

Envoi par courrier et par télécopieur : (418) 528-0690

Québec, le 17 mai 2004

Monsieur Alain Lefebvre
Directeur
Ministère des Ressources naturelles,
de la Faune et des Parcs
Direction du développement des hydrocarbures
5700, 4^e Avenue Ouest, bureau A-401
Québec (Québec) G1H 6R1

Objet : Les enjeux liés aux levés sismiques dans l'estuaire et le golfe du Saint-Laurent

Monsieur,

La commission a reçu un ensemble de questions de la part de Geophysical Service Incorporated (GSI) dans le cadre de son mandat sur les enjeux liés aux levés sismiques dans l'estuaire et le golfe du Saint-Laurent. Ces questions, déposées par la commission sous la cote QUES3, ont notamment trait au choix des deux ministres d'avoir confié un mandat au BAPE ainsi qu'à d'autres considérations d'ordre général. La commission vous les transmet donc intégralement afin que vous puissiez y donner suite de la façon que vous jugerez appropriée.

1. Please outline the benefits of the BAPE process when the current proven Environmental Assessment process already ensures a thorough review of social, economic and environmental impacts of seismic programs in the estuary and Gulf of St Lawrence ?
2. Please define the Quebec government concerns with the current regulatory framework that would necessitate a duplicative review process ?
3. Extensive research and years of seismic testing has not resulted in any apparent harm to marine life. In addition, advanced seismic technology and cooperative attitudes among environmental, educational and seismic organizations have resulted in significant priority being focused upon mitigations and best practices whenever any seismic testing is done. Since there have been no proven negative impacts (from the approximate 40,000 kms of previous seismic research in the 1970s and 1980s in the Gulf of St. Lawrence) that are attributable to seismic testing, what has motivated this review at this time ?

4. The additional costs of this duplicative review process will increase the cost of doing business for those industries that rely on scientific information to do their work. What consideration is being given during the BAPE process to ensure they do not make this valuable information economically unfeasible for educational institutions, the oil and gas industry and other organizations that must have this information to conduct their research or work ?

5. Given the large shipping, tourism and other noise producing activities that take place in this region, how does BAPE intend to factor in the relative impacts of other offshore activities when determining the impact of seismic testing and the relative need for this focus on one small segment ?

6. What information does BAPE have with regard to the more pervasive and persistent noise emissions from shipping, fishing, and whale research/watching activities ?

7. Presumably the primary concern relates to noise emissions from seismic and a potential affect on whale behavior. Whale watching and research (i.e. any intentional seeking, approach, and following) which clearly fits the definition of "harassment" of whales that is prohibited in the legislation, has a higher frequency, proximity, and impact than Seismic Research. To my knowledge no review panels, Environmental Assessments, Environmental Mitigations, Geographic, calendar, and time restrictions have been imposed on whale related activities. Why has the seismic industry been singled out to become the focus of these concerns, and additional reviews ?

8. It is very difficult to prove a negative (i.e. to prove there is no harm). There is no evidence (studies or observations) that Seismic has harmful or even behavioral impacts on whales. Various parties who have the objective to stop the energy industry will cite imperfect studies that show unrealistic conditions and quickly apply these results to different field conditions in the ocean. Given the multiple viewpoints that are likely to be presented, how will BAPE sort through the variable quality and reliability of the information provided to ensure valid, scientific research will be most influential ?

9. The BAPE process is likely to reduce the interest and ability of the oil and gas industry to work in this region if they cannot get reliable seismic data to support the work they do. Given the seismic, other suppliers and the industry itself meets or exceeds stakeholder expectations on a regular basis, how will the BAPE process insure this industry is not unduly affected ?

10. DFO will present six papers on the impacts of seismic testing on June 30. Will this information be considered in the BAPE process ?

11. What role would expert interveners have in this process ? The BAPE process has allowed for interveners and experts to present during the process. What other considerations will be used to determine the final outcome ?

