

Welcome

We will begin shortly!

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
Agence d'évaluation d'impact du Canada

Regional Assessment of Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling in the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Area

AUGUST 17, 2026

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
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Canada



Presentation Overview

1. Regional Assessments under the *Impact Assessment Act*

- Phases
- Types of Regional Assessments
- Goals of Regional Assessments

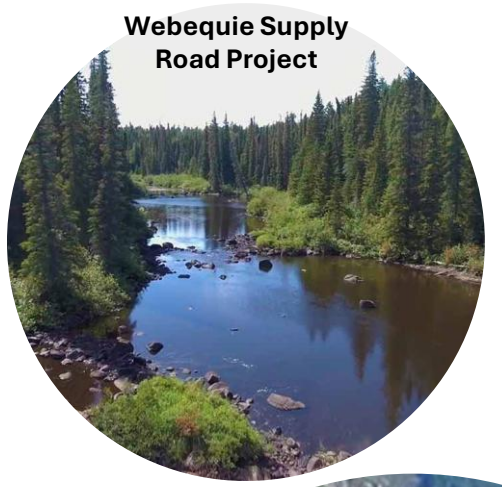
2. Regional Assessment of Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling in the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Area

- Overview
- Purpose and Approach
- Key Aspects
- Timeline
- Engagement
- Feedback Summary
- Provide your feedback!

Who We Are

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC):

- Federal agency reporting to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change
- Conducts federal impact assessments under the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA)
- Coordinates consultation with Indigenous Peoples



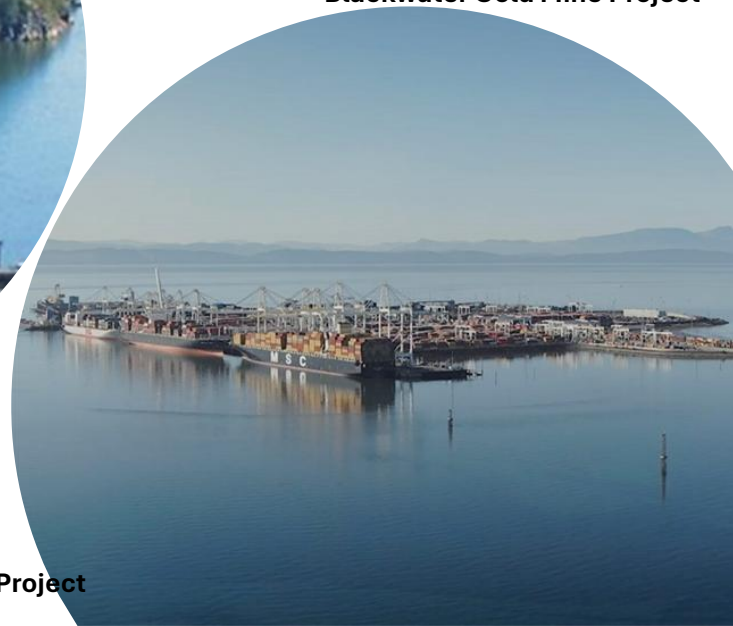
Webequie Supply Road Project



Blackwater Gold Mine Project



Woodfibre LNG Project



Deltaport Fourth Berth Project

What is a Regional Assessment (RA)?

Regional assessments examine the positive and adverse effects (impacts) of past, existing and/or future activities within a specific region.

These impacts can affect:

- Indigenous Peoples and their rights
- the environment
- social conditions
- the economy
- human health



- ❖ Broad
- ❖ Flexible in timeline and objectives
- ❖ Take place before projects are proposed

Regional Assessment Phases

1. **Planning Phase**
   - Administrative planning
   - Draft Terms of Reference developed
   - Public Comment Period for draft Terms of Reference
   - Minister establishes final Terms of Reference

2. **Conduct Phase**
   - Engagement/Consultation
   - Analyses and report development
   - Public Comment Period for draft RA Report
   - Final RA Report submitted to the Minister

There is no set timeline for RAs - timeline is noted in the Terms of Reference

Types of Regional Assessments

The Minister decides whether a RA is to be conducted and if it will be conducted by a Committee or by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC)

I. Committee-led regional assessment:

- comprised of one or more experts
- appointed by the Minister

II. IAAC-led regional assessment:

- IAAC conducts a regional assessment
- may establish partnerships

Goals of Regional Assessments

- Analyze **positive** and **adverse effects** of future activities in a specific region (the Study Area)
- Improve the **effectiveness** and **efficiency** of future impact assessments
- Each RA has different objectives informed by **key considerations** such as:
  - Cumulative effects
  - Environment context
  - Health context
  - Socio-economic context
  - Traditional Knowledge and community knowledge
  - Gaps in knowledge or data



Recommendations

Regional Assessment of Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling in the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Area

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Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling

- Exploratory drilling is the process of drilling wells to find out if oil or gas is present beneath the sea floor and, if so, to understand its size and characteristics.
- It is the only way to confirm whether oil or gas resources exist in a specific location
- The well is drilled in stages, and data is collected and evaluated
- Exploration drilling typically takes 1-4 months
- Drilling programs may include one well or multiple wells (2-3)
- Effects and mitigation measures are well known
- Exploratory drilling projects trigger an impact assessment process under the Impact Assessment Agency and an environmental process under the Canada-NS Offshore Energy Regulator

Exploration may or may not lead to development depending on resource size, location, economics.

Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Overview

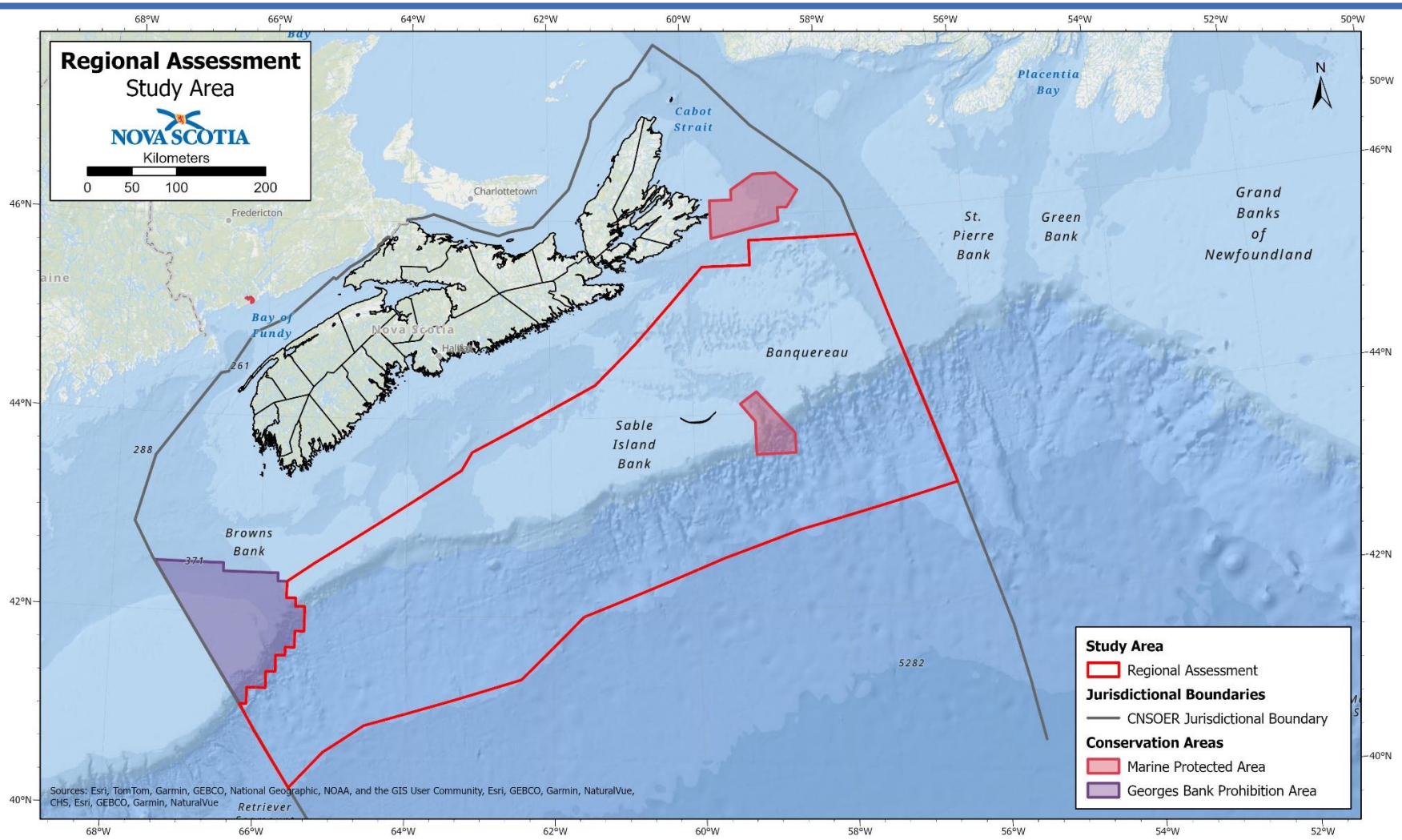
Goal: To identify opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of project-specific impact assessment and other regulatory processes for future proposed offshore exploratory drilling projects.

