

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
10 Barters Hill, Suite 301
St. Johns, NL, A1C 6M1

SUBJECT: Qalipu First Nation Comments on the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador Draft Report

To whom it may concern:

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments on the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador Draft Report.

Qalipu First Nation (QFN) represents approximately 24,000 registered members in Newfoundland and abroad and is made up of 67 traditional Mi'kmaq communities across Newfoundland. As a band, we provide core programs and service to our members, including Natural Resources Management.

It is essential with the level of development in exploratory drilling offshore Newfoundland and Labrador that a more efficient and effective approach is taken to the Impact Assessment (IA) process. Specific environmental protection requirements for future exploratory drilling in the region should include proactive maintenance of tools for decision-making and public involvement. QFN supports the development of a maintained and publicly accessible GIS decision-support tool as well as the establishment of a Regional Assessment Oversight Committee to aid in future IA work and IA process development.

Upon reviewing the Draft Regional Assessment Report, we are pleased to see the inclusion and consideration of issues, questions, and recommendations made in the engagement sessions addressed in section 6, "Integrating Indigenous Knowledge" and throughout the document. Recommendations made by the committee are thorough and provide advice on developing a comprehensive process that addresses environmental protection. Going forward, we see this new process as a tool to ensure inclusion of the two-eyed seeing approach, further insertion of scientific experts in data deficient areas, and development of mitigation and follow-up requirements for all future drilling. Given the development of a new IA process, QFN would like to maintain our ability to submit comments on projects as they progress if we feel as though action is necessary.

It is essential that this process is consistently updated as new data becomes available to ensure better regulatory requirements for all future drilling. Transparency and further engagement with Indigenous groups and stakeholders is crucial to maintain good data sharing and IA growth and development.

Sincerely,

<original signed by>

Chief Brendan Mitchell