12. How will the interveners be chosen to ensure the full breadth of issues, benefits and concerns are explored ?

13. Considering seismic studies have not been conducted in the estuary and Gulf of St Lawrence since 1983, what correlation can be drawn between recent declines in the marine environment and seismic activity ?

14. Canadian government policy related to energy security, the potential for exporting exploration and jobs out of Canada, the desirability of clean fuels such as natural gas rather than coal or nuclear power, and the fact that many of the jobs in Quebec rely upon energy intensive industries such as manufacturing so government policy should try to avoid a loss of energy security that will result in the exporting of jobs in other industries and loss of tax base and revenues to federal, provincial, and local governments. How will the BAPE process integrate these issues/concerns and broader government policy into this process ?

15. Given the significant client base of seismic companies is the Canadian energy industry, and a provincial/national energy supply is of vital importance to Quebequois and Canadians, how will the provincial energy demand/supply and provincial energy strategy be integrated into the final determinations on marine seismic ?

16. The objective of the BAPE is to ensure that the environment is protected to the extent that is reasonable with economic considerations. Will the BAPE consider the fact that if economic activity, energy security, jobs, and tax base is eroded in Quebec, and Canada that the environment will suffer further because currently funding in Canada is not even available for basic sewage treatment in most if not all seaside communities, and when citizens have no income the environment comes last as is seen in third world countries. How will the BAPE integrate the potential reduction of economic activity, tax revenues, and the negative impact it will have on the environment into this process ?

17. What is the goal for the conclusion and deliverables of this process? Will this process result in recommendations that require additional review and follow up or final mandates/regulations that will be implemented without further review or will there be further consultations ?

18. How we can work together to ensure we can all operate with similar goals to protect the marine environment while bringing economic and scientific benefits to local communities and Canada as a whole, in a cooperative, non-adversarial process ?

La commission apprécierait être tenue informée du suivi que vous apporterez à ces questions.

Nous vous remercions de l'attention que vous porterez à cette demande et vous prions d'agrèer, Monsieur, l'expression de nos sentiments les meilleurs.

Danielle Dallaire
Coordonnatrice du secrétariat
de la commission

Envoi par courrier et par télécopieur : (418) 644-8222

Québec, le 17 mai 2004

Monsieur Louis Germain
Directeur
Ministère de l'Environnement
Direction des évaluations environnementales
Édifice Marie-Guyart
675, boul. René-Lévesque Est
Québec (Québec) G1R 5V7

Objet : Les enjeux liés aux levés sismiques dans l'estuaire et le golfe du Saint-Laurent

Monsieur,

La commission a reçu un ensemble de questions de la part de Geophysical Service Incorporated (GSI) dans le cadre de son mandat sur les enjeux liés aux levés sismiques dans l'estuaire et le golfe du Saint-Laurent. Ces questions, déposées par la commission sous la cote QUES3, ont notamment trait au choix des deux ministres d'avoir confié un mandat au BAPE ainsi qu'à d'autres considérations d'ordre général. La commission vous les transmet donc intégralement afin que vous puissiez y donner suite de la façon que vous jugerez appropriée.

1. Please outline the benefits of the BAPE process when the current proven Environmental Assessment process already ensures a thorough review of social, economic and environmental impacts of seismic programs in the estuary and Gulf of St Lawrence ?
2. Please define the Quebec government concerns with the current regulatory framework that would necessitate a duplicative review process ?
3. Extensive research and years of seismic testing has not resulted in any apparent harm to marine life. In addition, advanced seismic technology and cooperative attitudes among environmental, educational and seismic organizations have resulted in significant priority being focused upon mitigations and best practices whenever any seismic testing is done. Since there have been no proven negative impacts (from the approximate 40,000 kms of previous seismic research in the 1970s and 1980s in the Gulf of St. Lawrence) that are attributable to seismic testing, what has motivated this review at this time ?