Objectives:

- Provide regional context for the Study Area
- Provide an overview of offshore exploratory drilling
- Identify and examine valued components
- Identify mitigation measures and knowledge gaps
- Complete supplemental analyses:
  - Cumulative Effects Assessment
  - Gender Based Analysis Plus
  - Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)**
- Provide information and analyses to inform a recommendation for an exclusion regulation



Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Study Area



Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Purpose

Support more consistent regulatory decision-making

Improve future project assessments

Inform future policy and regulatory approaches

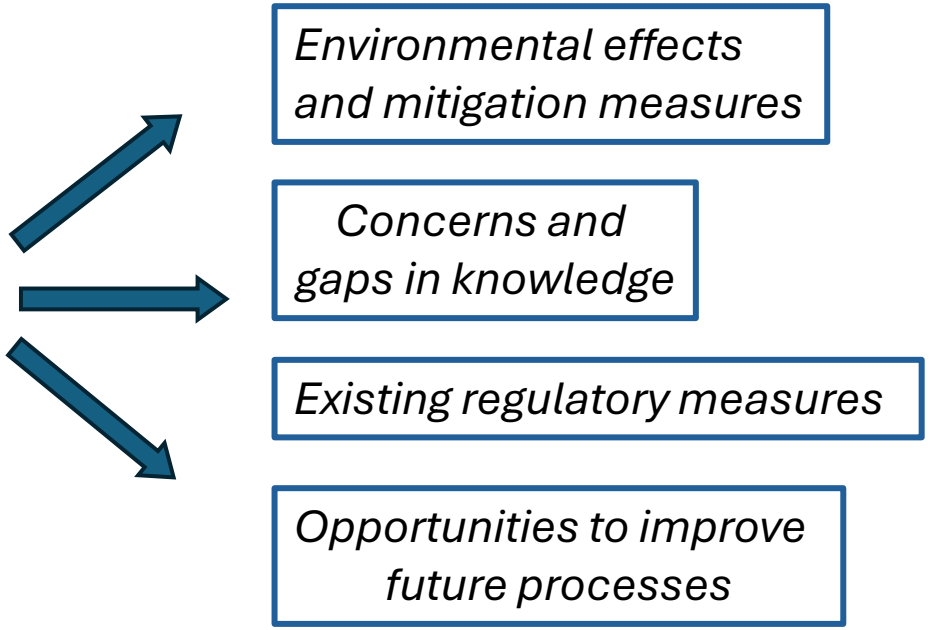
- Identify key considerations associated with offshore exploratory drilling
- Identify regional conditions and sensitivities
- Identify common mitigation and monitoring measures and explore new ones
- Highlight information gaps and monitoring needs
- Help determine whether an exclusion regulation should be considered

Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Approach

- Led by Impact Assessment Agency in collaboration with:
  - Nova Scotia Department of Energy
  - Natural Resources Canada
  - Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator
- **Defined offshore Study Area:**
  - encompasses an offshore area relevant to oil and gas exploration drilling
- **Process:**
  - Where relevant utilizing baseline information from Regional Assessment of Offshore Wind Development in Nova Scotia (2025)
  - Where relevant incorporate learnings from the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador (2020)
  - Focus on the Nova Scotia context

Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Approach

- **Not a single project**
- Valued Components will form the base of the analysis:
  - Environmental (atmospheric environment; fish, fish habitat and marine plants; marine mammals and sea turtles; birds and bats; protected areas and Species at Risk)
  - Indigenous Rights and Interests (culture, use of lands and resources for traditional purposes, health/social/economic conditions)
  - Health and Socio-Economic components (fisheries, other ocean users)
- Supporting Analyses:
  - Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions
  - Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+)
  - Cumulative effects



Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Cumulative Effects

- Separate analysis
- Distinct section in the RA report
- Considerations:
  - Future drilling scenarios
  - Evaluation of how exploratory drilling may interact with:
    - Existing and future offshore activities
    - Climate driven changes

Identify cumulative pressures

Highlight uncertainties

Evaluate regional-scale trends

Consider monitoring and management opportunities

Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling – Gender Based Analysis +

- Separate analysis
- Distinct section in the RA report
- Focus on perspectives of Indigenous peoples, women, rural communities etc.
  - Employment and economic participation
  - Health, safety, and well-being
  - Age, income, and employment security
  - Community wellness
  - Systemic inequalities

Identify differential effects

Highlight data gaps and uncertainties

Provide input on considering the needs and experiences of diverse populations

Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Climate Change and GHGs

- Separate analysis
- Distinct section in the RA report
- Considerations:
  - Future drilling scenarios
  - Measured against climate objectives for Nova Scotia and Canada
  - Explore potential ways to decrease emissions

Inform consideration of climate change-related issues

Identify potential emission reduction opportunities

Provide climate-related context for future impact assessment and regulatory decision-making.

Exclusion Regulation

An *Exclusion Regulation* may allow certain offshore exploratory drilling projects to proceed **without an impact assessment** stage, **IF** the project meets specific requirements/conditions.

