

The Western Newfoundland and Labrador
Offshore Area Strategic Environmental Assessment:
Public Participation and Learning

by

Morgan Vespa

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources

Natural Resources Institute

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Winnipeg

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Abstract

The pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness in environmental assessment (EA) processes has prompted the introduction of a promising, second-generation process: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). In order to learn about SEA practice and identify opportunities for improvement of SEA, this research examined the ongoing Western Newfoundland Offshore Area SEA.

Analysis was conducted on data obtained from documents, observations, and interviews with participants in the case study SEA to determine if meaningful participation had occurred, participants' learning outcomes, and recommendations for future practice. The results show that the principles of meaningful public consultation were not in place, resulting in dissatisfaction with the participatory process and limited learning amongst participants. The meetings also veered from some of the important elements of a SEA (e.g., examining broad alternatives). Variance from the basic principles of SEA and meaningful public consultation demonstrated a lack of commitment to conducting an effective and influential strategic assessment.

Acknowledgements

Conducting research has been a process of overcoming challenges, learning, and adapting. There are many to thank because this resultant document would not have been possible without the support of those I have encountered throughout this endeavour.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my research participants and everyone that I had the pleasure of meeting during my time in Newfoundland. Thank you for welcoming me in to your homes and your communities. Your willingness to share your time and thoughts was truly amazing and indicative of the generosity I encountered throughout my fieldwork. I learned so much from interacting with all of you and came to fully appreciate the special sense of place shared by Newfoundlanders that provided a unique setting for this research. I cannot wait to make a trip back to this truly beautiful place.

Thank you to my advisor, Dr. John Sinclair. Your patience and guidance was invaluable to this thesis work. Thank you for the many drafts, answers to questions, and incredibly thoughtful comments provided throughout. Thank you to my thesis advisory committee: Dr. Bob Gibson, Dr. Nazim Cicek, and Professor Thomas Henley. I appreciate all of your input and engagement throughout this process. Thank you for providing helpful insights and for making me feel as if I had a supportive team of experts with me at every step.

Thank you to the ever-helpful and supportive administrative staff at the Natural Resources Institute. Without their knowledge and unrelenting hard work for the faculty and students I am fairly certain the department would grind to a halt. Their constant willingness to help and answer questions has made my masters experience so much smoother.

My successful completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the positive environment that balances my life outside of school, shaped by my friends and family both in Ontario and Manitoba. You create a place that makes it impossible to be anything but thankful for all of the support and love I have in my life.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the financial support provided by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

AMEC	Multinational consultancy, engineering, and project management company
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CEAA	Canadian Environmental Assessment Act
CEA Agency	Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
CNL	Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act
C-NLOPB	Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board
C-NSOPB	Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board
CPRA	Canadian Petroleum Resources Act
EA	Environmental Assessment
FFAWU	Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union
FEARO	Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
LGL Limited	Lewis, Gunn, and Livingston – environmental research associates
NB	New Brunswick
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador
NS	Nova Scotia
Nvivo™	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) Program
P.E.I.	Prince Edward Island
PP	Public Participation
PPP	Policy, Program, and Plan
QC	Quebec
RFP	Request for Proposals
R-SEA	Regional-Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SSHRC	Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada

1 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Environmental assessment (EA) processes are formally applied in over 100 countries as a tool for considering environmental impacts of projects and other decisions before actions are taken (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; Devlin et al., 2005; Petts, 1999). Through continued EA practice and research in these jurisdictions, many academics and practitioners now view EA as a powerful tool for moving towards more sustainable development (Lawrence, 2003; Stinchcombe and Gibson, 2001; Sinclair and Doelle, 2010). With the direction of governance in many places continuing to shift towards encouraging more sustainable outcomes, newer, more proactive forms of EA have been developed to see that sustainability and environmental considerations are incorporated in decision making from the outset. One such initiative is the practice of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which aims to include environmental considerations in the early stages of policy, program, and plan (PPP) development (Noble, 2000).

Like all forms of EA, a quality and effective SEA depends on meaningful public participation. In fact, SEA is intended to improve the public participation process and approach environmental decisions from a holistic perspective (Noble and Harriman-Gunn, 2009). In theory, improvement to public participation in part comes from the opportunity to discuss the higher-level issues central to a SEA that are often excluded from project-level EA discussions. SEA is meant to focus on collaboration among diverse stakeholders to identify and evaluate the possible options and broad alternatives to the proposed strategic action (Margerum, 1999). Communities are involved during the planning process, and because of this, SEA is regarded as an approach that enables the

public to participate in managing for their future development before specific project proposals are made (Gauthier et al., 2011), improving the chance that active involvement will result in community empowerment.

Although there were other countries to implement SEA-like processes prior to Canada, Canada's federal government was the first jurisdiction to formalize an SEA system separate from project-level EA (Sadler, 2011). The federal *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Program, and Plan Proposals*, issued in 1990, required SEAs on all relevant cabinet proposals (Stratos, 2009). The purpose of the directive was to clarify the obligations of departments and agencies in carrying out an SEA and links those objectives to sustainable development strategies (Stratos, 2009). Since then, SEA implementation has faced several challenges in the Canadian context (Gauthier et al., 2011), with few instances of *formal* SEA practice in the past ten years. Despite the lack of requirement to assess PPPs, several jurisdictions and practitioners have gone beyond the federal directive to reap the benefits of both informally and formally identified 'strategic environmental assessment'. The range of applications of SEA that are not directly affected by the cabinet directive demonstrates the variability of SEA (Noble, 2009) and the importance of context when looking at SEAs (Brown and Therivel, 2000).

In 2004, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada concluded that since the issuance of the cabinet directive, most departments had not made a serious commitment to Federal SEA (Canada, 2004). Despite this, the value of the SEA approach is continually being recognized for its merit in promoting sustainability and the potential that SEA has for incorporating meaningful involvement of the public early in decision

processes (Gibson et al., 2010). As such, SEA offers both a promising direction and an opening for improvement before wide implementation of policies, programs, and plans, especially in the Canadian context. Evaluation of SEA and recommendations for SEA are crucial at this stage in order to ensure that the benefits of effective SEA are achieved.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives

SEA provides an opportunity to include holistic thinking about sustainability as a way of framing decisions surrounding plans, policies and programs (Noble and Harriman-Gunn, 2009; Stinchcombe and Gibson, 2001). The potential for increased efficiency and effectiveness through SEA, especially at the project level, makes it an attractive process within EA. As well, SEA may offer an opportunity for more meaningful public participation, and individual and institutional learning that may not be as accessible through traditional, project-specific EA. As such, the purpose of this research was to study the substance of SEA participatory processes and the learning outcomes achieved to formulate recommendations for future SEA processes.

