

POTENTIAL REGIONAL ASSESSMENT – ST. LAWRENCE RIVER AREA, QUEBEC
Session 3 : Potential Objectives and Outcomes of a Regional Assessment
March 2021

Session Objective

To gather input on possible objectives and outcomes for this potential regional assessment.

Background Information

- A key rationale for regional assessments under the *Impact Assessment Act* (the Act) is to inform and influence future project-specific assessments, in order to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the impact assessment process.
- The specific objectives and planned outcomes of a regional assessment under the Act can vary considerably, and are defined based on site and situation specific considerations.
- If the Minister decides to conduct a regional assessment, the objectives and outcomes of that regional assessment are set out in the terms of reference as part of the regional assessment agreement.
- To help with this discussion, Table 1 (page 2) provides some examples of the range of potential regional assessment objectives and outcomes, and Annex 1 (page 3) provides information on the objectives and outcomes for the regional assessment conducted off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Guiding questions

- What could be the overall goal and specific objectives for this regional assessment, if it were to proceed?
- What could be the main outputs for this regional assessment (e.g., information, analysis, mitigation, etc.)?
- How could the results of a regional assessment be used to inform future assessments and/or other planning and decision-making processes?
- How could Indigenous knowledge be shared, considered and incorporated in a regional assessment?
- How can the regional assessment serve as a means of integrating Indigenous knowledge and scientific information?
- How could impacts on the rights of Indigenous Peoples be considered in a regional assessment?

Table 1: Potential Objectives and Outcomes of a Regional Assessment (*Examples, for discussion purposes only*)

Objectives	Outcomes
To compile and provide regional information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory of existing Indigenous knowledge, scientific data, economic information, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of existing environmental, health, social and economic conditions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and analysis of key information gaps, requirements, and opportunities
To identify effects and define mitigation measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of potential environmental, health, social, economic, cultural effects (positive or negative) resulting from future development activities (including cumulative effects)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description and analysis of key ecological and socioeconomic components, values and issues that should be considered in associated regulatory and planning processes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of mitigation and follow-up measures for future developments or types of activities (standard and situation-specific)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations on non-project specific measures to address regional issues (including possible policy, plan, program, regulatory or other initiatives by governments or others).
To provide regional context for future developments and their assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of past, planned and foreseeable development in the region (including possible scenarios)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing an understanding of the regional context that can be used as a framework for considering and evaluating the effects of future activities (especially with respect to cumulative effects)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of potential planning objectives, preferred development scenarios, possible development controls.

<p>ANNEX 1</p> <p>Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador</p>
<p>Background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was the first regional assessment to be undertaken under federal impact assessment legislation in Canada. It applied to offshore exploratory drilling and associated activities in a defined Study Area off Eastern Newfoundland. • The regional assessment was undertaken as a collaborative effort between the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC), the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB), Natural Resources Canada, and the Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Department of Natural Resources, pursuant to an Agreement signed between the Ministers responsible in March 2019. • A 5-member Committee was appointed to conduct the regional assessment in April 2019. The Committee was supported by a Task Team (secretariat), and a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) process that involved participants from applicable government departments and agencies, Indigenous groups, industry and stakeholder organizations, and others. • In January 2020, the Committee made its Draft Report available for a 30-day public review period, after which the Report was finalized based on consideration of the comments received. The Committee's Final Report was submitted to the Ministers on February 29, 2020. An associated Geographic Information System (GIS) application was also prepared by the Committee and submitted at the end of May 2020.
<p>Objective of the Regional Assessment (as defined in the Agreement)</p> <p>To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the impact assessment process for future oil and gas exploration drilling and associated activities in the region, while also ensuring the highest standards of environmental protection continue to be applied and maintained.</p>
<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee produced a report and developed an associated GIS application (including inventory of information, effects analysis, identification of mitigation and follow-up requirements for future projects, and on other matters). • In its Report, the Committee made 41 recommendations on a variety of topics, directed to various parties including the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada but also to the C-NLOPB, other government departments and agencies, and other organizations. This included recommendations around the following topics (examples provided): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Environmental Information and Knowledge</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future updates to the regional assessment's information and analysis (including an Oversight Committee) • Incorporation of various on-going studies and analysis (environmental baseline information and effects) • Accelerated research / cooperation on key issues and data gaps • Improvements to government datasets and their release

ANNEX 1

Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador

b) *Effects, Mitigation and Follow-up*

- Recommendation that the various mitigation and follow-up measures included as conditions of environmental assessment approval for recent projects be required for all future exploratory drilling in the Study Area
- Recommendations to improve or enhance these measures for future projects
- Accelerated scientific review and analysis of effects in to determine if additional mitigation is required
- Consideration of information availability and key data gaps in future licencing
- Consideration of cumulative effects as part of relevant planning processes

c) *Regulations and Future Impact Assessment*

- Upon receipt of the Final Report, the Government of Canada initiated a process of developing a regulation under the IAA that sets out specific requirements for future exploratory drilling projects within the Study Area.
- On June 4, 2020 the [Regulations Respecting Excluded Physical Activities - Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Exploratory Wells](#) came into force.
- Under the Regulations, if future exploratory drilling projects within the Study Area are able to demonstrate compliance with the conditions laid out in the regulations, they do not require project-specific impact assessment review and approvals.