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Friday, August 18, 2017

Darren Hicks
Environmental Analyst
Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board
140 Water Street, 5th Floor, TD Place
St. John's, NL A1C 6H6

**Re: Nexen Energy ULC Eastern Newfoundland Offshore Geophysical,
Geochemical, Environmental and Geotechnical Program (2018-2027)
Environmental Assessment**

Dear Mr. Hicks,

Thank you for providing the Fish, Food and Allied Workers' Union (FFAW/Unifor) with the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment of Nexen Energy's Eastern Newfoundland Geophysical, Geochemical, Environmental and Geotechnical Program (2018-2027). We would like to comment on a few aspects of the document that are representative of issues and concerns from the fishing industry, namely the members of FFAW/Unifor.

The overall study area for this EA is quite large as is the temporal scale of the project (2018-2027). While current fisheries data has been examined in the document it needs to be recognized that the fishery could change dramatically over the span of this ten year project. Our fisheries science work is likely to change as well. *It is critical that effective and regular communication ensue with the fishing industry, as committed in the EA, throughout the EA lifespan so that the proponent is kept apprised of ongoing developments with fisheries in the project area.*

"Reduced access to preferred fishing...areas during survey activities in certain locations, with possible decreases in activity success, efficiency, value or enjoyment" was mentioned as an environmental consideration in this assessment (page 255, 317). It is not clear what mitigation measures will be employed to mitigate these potential effects. *We request clarification in this instance.*

Further to this, a common mitigation measure noted in many Environmental Assessments is that seismic vessels avoid areas that are actively being fished. This requires planning prior to seismic activity being conducted (page 318-319) as well as regular communication with the fishing industry throughout the fishing season. *It is therefore critical that effective and regular communication ensue with the fishing industry throughout the EA lifespan so that the seismic company is kept apprised of ongoing developments with fisheries in the project area.*

As a mitigation, it is also important to clarify that the Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) onboard the seismic vessel be the one to communicate with fish harvesters on the water, not the crew of the standby/guard vessel (page 13, 262, 320).

Finally, the unknown long term effects of seismic activities continue to concern fish harvesters. While the research has not determined any direct mortality of fish or shellfish attributable to seismic activity there may be behavioural changes that could affect migration and/or reproductive and spawning activities as well as movement of the exploitable biomass in an area. This, in turn, can impact catch rates in the current fishing season and/or for years to come. There is need for further research on impacts of seismic activity on important commercial species including shrimp, crab, turbot and Atlantic cod to address data gaps. *As such, we would challenge the magnitude of the effect on seismic sound on marine fisheries to be "Low", not "Negligible" as reported in Table 5.17 (page 321).*

FFAW/Unifor would like to thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on this EA. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact the undersigned.

Kind regards,

Robyn Lee
Petroleum Industry Liaison