The specific objectives of the research are to:

- a. establish public participation best practices in SEA and evaluate how these may differ from those in a traditional EA;
- b. determine the types of issues being discussed in a SEA case study, and whether these include higher-level strategic issues;
- c. identify participants' learning outcomes as a result of participation in a SEA case study; and
- d. make recommendations for amendments to SEA requirements that reflect best practices.

1.3 Methods

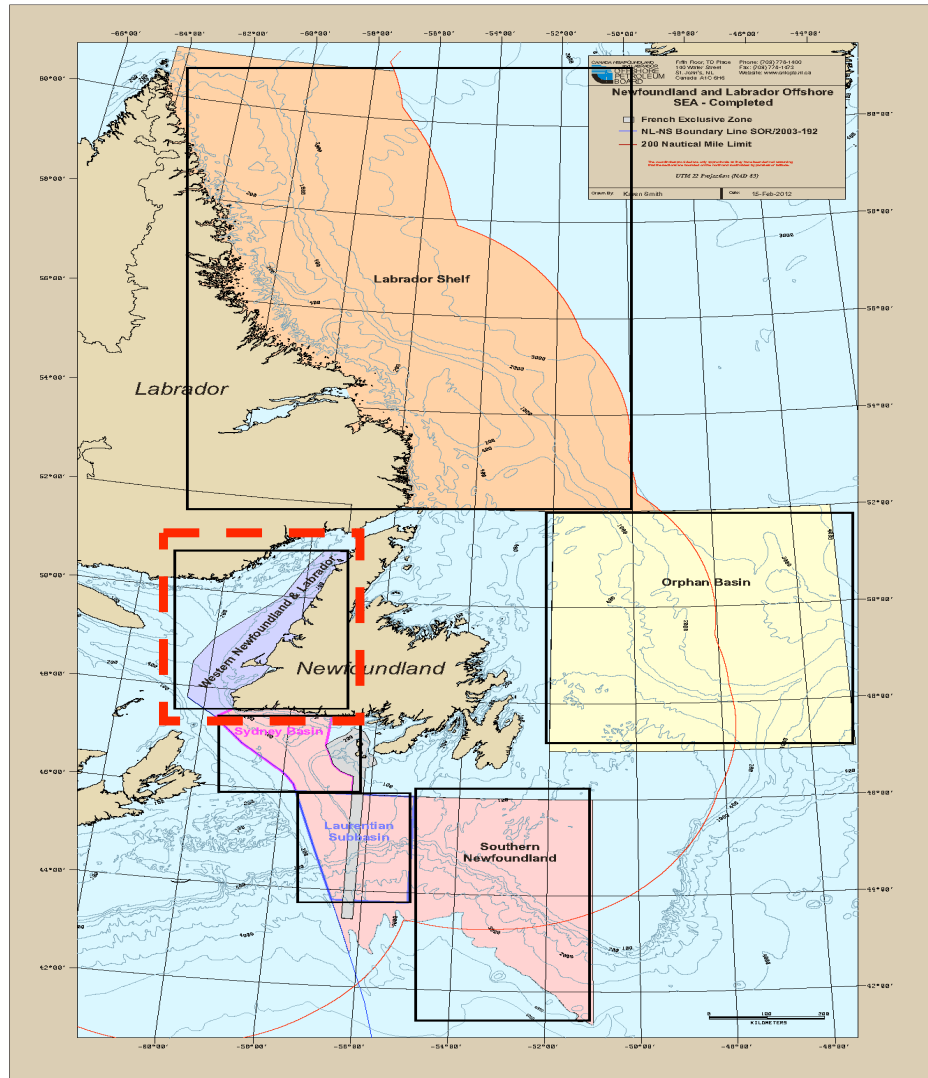
To address the identified objectives I used a qualitative approach. This approach allowed me to address the complexity of individual participant experiences with SEA (Creswell, 2009) and show how SEA can result in learning outcomes. This approach is also consistent with my own advocacy/participatory worldview. This thesis represents the data I collected from the communities/people that took part in the study and through their participation I was able to address the objectives of the research. Unfortunately, limits of time and resources did not allow for an entirely participatory design, but whenever possible I used the input and ideas of research participants in order to enhance the approach described below and in Chapter 3 in reaching the research objectives.

I used a case study strategy of inquiry in order to maintain a manageable scope while still addressing my objectives. The level of detail required to address the research questions was most effectively obtained using the variety of data collection procedures available in a case study setting (Travers, 2001). There have been a limited number of recent formal SEA cases within Canada, but through applying the criteria outlined in Chapter 3, I selected a current SEA case, the Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area SEA (to be identified as the Western NL SEA from here forward).

The Canada Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) is a joint (federal and provincial) review board that oversees the development of offshore petroleum activities in the offshore area of Newfoundland and Labrador (C-NLOPB, 2012a). Since 2002, the C-NLOPB has conducted six SEAs for the defined, offshore geographic areas surrounding the province (Figure 1). The Western NL SEA (area outlined in a dashed red line in Figure 1), which was completed in 2005, amended in 2007, and is currently undergoing an updating process (C-NLOPB, 2011), provided an

interesting case due to rising public interest in offshore drilling. This SEA was the most appropriate case for exploring public participation in a SEA because, among other reasons, it is recent and ongoing. Details of the selected case are detailed in chapter 4.

Figure 1 Six SEAs completed by the C-NLOPB. Adapted from C-NLOPB (2012)
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There were several steps in the data collection process. I used a preliminary document review and participant observation as data collection procedures to provide

context for SEA and for the selected case. This helped to develop the main data collection tool, semi-structured interviews that were used later in the study.

Document review was crucial in studying this case because of the recent history of SEAs for offshore oil development in the province and the amendment and current update of the Western NL SEA. The document review also allowed for study of the legislated requirements for public participation from jurisdictions that have implemented SEA. The use of document review complimented the other data collection procedures and acted as a method of triangulation (Bowen, 2009). In the field, participant observation was employed to further determine the specific context of the case and gain rapport with potential research participants. The majority of the observation data were collected through attending consultation meetings within the four, targeted communities in the area (Port aux Basques, Stephenville, Corner Brook, and Rocky Harbour). Through conducting semi-structured interviews with participants of the SEA I was able to: (1) gather most of the data used for the analysis throughout this thesis and (2) gain an understanding of participants' perspectives on the entire process and on the outcomes (learning and otherwise) of public participation in the SEA, including effects on project-level EA and the offshore development plan itself. The methods are further detailed in Chapter 3.

