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Monday, March 03, 2014

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

Mr. Hicks,

The Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW) would like to respectfully submit the following comments for the **Environmental Assessment of Suncor Energy's Eastern Newfoundland Offshore Area 2D/3D/4D Seismic Program, 2014-2024** for an exploration program offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. The FFAW actively engages in reviews and consultations with the Petroleum Industry on behalf of our membership throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Thank you for providing the **Environmental Assessment of Suncor Energy's Eastern Newfoundland Offshore Area 2D/3D/4D Seismic Program, 2014-2024** for review. While the FFAW is generally supportive of proposed projects helping to stimulate the provincial economy, we must balance that support with the responsibility to protect the interests of our members, fish harvesters and plant workers, and the health of the ocean for future generations.

The spatial coverage that this Environmental Assessment involves prime harvesting areas for three major species of the Newfoundland and Labrador fishing industry. It is important that full consideration of potential impacts on other ocean users is given by the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

Page 54 suggests that the demise of the ground-fish fisheries was purely a result from exhaustive fishing effort. This is not a complete description, as there is strong science suggesting that a significant change to the environmental regime, which substantially impacted the recruitment and survivability of many of the ground-fish species.

Section 5.7 discussing the Cumulative Effects contains a list of potential programs, which it would be worth for the proponent to update as questions and comments on the Environmental Assessment are being reviewed. Further, the second last paragraph on page 185 may hold true historically, but in recent years there has been an increase in the Seismic Programs operating in Newfoundland and Labrador waters in a given year.

Reading the text in section 4.3.7 on Industry and DFO Science Surveys, it appears that the Industry-DFO Collaborative Post-Season Trap Survey for Snow Crab is a new project with a limited scope. In fact this survey has been ongoing for over a decade and involves the sampling of approximately 1,000 locations by almost 100 fishing vessels. In 2013 the Industry-DFO Collaborative Post-Season Trap Survey for Snow Crab, the locations in NAFO region 3L were completed between September 4<sup>th</sup> and September 25<sup>th</sup>. This

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survey provides significant input into the scientific advice of DFO when it comes to the establishment of quotas and recruitment estimates.

In the context of avoidance of fishing grounds and areas in which the Industry-DFO Collaborative Post-Season Trap Survey for Snow Crab, the FFAW would reiterate as we have done with other projects, there should be no seismic activity in vicinity of either active fishing grounds or survey locations. With the lack of scientific evidence showing that seismic activity does not have an impact on the biological strata. Page 159 indicates that there for previous Newfoundland & Labrador surveys has been a temporal and spatial separation plan; the FFAW would feel inclined for the proponent to indicate said occurrences. In the context of the surveys estimating the biological abundance, for the FFAW Science there is no such concept of adequate “quiet time” – the FFAW is unsure what is being implied and would like to reiterate that there be no activity in the areas of the Industry-DFO Collaborative Post-Season Trap Survey for Snow Crab.

Further in the context of avoidance it is worth to note that the Environmental Assessment suggests in Section 5.6.2.2 that “other vessels must give way” to the seismic vessel, the FFAW is inclined to suggest this to be inappropriate language in this context. In section 5.6.2.1 under *Avoidance* it suggests “potential effects of seismic sound on fishery catch success **can be** mitigated by avoiding heavily fished areas ...” (emphasis added), it is the perspective of this reviewer that **should be** mitigated by avoidance.

The FFAW reviewer is only aware of the implementation of spatial separation of about 20 nautical miles having been discussed in the context of any recent programs in Newfoundland & Labrador. The suggested of acceptance of a 7 day window is something that has only been seen in the context of the DFO multi-species trawl survey. The FFAW therefore reiterates the concern that exposure to seismic activity can have an effect on harvested species. Any impact on surveys and/or stock assessments would have a lasting impact for harvesters. Although the proponent suggests that there would be no significant cumulative effects on the commercial fisheries from the seismic program (page 184). The FFAW is obliged to again state that any impact on either harvesting or fisheries science should be recognized as unacceptable in Newfoundland & Labrador waters.

The FFAW and all the affected fish harvesters are eager to work collaboratively with Suncor Energy to ensure that everyone shares the prosperity hoped to be created from seismic and harvesting activities. I thank you for providing an opportunity for the FFAW to comment on the Suncor Energy 2D/3D/4D Seismic Environmental Assessment. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me.

Yours truly,

Jóhan Joensen  
Petroleum Industry Liaison