**Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador
Offshore Petroleum Board
(C-NLOPB)**

by the
St. Lawrence Coalition

November 22, 2016

THE ST. LAWRENCE COALITION

Recognizing the biological and socio-economic importance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the St. Lawrence Coalition was created in 2010 with a two-fold purpose : 1) convince authorities to declare without delay a moratorium on oil and gas exploration/exploitation in the totality of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, 2) work towards a large multi-province and First Nations review of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and its future, prior to any decision on its opening to oil & gas exploration. The Coalition's goal is to rally the communities that live around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and depend on its various renewable natural resources, around this common position. More than eighty groups belong to the Coalition, as well as up to 5000 individuals, including First Nations. The St. Lawrence Coalition strives to be interprovincial because five provinces are directly concerned by the future of the Gulf: Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Preliminary remarks

Timing of the release of the EMGS Inc. project. The St. Lawrence Coalition finds it very disturbing that the EMGS Inc. project was publicly released by the C-NLOPB on November 10, 2016, in the middle of the controversy surrounding the proposed reissuance of the Corridor Resources exploration licence. If the Corridor Resources licence expires on January 14, 2016, as is legally expected, there is no need for this EMGS Inc. project at Old Harry. As a matter of fact, Corridor has publicly stated in numerous financial documents, that they are the client who will buy the data that EMGS Inc. plans to obtain.

Starting the EMGS Inc. environmental assessment at this point in time sends a clear message to the public that the issue is already decided and that Corridor is set to obtain a new licence.

Recommendation. The St. Lawrence Coalition recommends that the EMGS Inc. environmental assessment be postponed until after January 15, 2017, when the issue of the Corridor Resources licence reissuance will be completely settled.

Language of the EA documents. Documents posted on the C-NLOPB website (project description and draft scoping document) have been fully translated in French. The St. Lawrence Coalition wishes to commend the C-NLOPB on this excellent initiative, considering the importance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence for French-speaking populations in the Magdalen Islands, in the Gaspé peninsula, on the Quebec North Shore, and in other French-speaking regions around the Gulf.

Recommendation. The St. Lawrence Coalition recommends that the upcoming EMGS Inc. Environmental Assessment report be also translated in French.

Duration of the draft scoping comments period. The EMGS Inc. project draft Scoping Document is only open for comments during a 2-week period, from its posting on the CNLOPB website on November 10, 2016, until November 25. This is extremely short, considering the fact that the 2013 Western Newfoundland SEA Update draft scoping document was open to comments for a 4-weeks period. This is also extremely short considering the small amount of publicity that the EMGS Scoping Document received.

Recommendation. The St. Lawrence Coalition recommends that the consultation period for the EMGS project be extended to 4-weeks.

Electromagnetic Geoservices Canada, Inc. - Controlled Source Electromagnetic Survey (2017) Western Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area Draft Scoping Document

Comments on the Draft Scoping Document¹

Note: Section numbers refer to sections in the draft Scoping Document itself.

4.1 Purpose of the project

- The scoping document requests that the environmental assessment consider “**the purpose of the project**”. This is extremely important and EMGS Inc. should describe not just the technical purpose of the project but also the ultimate reasons why it is proposed.
 - EMGS Inc. is not an oil & gas exploration firm, but rather a provider of data to clients. The names of clients sponsoring the current project should definitely be provided to judge the real need for this project;
 - The only company currently holding an exploration licence in the project area is Corridor Resources. However, Corridor’s licence is scheduled to be revoked on January 14, 2017. Why would EMGS Inc. perform a costly CESM survey for a company that will hold no licence past January 14 2017? Is it because it is already decided that the C-NLOPB will issue Corridor a new licence on January 14 ?

4.7 Report on consultations

- This section of the draft scoping calls for a report on consultations undertaken by EMGS “with interested other ocean users (...) and/or the general public”. This request is particularly vague on many aspects and calls for a much stricter framing of the consultation process in the final scoping document:
 - Ocean users from other provinces, particularly Quebec and Nova Scotia, who are located quite close to the project area should be advised in priority. As it stands, only Newfoundland ocean user organizations have been formally invited to participate in the process².

¹ <http://www.cnlopb.ca/pdfs/egcsurvey/projscopeen.pdf?lbisphpreq=1>

² <http://www.cnlopb.ca/pdfs/egcsurvey/reqcomngo.pdf?lbisphpreq=1>

- As is often the case, “consultations” organised by industry proponents often amount to no more than a “public information session”. Real possibility of interaction needs to be provided to the public.
- Another frequent problem is that the opposition voiced by participants in industry-held consultations is often downplayed in the final reports, specially if the reports are written by the proponent himself. This problem should be firmly addressed by the C-NLOPB.

5.1.1 Spatial Boundaries

- The EMGS Inc. project area is clearly delineated in the proponent project description (section 2.1, figure 1). However, there are no further indications as to the location of the three spatial boundaries described in the draft scoping document : “project area”, “study area” and “regional area”. These various boundaries need to be fully adressed in the EMGS Inc. Environmental Assessment and not limited to the simple outline specified in the project description (fig. 1).
- The EMGS Inc. “project area” boundaries fall exactly on the Quebec-Newfoundland as well as on the Nova Scotia-Newfoundland limits. The Gulf of St. Lawrence is an entirely different political environment than the one EMGS Inc. is used to work in (i.e. the Grand Banks and Atlantic offshore) : there are five provincial jurisdiction, as well as First Nations offshore land claims. The environmental assessment absolutely needs to acknowledge these various administrations, including First Nations, and EMGS Inc. should not only notify them of the project, but also adequately consult them.

5.2.14 Biological Follow-up Monitoring

- The scoping document states that the observation procedures for marine mammals should be consistent with the C-NLOPB “*Geophysical, Geological, Environmental and Geotechnical Program Guidelines*”. It should be noted that these Guidelines propose the “*Statement of Canadian Practice with respect to the Mitigation of Seismic Sound in the Marine Environment*” as a code of conduct concerning interactions with marine mammals. However, this “Statement” is more and more contested by scientists, and the 2013 Quebec SEA in the Gulf of St. Lawrence even recommended that it be updated before use in Quebec³. It is unfortunate that the C-NLOPB should rely on this dated document.

³ http://mern.gouv.qc.ca/publications/energie/ees/EES2_Rapport_final.pdf