1.4 Significance

SEA practice is growing; it provides a promising direction for environmental assessment, and with the 1990 *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Program, and Plan Proposals* intended to initiate the adoption of SEAs within federal departments leading to little improvement or expansion of SEA in Canada, it is important that lessons be learned and implemented to increase future benefits of SEA.

Participant involvement is a crucial element of any environmental assessment, and is especially relevant to SEA (Heiland, 2005). It is critical that the process design and implementation of public participation in SEA lead to meaningful public participation early in its implementation, in order to encourage best practice and increased participation in future SEAs or updates to existing SEAs. Ensuring that SEA processes promote both institutional and individual learning for sustainability is also a significant component of SEA, perhaps even more so than with other types of EA. Sinclair et al. (2007) identified that additional work is needed in order to determine links between SEA and learning. This study will attempt to answer questions related to outcomes from public participation in SEA and those conclusions can be used to make recommendations for improving future practice.

Doelle and Sinclair (2006) proposed a problem with looking at public participation processes rather than outcomes, because outcomes may be more indicative of whether or not meaningful public participation is occurring. Others have identified that it is difficult to compare different SEA applications (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; Noble, 2000) because the context of a SEA is especially important to its examination (Bina, 2008; Brown and Therivel, 2000; Fidler and Noble, 2012). For these reasons, I am proposing that examining the outcomes of a SEA case is a more applicable and relevant way to study public participation in a SEA, so that process recommendations may be determined through working backwards from the case study conclusions.

1.5 Organization

This thesis is organized into six chapters including this introduction. Chapter 2 provides an overview and synthesis of the relevant literature as the result of the literature review. The topics of the review relate to environmental assessment, strategic

environmental assessment, public participation, and learning outcomes in these settings. Chapter 3 outlines the details of the research design in order to link strategy of inquiry and data collection methods to the research aims. Chapter 4 details the case study and provides a discussion of the public participation of the strategic environmental assessment in the case. Chapter 5 discusses the public's learning outcomes achieved through participation. Finally, chapter 6 concludes the document with a summary of the findings, conclusions for each research objective, and recommendations for improving future practice.

2 SEA, Participation, and Learning: Context within Relevant Literature

This chapter provides an overview and synthesis of the relevant literature as the result of the literature review. The topics of the review relate to environmental assessment, strategic environmental assessment, public participation, and learning outcomes in these settings.

2.1 Introduction

With over forty years of Environmental Assessment (EA) in practice worldwide (Hanna, 2009), a wealth of literature has surfaced, providing critical analysis, improvements for practice, and suggestions for future directions of EA and public participation in EA. EA in Canada has gone through several transformations since the first consideration of environmental impacts and the passing of Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) in 1992 (Hanna, 2009). Since EA was first legislated in Canada, it has evolved as provincial and federal governments have made attempts to change both process and practice, often with the objective of improving efficiency (Hanna, 2009). The most recent transformation of EA in Canada when the CEAA 1992 was repealed (through budget bill C-38), and replaced with the new law, CEAA 2012 on July 6, 2012 (CEA Agency, 2012). In the changes to the CEAA no reference was made to strategic environmental assessment (Doelle, 2012) despite advocacy for a legislated base for SEA (Gibson, 2012).

Strategic environmental assessment represents a potential direction for moving EA towards sustainability objectives (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; Devlin et al., 2005; Petts, 1999; Stinchcombe and Gibson, 2001). SEA is seen as a second-generation process in that it transitions project-level EA principles of decision making upstream, towards higher-level objectives (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005). SEA is also considered

to be a proactive approach that may deliver efficiencies to project-level EA through streamlining lower tier processes. Involving the public is considered a crucial component to any legitimate environmental assessment process (Sinclair and Diduck, 2009) and including the public in higher-level decisions provides a potential opportunity for different forms of learning that could lead to a transformation towards sustainable practices.

The following provides a contextual overview of the concepts discussed in the literature as they apply to the research objectives of this thesis. The review is a result of research and exploration of the theories and background of public participation in environmental assessment and strategic environmental assessment, and how that links to learning outcomes. The theoretical and experiential context reported in the literature identified the applicable groundwork and gaps in knowledge and research that this thesis attempts to fill. The concepts identified in this chapter established the theoretical and contextual framework within which the data were collected and analyzed, along with the themes that emerged from the data. The theoretical background information also provided the basis for developing an appropriate research design, methodology, and analysis effective in fulfilling the purpose and objectives set out in Chapter 1.

2.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment: Origins and Principles

Strategic environmental assessment is the assessment of policies, programs, and plans (PPPs) and it is considered a complementary approach to project-level EA (Chaker et al., 2006; Sadler et al., 2011; Therivel, 2010):

SEA is a systematic process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed policy, plan or program initiatives in order to ensure they are fully included and appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate

stage of decision making on par with economic and social considerations.

(Sadler and Verheem, 1996 p. 27)

This commonly cited definition of SEA explains for what, when, and why SEA is used.

Drawing from research of literature discussing SEA and expert definitions of SEA, I have determined a definition that is appropriate in the context of this study. For the purposes of this research I define SEA as:

The broad, proactive, and participative assessment of a proposed policy, program or plan and alternatives to the proposal that results in directing lower-tier assessments and decisions.

SEA has been divided into three types of assessment: sectoral, regional or area-based, and indirect (Harriman and Noble, 2008; Therivel, 1993). Sectoral PPPs refer to those pertaining to a specific sector such as energy, or mining. Assessment of regional PPPs, sometimes called Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment (R-SEA), assess PPPs that pertain to activities within a defined area. Lastly, indirect PPPs are those that may have significant environmental effects and may influence an entire country, such as fiscal or technological decisions (Harriman and Noble, 2008; Therivel, 1993).

Strategic assessment originated as a method of accounting for the shortcomings of traditional project-level EA (Partidário, 2000). The reactionary nature, narrow scope, and poor integration are common issues in a project-level EA that could be addressed by a SEA (Gibson et al., 2010; Partidário, 2000). One of the central reasons for implementing SEA is that it can influence and even direct lower-level decisions. SEA can influence which projects are included for consideration, determining if a project can be brought into the process at all, rather than determining the details of a project (Therivel, 2010).

