



September 13, 2013

Premier Kathy Dunderdale  
The Office of the Premier  
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Canada-NL Offshore Petroleum Board  
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C-NLOPB Draft Western NL Offshore Area Strategic Environmental Assessment Update Report

Dear Premier Dunderdale,

The Western Newfoundland Destination Management Organization (Western DMO) represents more than 600 registered tourism operators along the west coast of Newfoundland. Our role is to develop and market Western Newfoundland as a world-class multi-season tourism destination. The *C-NLOPB Draft Western NL Offshore Area Strategic Environmental Assessment Update Report* and a recent proposal for oil/gas exploration by Shoal Point Energy/Black Spruce Exploration Corporation within the region, has come to our attention. We would like to respectfully submit our concerns about the anticipated impact this would have on tourism development in western Newfoundland, and in particular Gros Morne National Park both as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and as our most recognized/popular tourism attraction/destination – for both the west coast and the province.

As the provincial scale tourism Destination Development Plan rolls out across Newfoundland and Labrador (due for completion in 2015), we are paying close attention to any current news related to any development in the area and to this type of industrialization in particular. A recent article in the Financial Post (August 8, 2013), reports that Black Spruce Exploration (BSE) (one of the proponents identified as expressing drilling interests along the west coast of Newfoundland) intends to drill “*up to 80 wells by 2015*”. We understand that hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is said to be the preferred technique to be used for the exploration of the resource in this particular geological formation which adds to our concerns and our request for caution.

The Western DMO is a full partner in the 2020 Uncommon Potential tourism vision this province is implementing. As we move toward 2020, we are excited by our growth potential. Our current tourism revenue for western Newfoundland is in the order of \$229 million **per year** and growing. As a province, we have recently surpassed a billion dollars in tourism spending and feel the western region's contribution to this figure is a significant one.

**Go Western Newfoundland**

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A great deal of effort and investment (privately, provincially and federally) has contributed to the generation of this income to the province. We feel that this type of industrialization in its current format will jeopardize our collective efforts and investments and would put at risk our continued growth. The purpose of this letter is not to list the elements of concerns already raised in the conversation, but to mention that the project and its related technology has not obtained the levels of social acceptability/responsibility it requires to proceed.

Our Board of Directors is in full support of UNESCO, Hospitality NL and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and their request for a buffer zone/protected area around Gros Morne National Park that would guarantee an authentic tourism experience free from industrialization. Our board and members along with our partners are also recommending the following:

A **hold** on all activities related to hydraulic fracturing until:

- a) An independent, science-based, comprehensive assessment of all aspects of the project be conducted and,
- b) Adequate and specific policies and procedures are established in order to regulate this form of exploration.

In conclusion, we must stress that this is not an anti-oil development position. Realizing the economic benefits that oil and gas exploitation brings to our province, our recommendations reflect the tourism sector's interests while advocating for a more strategic, responsible, cautionary approach and informed decision-making process prior to moving forward.

Respectfully,




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Chair

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