

May 31, 2020

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Government of Canada
Email: ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

In response to your letter of 10 January 2020, the Committee is submitting our Geographic Information System (GIS) decision support tool, thus fulfilling the terms of the Final Agreement signed by Ministers. This tool was developed as an integral component of the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador (RA). Please click on the following link to access the site, <https://nloffshorestudy.iciinnovations.com>

In August 2019 we wrote to Ministers respecting our progress on fulfilling Section 5.9 of the Agreement, at which time we noted that such a GIS application was not only feasible, but also that its development should continue to be a key component of the RA. This included stating that “As our work continues, we are very encouraged that only by adopting this approach to managing the considerable knowledge that exists on all aspects of the offshore environment can we be certain of providing the level of environmental protection required together with more efficient decision making. Its other strength is that everyone will be able to access this knowledge thereby achieving an effective level of transparency and inclusiveness to the process.”

Since that time we have made steady progress on building the system and its attendant knowledge base and it has provided the information and analysis in support of, and which were used in the development of, our final recommendations. It is also intended to help facilitate the effective and efficient presentation to the public and other users of this information through this interactive and publicly-accessible system. The development and publication of this GIS has been fundamental to the Committee’s approach of ensuring that the information it used and produced in conducting the RA was clear, transparent and made publicly available. The continued development of the GIS will place a tool in the hands of resource managers, Indigenous groups and the public that will increase the collective understanding of the offshore environment and the implications of resource management decisions.

The Committee has made several recommendations to ensure the sustainability and improvement of the tool including regular updating, provision of a long-term hosting site and the formation of an Oversight Committee to, among other tasks, focus on the maintenance and further development of the GIS decision-support tool. To support the ongoing maintenance of the application, the system was designed to handle the rapid addition of new map layers by trained support staff making use of common tools to upload data, define layer properties and configure how a map is presented within the application. The Committee has arranged for the RA GIS application to continue to be hosted and maintained on an external server (by consultant ICI) until December 2020, to allow for the required discussions and planning for IAAC to transition to hosting the application.

In conclusion, we would like to stress that the government's ongoing support for the evergreen nature of the Regional Assessment including the GIS decision-support tool and the Oversight Committee, will be fundamental to the continued success of the Regional Assessment process.

Yours respectfully,

<Original signed by>

Garth Bāngay
Regional Assessment Committee Co-Chair
<email address removed>

<Original signed by>

Wes Foote
Regional Assessment Committee Co-Chair
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CC: The Honourable Seamus O'Regan
The Honourable Dwight Ball
The Honourable Siobhan Coady
Regional Assessment Committee Members