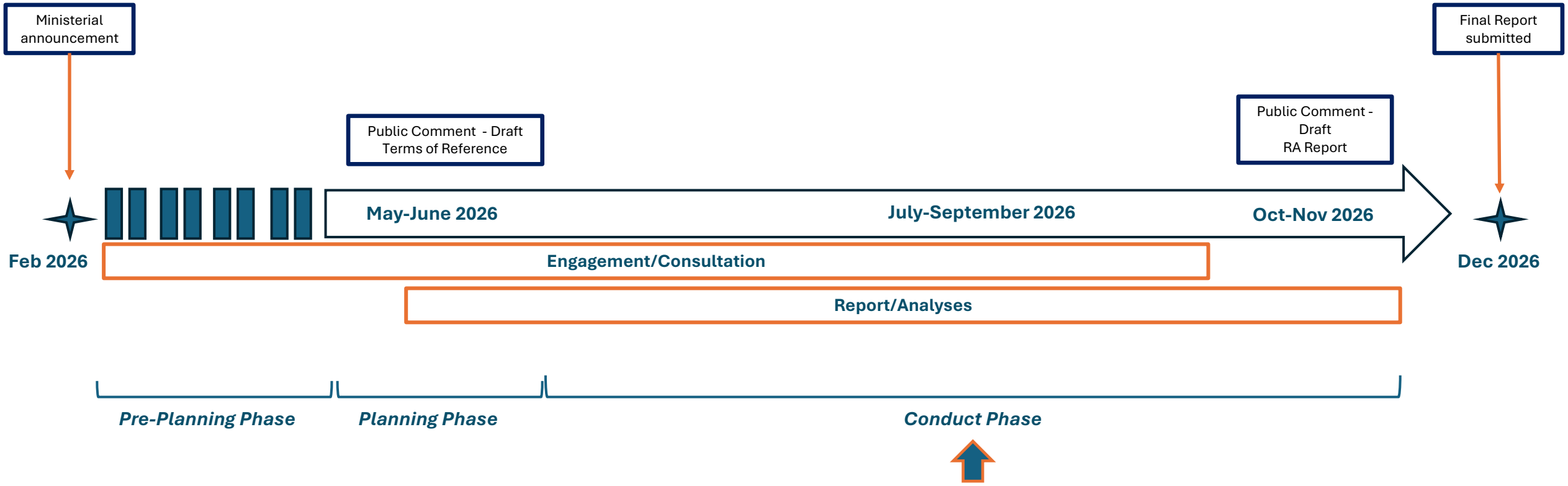
To qualify, a project must:

- Be located in the area covered by the regulation (i.e., the Study Area).
- Meet regulatory conditions.
- Engage with Indigenous groups.
- Conduct monitoring and follow-up activities.

Important:

- *Projects are still required to undergo the environmental assessment process at CNSOER.*
- *Projects must still comply with all other federal and provincial laws, regulations, and approvals. The exclusion applies only to the federal impact assessment requirement.*
- *An exclusion regulation can only be considered after completion of the Regional Assessment and the decision is made by the Minister.*
- *A separate consultation process is initiated specific to the Exclusion Regulation.*

Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Timeline



Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Engagement

- **Public Engagement**: Registry site, Virtual Sessions (2)
  - sharing information about exploratory drilling and the RA process (FAQs)
  - ensuring transparency
  - gathering feedback
  - answering questions
- **Indigenous Engagement and Consultation**
- Outreach to **key stakeholders** (government, NGOs, ENGOs, academia, experts): One on one meetings
- Working with **collaborating organizations**:
  - Technical advice
  - Knowledge of past activities



Regional Assessment for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling - Feedback Summary

Key themes raised by participants so far:

- Meaningful **Indigenous participation**, including consideration of Indigenous rights, interests, knowledge, and stewardship responsibilities.
- Assessment of **cumulative effects** from offshore activities, fisheries, shipping, and climate change.
- Protection of **fisheries, marine ecosystems, marine mammals, and species at risk**.
- Consideration of **climate change and long-term sustainability**.
- Need for clarity on how **Regional Assessment findings will be used** in future regulatory and project review processes.
- Importance of maintaining **future project-specific consultation and impact assessment requirements.**
- Requests for **sufficient time and opportunities** for stakeholder and Indigenous engagement throughout the process.

Provide Your Feedback…

1. Regional Assessment Registry site:

   Regional Assessment of Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling in the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Area

2. E-mail us at: NSOffshoreDrilling-NEForageEnMer@iaac-aeic.gc.ca

The Registry page:

- Serves as the public record
- Ensures transparency and accountability
- Provides updates and information
- Used for comments throughout the RA process and during Public Comment Periods



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