Although the origins of SEA link to the professional practice of project EA, the evolution of SEA has led to recognizing its potential for promoting sustainability objectives (Noble, 2000; Partidário, 2000).

At its most basic, SEA aims to protect the environment (Therivel, 2010); whether that is considered strictly as the biophysical, or recognized as the broader interactions between the natural and societal environments. According to Therivel (2010), SEA has two central aims: (1) it must evaluate alternatives in the assessment context; and (2) it must improve the strategic action (the PPP). The literature identifies the following principles of SEA as crucial to fulfilling these aims:

- promote participation of stakeholders (IAIA, 2002; Noble, 2009; Partidário, 1996; Therivel, 2010);
- focus on key environmental and sustainability issues (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; Noble, 2009; Therivel, 2010);
- identify the best option (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; Therivel, 2010);
- relate to project EA (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; Noble, 2009; Partidário, 1996);
- be transparent and open (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; Noble, 2009);
- remain focused (cost and time effective) (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; IAIA, 2002); and
- be an iterative learning process (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005; IAIA, 2002; Noble, 2009; Partidário, 1996).

Transitioning towards implementing a new process such as SEA that is intended to improve effectiveness and efficiency requires an effort towards full integration within

the current system. Full integration of SEA will reduce the risk of overlap, which is important in that overlapping can produce inefficiencies, resulting in the reverse of the intended effect. Implementing a new process is often met with resistance when capacity is limited (Rauchmeyer and Risse, 2005) or entrenched interests are threatened, so identifying the theoretical benefits and implementing an iterative process provides a platform to make SEA an attractive option and continually improve SEA so that it remains within the original principles and meets the intended benefits.

2.3 SEA in the Canadian Context

In 1990, Canada was the first country to formally direct the assessment of policies, programs, and plans as a separate process from traditional EA (Sadler, 2011). In Canada, SEA is linked in legislation to sustainable development and a movement towards sustainability objectives (Hanna, 2009). Although SEA has been gaining momentum as a promising direction for EA, in Canada there are many challenges faced by an upstream assessment of PPPs. As identified by Dalal-Clayton and Sadler (2005), these challenges include: (1) institutional and political acceptance; (2) ensuring inclusion at key points in the decision-making process; (3) overcoming uncertainty; and (4) securing transparency and public inclusion at the earliest stages. Two of these key issues (numbers two and four) reflect challenges that relate to public participation, inferring that although public involvement is a key element of SEA, it presents a large hurdle to the implementation of efficient SEA as a future prospect for environmental protection in Canada.

Challenges to effective SEA have proven significant to date, as the federal SEA initiative has not met original expectations since it was first introduced, and Canada has not proven its leadership in this approach (Benevides et al., 2009). Federally, there is a directive to conduct a SEA on any policy, program, or plan that may have significant

negative or positive environmental impacts. The directive was accompanied by guidance material issued in 2004 to provide flexible guidelines for procedures in a SEA. Despite the federal directive to conduct SEAs on PPPs, the *initiation* of a SEA is still a decision that is at the discretion of the Minister (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2005). Another challenge unique to Canada is the two-tiered, multi-jurisdictional system that governs environmental assessment processes among provinces, territories, Aboriginal authorities, and the federal government (Benevides et al., 2009). Overlapping responsibility and processes have caused challenges to implementation and integration of SEA in Canada. The requirements for and applications of SEA in the different Canadian jurisdictions are described in Table 1.

Table 1 Canadian jurisdictions' application of SEA

Jurisdiction	Requirement	Formal SEA	Example Case(s)
Federal	Policy	Yes	Trade agreement negotiating positions
Alberta	No	No	
British Columbia	Legislated	Yes (joint)	Salmon Aquaculture
Manitoba	No	No	
New Brunswick	Policy	Yes (joint)	Fundy Tidal Energy
Newfoundland and Labrador	Policy	Yes (joint)	Offshore Oil
Northwest Territories	No	No	
Nova Scotia	Policy	Yes (joint)	Fundy Tidal Energy Offshore Oil
Nunavut	No	No	
Ontario	Legislated	Yes	York Regional Planning Energy Sector
PEI	Policy	Yes	Historic Site Plan
Quebec	Legislated	Yes	Waste Management Forest Protection
Saskatchewan	Legislated	Yes	Forest Management
Yukon	Policy	Yes	Aboriginal Land Planning

Adapted from Noble (2009) and environmental assessment law documents (CEAA)

In 2004, the Commissioner of the Federal Environment and Sustainable Development from the Office of the Auditor General in Canada audited the implementation of the cabinet directive for the evaluation of PPPs and concluded that there was a low level of commitment towards conducting SEAs (Canada, 2004). That audit resulted in an amendment to the directive requiring that a public statement of environmental effects be issued whenever a SEA is completed. In a subsequent audit in 2008, the commissioner stated that many departments had not complied with requirements for issuing public statements and that when they had complied, the statements were often difficult to locate and contained insufficient information (Canada, 2008).

Provincially, there are examples of SEA application, but with varying levels of effectiveness. There are few legislated requirements for conducting SEAs in provinces or territories (see Table 1). At the provincial level, when SEA is included in legislation, it is at the discretion of the Minister to determine if a proposed plan, program, or policy requires an environmental assessment. The British Columbia Environmental Assessment Act (2002, 49(a)) states that under the assessment of policies and practices the Minister may direct the environmental assessment office “to undertake an assessment of any policy, enactment, plan, practice or procedure of the government”. The Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (1990, 3(b)) states that the act applies to “enterprises or activities or proposals, plans, or programs...” The Nova Scotia Environmental Assessment Act (2009, 11(3b)) states that if the Minister is of the opinion that a policy, program or plan is considered an undertaking they may advise that an environmental assessment be done. Also, there are many examples of informal uses of SEA processes

for forestry and land-use planning (Noble, 2012). Many of the formal provincial SEA undertakings have occurred within a joint review with federal authorities, such as the British Columbia salmon aquaculture review and the Misaine Bank Area SEA (Noble, 2009).

