



## *Gros Morne Co-operating Association*

C/O GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK

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Canada Newfoundland Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board  
Ms. Elizabeth Young  
Environmental Assessment Officer  
140 Water Street  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, TD Place  
St. John's, NL A1C 6H6



Dear Ms. Young,

With respect to the Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) update, the Gros Morne Co-operation Association Inc. would like to register its concerns.

### **Who are we?**

The Gros Morne Co-operating Association (GMCA), also known as “Friends of Gros Morne National Park”, is a non-profit community-based organization formed in 1993. Through our Board of Directors, volunteers and employees, we work closely with Gros Morne National Park and other partners to promote the values of the protected area and to encourage stewardship and enjoyment of the area’s natural and cultural resources.

The Association employs 6 people year-round and another 35 to 50 people seasonally. GMCA has been directly responsible for over \$23.5 million of investment (salary dollars excluded) in the Gros Morne region since 1993. Therefore, GMCA is considered by the provincial and federal governments to be an economic leader on the west coast of Newfoundland. Our Board of Directors is comprised of a broad cross-section of the citizens of the region – business, tourism, service, science, culture and retirees. Dr. Wade Davis, internationally known anthropologist and ethno-botanist, and National Geographic Society Explorer-in-Residence serves as Honorary Chair of the Board. What we share is a commitment to the national park goals and the ecological, aesthetic and social values that are the foundations for sustainable development.

Since its establishment, the GMCA has been instrumental in opening two gift shops, operating the swimming pool, managing the cross-country ski trails and backcountry cabins, expanding and co-managing the Memorial University Bonne Bay Marine Station, launching and managing marketing partnerships such as Gros Morne Gatherings (conferences and special events), facilitating research partnerships with universities, supporting educational institutes for the province’s teachers, and administering the Gros

Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (a training centre for Atlantic Canada tourism operators). In addition, the GMCA plays a direct role in bringing together private and public partners in several regional socio-economic development projects. Our most recent initiative is the development and implementation of the *Gros Morne Cultural Blueprint*, a strategic cultural plan supported by a \$15 million investment in cultural tourism.

### **What is our perspective?**

We endorse the environmental and socio-economic concerns raised by Parks Canada in their recent submission to you. Their mandate for protection of the national park's (and national historic site's) ecological and commemorative integrity is a legal obligation set out in the Canada National Parks Act. There is a further international commitment on behalf of Canada to uphold the World Heritage values for which the park was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. The impacts on wildlife, habitat and visitor experience that need to be avoided have been well articulated.

As an arms-length organization, the GMCA advocates on behalf of the park and the communities in which we live. What we recognize in this region is the high degree of inter-dependence between economic stability, environmental integrity and quality of life. This region has prospered economically and socially since the establishment of the national park. We have a diverse economic foundation of tourism, fisheries, arts, services and health care. This supports the needs of the present generation while providing role models and future opportunities for youth. We have stable employment and are buffered from the boom and bust cycles of single resource communities.

On a larger scale, the park is a tourism icon for the province, and accounts for 1 in 4 non-resident visitors to the province. Therefore it is a considerable source of revenue for the province (over \$110 million), as well as for the immediate region. In 2005, Gros Morne tied for second place among 55 North American parks in National Geographic Traveller magazine's survey of sustainable tourism, destination quality and park management. "A model of collaboration between local communities and park management... Authentic and unspoiled, and given the approach to management, is likely to stay so." We continue to work towards that goal. For discerning travellers choosing a destination, perception is everything.

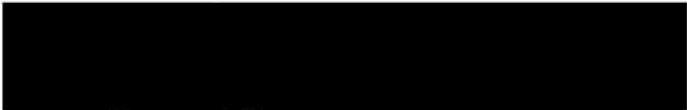
We are concerned that oil exploration and development, while being presented as an economic boom, has underlying risks and assumptions that have not been disclosed and shared with the communities most affected. How can we assess the possible benefits against a legion of unknowns? Who will ultimately bear the burden of these? What long-term benefits could be lost to short-term decisions?

It is not the purpose of this letter to rehash all the possible concerns or risks surrounding oil exploration and development. Rather it is to state that our board is unanimously concerned that the values for which this area has been chosen by the people of Canada as a national park, and by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site be given priority in planning for any future development. Furthermore, with the presence of another World Heritage Site - L'Anse aux Meadows - to the north, and the recent nomination of Red Bay in

southern Labrador as a potential World Heritage Site, Gros Morne will become the gateway to the World Heritage Coast.

As an organization, we look forward to reviewing the SEA. We are hopeful that the SEA will recommend policies and regulations that will safeguard the Gros Morne area and indeed the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence. Please contact us for any clarification or additional information.

Sincerely,



Raymond Cusson  
Chair  
Gros Morne Co-operating Association



cc. Steve J. Bonnell, AMEC