4. The additional costs of this duplicative review process will increase the cost of doing business for those industries that rely on scientific information to do their work. What consideration is being given during the BAPE process to ensure they do not make this valuable information economically unfeasible for educational institutions, the oil and gas industry and other organizations that must have this information to conduct their research or work ?
5. Given the large shipping, tourism and other noise producing activities that take place in this region, how does BAPE intend to factor in the relative impacts of other offshore activities when determining the impact of seismic testing and the relative need for this focus on one small segment ?
6. What information does BAPE have with regard to the more pervasive and persistent noise emissions from shipping, fishing, and whale research/watching activities ?
7. Presumably the primary concern relates to noise emissions from seismic and a potential affect on whale behavior. Whale watching and research (i.e. any intentional seeking, approach, and following) which clearly fits the definition of "harassment" of whales that is prohibited in the legislation, has a higher frequency, proximity, and impact than Seismic Research. To my knowledge no review panels, Environmental Assessments, Environmental Mitigations, Geographic, calendar, and time restrictions have been imposed on whale related activities. Why has the seismic industry been singled out to become the focus of these concerns, and additional reviews ?
8. It is very difficult to prove a negative (i.e. to prove there is no harm). There is no evidence (studies or observations) that Seismic has harmful or even behavioral impacts on whales. Various parties who have the objective to stop the energy industry will cite imperfect studies that show unrealistic conditions and quickly apply these results to different field conditions in the ocean. Given the multiple viewpoints that are likely to be presented, how will BAPE sort through the variable quality and reliability of the information provided to ensure valid, scientific research will be most influential ?
9. The BAPE process is likely to reduce the interest and ability of the oil and gas industry to work in this region if they cannot get reliable seismic data to support the work they do. Given the seismic, other suppliers and the industry itself meets or exceeds stakeholder expectations on a regular basis, how will the BAPE process insure this industry is not unduly affected ?
10. DFO will present six papers on the impacts of seismic testing on June 30. Will this information be considered in the BAPE process ?
11. What role would expert interveners have in this process ? The BAPE process has allowed for interveners and experts to present during the process. What other considerations will be used to determine the final outcome ?

12. How will the interveners be chosen to ensure the full breadth of issues, benefits and concerns are explored ?

13. Considering seismic studies have not been conducted in the estuary and Gulf of St Lawrence since 1983, what correlation can be drawn between recent declines in the marine environment and seismic activity ?

14. Canadian government policy related to energy security, the potential for exporting exploration and jobs out of Canada, the desirability of clean fuels such as natural gas rather than coal or nuclear power, and the fact that many of the jobs in Quebec rely upon energy intensive industries such as manufacturing so government policy should try to avoid a loss of energy security that will result in the exporting of jobs in other industries and loss of tax base and revenues to federal, provincial, and local governments. How will the BAPE process integrate these issues/concerns and broader government policy into this process ?

15. Given the significant client base of seismic companies is the Canadian energy industry, and a provincial/national energy supply is of vital importance to Quebecois and Canadians, how will the provincial energy demand/supply and provincial energy strategy be integrated into the final determinations on marine seismic ?

16. The objective of the BAPE is to ensure that the environment is protected to the extent that is reasonable with economic considerations. Will the BAPE consider the fact that if economic activity, energy security, jobs, and tax base is eroded in Quebec, and Canada that the environment will suffer further because currently funding in Canada is not even available for basic sewage treatment in most if not all seaside communities, and when citizens have no income the environment comes last as is seen in third world countries. How will the BAPE integrate the potential reduction of economic activity, tax revenues, and the negative impact it will have on the environment into this process ?

17. What is the goal for the conclusion and deliverables of this process? Will this process result in recommendations that require additional review and follow up or final mandates/regulations that will be implemented without further review or will there be further consultations ?

18. How we can work together to ensure we can all operate with similar goals to protect the marine environment while bringing economic and scientific benefits to local communities and Canada as a whole, in a cooperative, non-adversarial process ?

La commission apprécierait être tenue informée du suivi que vous apporterez à ces questions.

Nous vous remercions de l'attention que vous porterez à cette demande et vous prions d'agrèer, Monsieur, l'expression de nos sentiments les meilleurs.

Danielle Dallaire
Coordonnatrice du secrétariat
de la commission