SEA is gaining momentum as more provinces are proposing SEA processes for regional, sectoral and municipal planning. With few formal SEAs conducted in Canada, especially in recent years, there is an opportunity to evaluate those few that have been done in order to make recommendations for future implementation of SEA. Public participation is a key aspect to a successful and effective SEA (Runhaar and Driessen, 2007) and recognizing the outcomes of the SEAs that have been done can provide insight for improving guideline materials and the overall effectiveness and efficiency of SEAs in Canada's future.

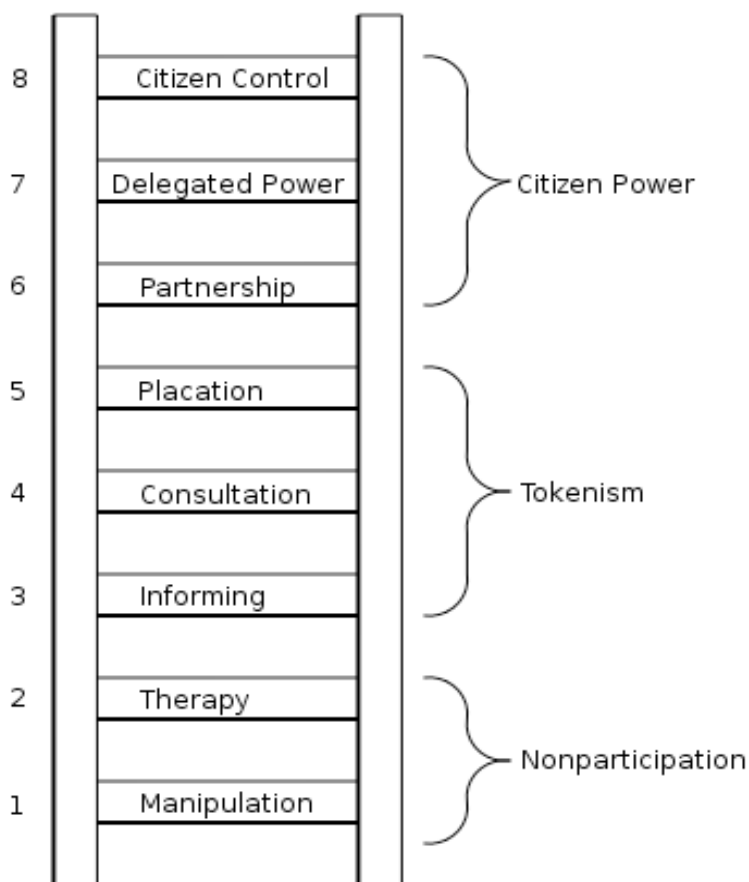
2.4 Public Participation in EA and SEA

Public participation is considered by many to be an essential and basic component of any acceptable EA process (Gibson, 1993; IAIA 2002; Petts, 1999; Sinclair and Diduck, 2011), but using public participation simply as a validation method for EA will not necessarily reap the potential benefits of a truly inclusive and transparent process. When done meaningfully, public participation provides an opportunity for the public to participate in the decisions that may affect them, enabling community empowerment (Fitzpatrick and Sinclair, 2003; Stewart and Sinclair, 2007). The potential for empowerment is especially relevant to SEAs that will assess and influence the policies, programs and plans that direct the future of that area, sector, or regional development.

The term 'public participation' is an umbrella term used to describe several different methods and levels of involving the public in an EA process. As identified by

Arnstein (1969) and detailed in Figure 2, there are different levels of involvement associated with public participation that can help to classify how meaningful the participation process is. Public participation can occur at differing levels depending on the type of interaction between the proponent and the public, and these different levels may occur in steps to ensure a logical and sequential exchange of ideas and information. The higher rungs of the ladder represent a shift towards the public having control over the consultation and outcomes (Arnstein, 1969).

Figure 2 The ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969)



In the ideal situation, the proponent and government approval agencies will strive for ‘meaningful’ public participation in order to reap the benefits of a transparent and inclusive EA. Generally defined, meaningful public participation is an exchange between the proponent and the public in which information and power is exchanged and expressed by both. Meaningful public engagement also requires learning amongst those who are involved (Sinclair and Diduck, 2009). Meaningful public participation moves beyond non-participation identified by Arnstein (1969) on the two lower rungs. ‘Therapy’ and ‘manipulation’ represent situations in which the proponent exerts power over the public in a one-directional information exchange. Meaningful public participation may incorporate several elements of the higher rungs in Figure 2.

In Canadian environmental assessment, federal guidelines, and many of the provinces include provisions for public participation, some emphasizing it more than others. The key provisions are adequate notice, access to information, participant assistance, public comment, and public hearings (Sinclair and Diduck, 2009). In an effort to provide guidance for public participation in environmental assessment within the federal context, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEA Agency) developed the Public Participation Guide (CEA Agency, 2008). The guide provides a detailed methodology for fulfilling requirements for public participation, particularly in a screening process (CEA Agency, 2008). Some jurisdictions may indicate strong provisions for public participation, but in reality, in most Canadian jurisdictions the timing and method of including the public are still discretionary (Sinclair and Diduck, 2005).

Stewart and Sinclair (2007) identified several critical components for meaningful public participation in EA by interviewing participants and practitioners who were knowledgeable and experienced with public participation in EA. The main elements identified by the research participants and the corresponding sub-categories are listed in Table 2. Proponents and responsible government agencies should aim to fulfill these objectives because when these criteria are fulfilled there is a strong indication that participants are meaningfully involved in consultation.

Table 2 Categories for meaningful participation in EA, adapted from Stewart and Sinclair (2007)

Element	Sub-Category
Integrity and accountability	Transparency Sincerity of lead agency Process intentions are clear
Influence	
Fair notice and time	
Inclusiveness and adequate representation	Engaging interested
Fair and open dialogue	Positive communication environment Capacity building Interactive formats
Multiple and appropriate methods	Multiple techniques Staged process Appropriate techniques Consult on design
Adequate and accessible information	
Informed participation	

Meaningful public participation provides benefits to the individuals participating, the proponent, and decision makers, and improves the effectiveness and quality of the assessment itself (Fitzpatrick and Sinclair, 2003). A compilation of SEA literature reveals

that the theoretical benefits of meaningful public participation specific to SEA are: early acknowledgement of possible problems (Heiland, 2005; Fischer, 1999; Runhaar and Dreissen, 2007), avoidance of delays (Raushmayer and Risse, 2005; Runhaar and Dreissen, 2007; Sheate, 1994), increased transparency (Benevides et al., 2009; Brown and Therivel, 2000; Heiland, 2005), legitimate evaluation of alternatives (Raushmayer and Risse, 2005), supporting sustainability outcomes (Benevides et al., 2009), and ensuring acceptance and application of decisions (Brown and Therivel, 2000; Heiland, 2005).

