

For immediate release

Petroleum Research Atlantic Canada releases the findings of Rights Issuance Study

Halifax, NS – Petroleum Research Atlantic Canada (PRAC) today released the results of a study, which examines the effectiveness of petroleum rights issuance processes in Atlantic Canada. The report compares Atlantic Canada to five jurisdictions around the world – the United Kingdom, Norway, Australia, Alaska and Alberta to see if there are opportunities for improvement.

Offshore oil and gas exploration in Atlantic Canada, particularly the increase since the early 1990's, has raised concerns among those involved in other marine activities such as fishing, aquaculture, tourism and marine transportation. Among the major concerns is their ability to influence decisions before lands are selected for licensing, as well as during the licensing process itself. An important aspect is when and how regulators obtain and use public input in these decisions.

Interviews conducted throughout the Atlantic Region and elsewhere considered the full range of people's concerns, public consultation practices and how well the rights issuance processes work. Processes are compared on the basis of their scope, clarity and openness, feedback to process participants, timing and education, balance of interests and overall satisfaction.

The study led to a number of important observations and conclusions. Rights issuances processes and public consultation practices vary widely. There is no single approach that is clearly superior based on the criteria used. The level of satisfaction in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere is strongly influenced by both formal and informal public consultation processes. These processes should be proactive, begin as early as possible when rights are being issued, and be flexible and responsive to people's needs.

The report was prepared by Community Resource Services Ltd., McInnes Cooper, the University College of Cape Breton and Memorial University of Newfoundland for PRAC and is available on the library page of www.pr-ac.ca.

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