It is recognized that early involvement of the public is valuable in all types of EA because it reinforces legitimacy in allowing the public to address alternatives and provide input before political and industry momentum have moved the process beyond alternatives discussions (Sinclair and Diduck, 2009). SEA provides an opportunity to involve the public when discussing broad alternatives is still a feasible option. As such, collaborative involvement of the public in SEA can be a tool for communities to guide and manage their own development and future (Fitzpatrick and Sinclair, 2003; Gauthier et al., 2011). SEA is meant to facilitate public involvement in strategic decision-making, which has been rare historically, but can help make project level EA less contentious.

Despite the recognition of the many benefits of meaningful public participation in EA and SEA, there are many challenges to conducting such processes (Sinclair and Diduck, 2008). There are numerous guideline documents and informative literature available to practitioners for implementing public participation in an EA, but still, public participation remains as a process that is often seen as a time consuming and inefficient process by both practitioners and the public (Petts, 1999). Some of the challenges of

public participation in traditional EA apply to SEA as well, and others are problems that can be addressed through effective public participation in SEA. Some of the common challenges to meaningful public participation in EA are lack of shared decision making, lack of participation at normative and strategic levels of planning, information and communication deficiencies, insufficient resources for participants, accelerated decision processes, and weak public participation in follow-up (Sinclair and Diduck, 2008). A narrow scope that excludes alternatives, has a limited focal area, and considers only adverse effects and mitigation and biophysical considerations also has negative consequences on public consultation.

SEA provides an opportunity for the public to be involved at the most proactive stage of environmental considerations and planning for the future, and although the benefits are recognized, there are many challenges specific to including the public in these higher-level conversations. In a traditional EA, one reason for proponent apathy towards public participation is that the public often has concerns regarding matters (often policy related) outside of the scope of the project EA, creating a time consuming and frustrating process for all involved (Benevides et al., 2009). Doelle and Sinclair (2005), among others, have suggested a separate process focused on policy to address public concerns that do not pertain directly to the project in question. SEA consultation can provide an outlet for the public to have these higher-level discussions, rather than bringing them into the more specific discussions pertaining to a project-level EA. One requirement for attaining this potential benefit of SEA is an unconstrained scope, which includes broad alternatives, a large focal area, and strategic level cumulative effects.

The strategic nature of SEA implies the importance of public involvement, and the possible need to conduct public participation processes differently from those in a project-level EA undertaking (Elling, 2000). Heiland (2005) suggests that the approach towards public involvement in SEA should ensure that it contributes to a better result of the SEA. In order to achieve the goals of an SEA it is important that the proponent (which could be a government agency) be clear from the outset about how the public will be involved, how the input will be used, and what effect the input has on the decision(s) of the SEA (Heiland, 2005).

From the proponent's perspective, the SEA presents issues of confidentiality and the difficult task of consulting broadly and responding to comments with such a far-reaching policy, program, or plan (Heiland, 2005). According to Therivel and Partidário (1996, p.8) "Few SEAs have made a concerted effort to seek and address public opinions, for reasons of confidentiality, because the PPP may be considered too sensitive for public debate prior to approval, or because of the sheer complexity of consulting the public on a national or region-wide issue." For example, according to the Canadian federal direction for *the Environmental Assessment Process for Policy and Program Proposals*, public consultation presents difficulties especially in the policy context 'because of the need for Cabinet confidentiality' (FEARO, 1993). Other apprehensions from SEA proponents include costs of consultation, time constraints, high amount of work involved with involving the public, lack of clarity about authority of recommendations for implementation, and the adjustments required in order to present strategic actions to the general public (Heiland, 2005).

From the public's perspective, the main constraints to public participation in SEA are lack of expertise, awareness and training within the public, lack of interest, lack of understanding of the process, and limited capacity and resources of public interest groups. Heiland (2005) describes public preference for involvement in more detailed, project-level assessment where they may have less influence, rather than strategic assessment where they may have more influence as 'the paradox of participation'. This influential barrier may require a more prominent presence of SEA and increased institutional recognition of the added value of the process in order to gain public trust.

The barriers to public involvement in SEA may be the result of several different influences, some of which overlap with traditional EA, but it is possible that public involvement in SEA is limited because traditionally, limited public input has been sought in developing strategic actions (Therivel, 2010). In other words, the historic exclusion of the public in strategic discussions and the relatively recent development of SEA may be the reason for limited public involvement. The conclusion that involving the public may be more costly than beneficial in some circumstances (Therivel, 2010) may be misguided. If the limited level of participation is partially due to the recent evolution of public involvement in higher-level discussions, promotion and increased use of public participation in SEA will develop the positive feedback loop needed to establish trust and interest in involvement of future SEAs.

According to the Canadian federal Cabinet directive for the assessment of policies, programs, and plans, one of the guiding principles of implementing SEA is accountability: "strategic environmental assessment should be part of an open and accountable decision-making process within the federal government. Accountability

should be promoted through the involvement of affected individuals and organizations, when appropriate, and through documentation and reporting mechanisms” (CESD, 2004, p4). The guidance document for conducting a SEA, published by the Government of Canada (2010) recommends the ‘use of existing mechanisms’ for public consultation when possible (p.1).

Chaker et al. (2006) identified that there are gaps in the literature pertaining to public participation in SEA. Although some work has been done surrounding the process of public participation in SEA in Canada (e.g. Gauthier et al. 2011), little has been done in the Canadian context to examine the outcomes and participants’ perspectives as a result of public participation in SEA. As explained by Doelle and Sinclair (2006), focusing on the outcomes of public participation rather than the process may enhance consultation, and that working towards a goal may, in effect, improve the process itself.

2.5 Learning through participation in EA and SEA

The long term and sustainability emphasis of SEA represents a progressive shift in approach towards resource management (Jha-Thakur et al., 2009). In order to move towards sustainability goals that are often included in SEA, there needs to be a greater emphasis on understanding the learning dimension of SEA (Owens et al., 2005).

Developing the potential for transforming individuals, practitioners, and institutions will in turn support sustainable development through their participative involvement (Fischer, 2007). Learning, as an essential outcome of SEA, about both broad sustainability topics, and the SEA process itself represents an important indicator for assessing the effectiveness of public participation in SEA.

Adult education and learning theories offer the basis for evaluating the types of learning that occur in a SEA consultation setting. According to Jha-Thakur et al. (2009)

transformative learning is a recognized aspect of environmental assessment. In SEA there is higher-level discussion, possibly influencing the capacity for social learning about sustainability to change behaviours. Social and transformative learning are especially relevant in studies of resource management because these theories focus on the context and process of learning (Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow, 2000; Sims and Sinclair, 2008; Sinclair and Diduck, 2001). Taylor (2000) explains that personal and socio-cultural contextual factors play a significant role in transformative learning. Context also plays an important role in the outcomes of a SEA (Jha-Thakur et al., 2009).

Learning through environmental decision-making can be integral to meaningful public participation and can offer a chance for interactions between stakeholders to motivate internal reflection and behavioural changes (Jha-Thakur et al., 2009; Sims and Sinclair, 2008). Changes and transformations in frames of reference of participants through learning can promote sustainable societal changes (Sims and Sinclair, 2008). A focus on achieving learning for those involved in a SEA can provide the link from short term goals towards ensuring long-term sustainability goals are achieved through the policies, program and plans assessed in a SEA.

Transformative learning theory is based on the notion that critical reflection leads to a transformation in the frame of reference of the participant (Merriam, 2000; Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow (2000) builds on two major domains of learning: instrumental learning, and communicative learning. Instrumental learning refers to learning how to successfully achieve desired ends (e.g., how to negotiate legal and administrative procedures regarding decision processes). Communicative learning involves trying to understand others and be understood when communicating with them, and it engages the learner in

negotiating meanings, intentions and values (e.g., resource conflict resolution) (Mezirow, 2000). According to Mezirow (2000, p.8):

Transformation theory's focus is on how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others – to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers.

This approach is especially relevant to the individual and social dimension of participation in resource management decisions (Sims and Sinclair, 2008). The outcome of participation may include instrumental, communicative, or transformative learning.

According to Diduck and Sinclair (1997), education in environmental assessment develops an understanding of issues discussed and of the assessment process. Participants can learn about how to participate in an EA and their participation can provide education about the broader issues related to the specific topics discussed during in the consultation (Fitzpatrick and Sinclair, 2002). An EA also offers a unique opportunity for different stakeholders to interact and discuss topics pertaining to environmental well-being (Sims and Sinclair, 2008).

Since public participation in EA and SEA offers a chance for dialogue between stakeholders, there is the potential for social changes and learning that may alter resource management patterns and practices (Sims and Sinclair, 2008). Some researchers have concluded that one method for measuring the effectiveness of public participation in a SEA process is the level and types of learning that occur (Buuren and Nooteboom, 2009; Jha-Thakur et al., 2009). In an analysis of 16 studies, Sinclair et al. (2007) built on a framework connecting participation, learning and sustainability within EA. The results

link meaningful public participation in EA with different individual learning outcomes. Communicative and instrumental learning were more prevalent than transformative learning outcomes, possibly because there was no case that was identified as having meaningful public participation (Sinclair et al., 2007). The research also suggested that future study be done to determine links between strategic assessment and learning systems.

The potential for learning through public participation is highest at strategic levels of EA (Sinclair et al., 2007). Learning how to participate in an SEA is valuable because the process may be entirely new, and the conversations lend themselves to learning because of the high-level discussions. SEA advances typical EA discussions towards a learning opportunity that may incorporate sustainability objectives. The initiation and attention that generates interest in participating in a SEA may also be relevant to transformative learning. Often the initiation of a SEA is through the realization that proactive planning is in order (Jha-Thakur et al., 2009). As such, the higher-level sustainability discussions in a SEA lend itself to certain types of learning. Jha-Thakur et al. (2009) looked at three European case studies of SEA in order to determine the levels of individual and organizational learning in each case. In this study the researchers looked at the learning outcomes of SEA practitioners and found that different types of learning occurred in each case according to the contextual differences, implying that learning can be context specific and enhancing learning will depend on the institutional and political context of the SEA (Jha-Thakur et al., 2009).

Focusing on whether the involvement of the public in a SEA leads to different types of learning outcomes may provide insight for enhancing the process to improve the

likelihood of meaningful participation. SEA that is meant to include the public in higher-level discussions that work towards sustainability goals has high potential for different types of learning that may lead to transformative changes in behaviour, so it is important to recognize if SEA provides an outlet for these types of conversations and which recommendations can be made to improve SEA in Canada's future.

2.6 Offshore Petroleum Planning and SEA

The importance of proactive planning is recognized within the offshore petroleum sector (Fidler and Noble, 2012). Marine environments present specific challenges for resource managers (Flannery and Cinnéide, 2012) and involving the public in decision-making can compound those challenges. Flannery and Cinnéide (2012) point out that in marine spatial planning the problems of a typical consultation process may be exacerbated by the inherent conditions of marine areas. For instance, the common property nature of the sea and the difficulty of excluding excess users from exploiting resources outside of a certain distance from shore make management difficult (Flannery and Cinnéide, 2012). In addition to those properties, the public is a stakeholder, but does not live within the zone of use (besides the coast) as they would in discussions surrounding a terrestrial environment. The large number of stakeholders that can be included in participatory processes for marine planning and the crossing of boundaries may present fragmentation of governance (Flannery and Cinnéide, 2012).

Often times, offshore developments stimulate less public attention than their onshore counterparts (Fidler and Noble, 2012). However, the Gulf of Mexico oil spill disaster induced public interest and attention in the protection of marine environments and safety of offshore petroleum. The recent public attention to offshore development

may aid in overcoming the lack of interest in SEA, and offshore SEA specifically, that has historically been difficult to overcome.

In Canada, offshore development is one of few sectors that have formally initiated SEA as a planning tool. The Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) and The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NSOB) have both been conducting SEAs since 2002. In a study of the Canadian east coast offshore petroleum boards and their application of SEA, Doelle et al. (2012) found that “public engagement is one of the most critical areas to build on when looking at the experiences with SEA on the east coast (p. 23).” Fidler and Noble (2012) identified in their comparative study of offshore SEAs that there has been little research done to investigate SEA processes for the offshore sector. Fidler and Noble (2012) also identified that maintaining long term public interest in offshore SEA requires a higher level of effort from proponents to ensure early and meaningful public participation. The process for SEA applied by the Canada-Newfoundland Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) in the case study for this research is outlined in Section 4.1.1.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (2009) issued a report that identified significant elements of an effective SEA. Doelle et al. (2012) adapted the key elements to apply to offshore petroleum development, and determined nine key principles as follows: An effective SEA should 1) be applied early and proactively; 2) be integrated by incorporating biophysical, social and economic aspects; 3) take into account its placement within other levels of assessment; 4) be guided by a regulatory context; 5) be flexible in adapting to the particular context and be carried out effectively, efficiently, and fairly; 6) should be transparent and provide opportunities for active public

engagement throughout; 7) should include incentives for learning from the results by government, industry and public participants; 8) should be followed up in terms of performance and effects; and 9) have political commitment to implement the SEA and its results. All of these principles have implications for meaningful participation and learning outcomes, but the most directly applicable for this study are principles numbered six and seven; both mention the importance of public engagement and principle seven states the importance of learning from the results of the SEA.

2.7 Summary

The conclusions and concepts that are already evident in the literature provide crucial support and background for what will serve as the starting point for development of a plan for reaching research goals. Previous research provides evidence of what is already known, what may be challenged, and what is not yet known. Taken together, the research that has already been done to provide theoretical background and the most current knowledge in each section provide the reasoning for why this research is important to filling gaps. The culmination of the literature review is presented in Table 3. The table outlines the major theoretical works and the recent studies that pertain to the scope of this study. The framework topics established in the table are further expanded upon in the Data Analysis section of Chapter 3.

Table 3 Framing the research design elements

Concept to be studied in this research	Theoretical concepts and base works	Most Current Studies	Contributions to Framework for Data Collection and Analysis
Meaningful Public Participation	Arnstein, 1969; Fischer, 2007; Stewart and Sinclair, 2007	Gauthier et al., 2011; Rauschmayer and Risse, 2005	Key public participation provisions in Canadian Environmental Assessment (Sinclair and Diduck, 2009), Elements of Meaningful Public Participation (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007) Indicators to evaluate public participation (CEA Agency, 2008)
Learning and Learning in SEA	Mezirow, 2000; 2003	Buuren and Nooteboom, 2009; Jha-Thakur et al., 2009;	Conditions for Instrumental, Communicative and Transformative learning Phases of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000)
SEA and Offshore SEA	IAIA, 2002; Partidário, 2000	Fidler and Noble, 2012; Flannery and Cinnéide, 2012	Topics of Strategic Environmental Assessments (vs. non-strategic) (Noble, 2000)

3 Research Design and Methods

This chapter outlines the details of the research design in order to link strategy of inquiry and data collection methods to the research aims.

3.1 Approach and Worldview

Environmental assessment is noted as one of the few legislated governance processes that normally require involvement of the public. Involving the public in higher-level discussions and resource management decisions provides an opportunity for inclusion in decisions around directing development that communities are often excluded from. Participating in the plans that will dictate which projects are allowed into the assessment process may also be empowering for participants and communities.

According to Creswell (2007), those that operate within a participatory/advocacy worldview believe that research should be contextually placed within the political climate. This worldview also holds that research will be used for action, possibly to change how things are done. I was unable to include a truly participatory approach to the construction of my methodology due to limitations of time and resources. Instead, I was in contact with some key informants prior to wider data collection in order to test the interview schedule and inquire about appropriate data collection methods and important questions to ask.

Advocacy will also be an outcome of this research in that I hope to promote better and more inclusive public participation processes in SEA. Advocating for the public that is typically restricted to their assigned role within EA processes may enable their voices to be heard, and in that way this thesis makes recommendations to improve future SEA practices, some of which specifically come from the perspectives of the participants.

Success of this research will result in the recommendations aiding in the process of improving SEA design and community involvement in and learning through SEA.

I used a qualitative study design because the collection and analysis of data related to the perspective of SEA participants requires an in-depth, communicated description of the circumstances and outcomes in order to accurately describe the phenomenon. Such a design focuses on the participants' perceptions and experiences in order to draw conclusions (Creswell, 2009). Retrieving an explanation of individual and group experiences with a decision process such as SEA required the analysis of both documented and communicated words. The complexities of higher-level discussions in a SEA and the elements and types of learning that were present were accessible through qualitative data collection and analysis.

3.2 Case Study Strategy of Inquiry

A case study strategy of inquiry provided the most appropriate basis to fulfill the objectives of the study in the time available. A case study strategy facilitated a manageable scope while still addressing the complex objectives of the research. Yin (2008) explains that case studies are best when used to answer “how” and “why” research questions. The literature review revealed few accessible cases of formal strategic environmental assessment in Canada despite a federal directive to conduct them. In the relative infancy of this process as a potential for increased meaningful public participation, the case study method offered an in-depth investigation in order to represent the perspective of participants and make recommendations for improvements before strategic environmental assessment is widely adopted elsewhere in Canada. The “how” questions I addressed in this study are: how does SEA differ from traditional

project-level assessment; how is public participation carried out in this setting; and how are learning outcomes (if any) achieved through public participation in SEA?

The choice of a case was done to maximize what can be learned in the period of time available for the study (Tellis, 1997). Creswell (2009) suggests that a purposefully selected study site and participants will strengthen the research approach. In this study I developed a set of criteria for choosing a case study. The criteria and reasoning that led to the selection of the Western Newfoundland SEA Update are detailed in Table 4. Several other cases were matched against the criteria, such as the Bay of Fundy Tidal Energy SEA, the Misaine Bank Area SEA for offshore petroleum, the Great Sand Hills Regional Environmental Study, and the National Capital Commission Core Area Sector SEA. These other cases did not fulfil the criteria as well as the selected case study. The most common reasons for other cases not meeting the criteria were that they were not conducted as recently, or that they were not formally identified as a ‘strategic environmental assessment’. For example, although the Misaine Bank Area Offshore Petroleum SEA is Canadian and is identified as a SEA, it was conducted in 2005 (Noble, 2009), and therefore does not fit the criterion that the case be conducted within the last three years. As well, the Great Sand Hills Regional Environmental study is an interesting case, but the work was not identified as a SEA (Noble, 2009). With an ongoing history of SEA and offshore petroleum exploration in the area, the update of the Western NL SEA presents an opportunity to study the involvement of the public in the iterative SEA process and the outcomes of those consultations as the SEA is undergoing an ongoing process.

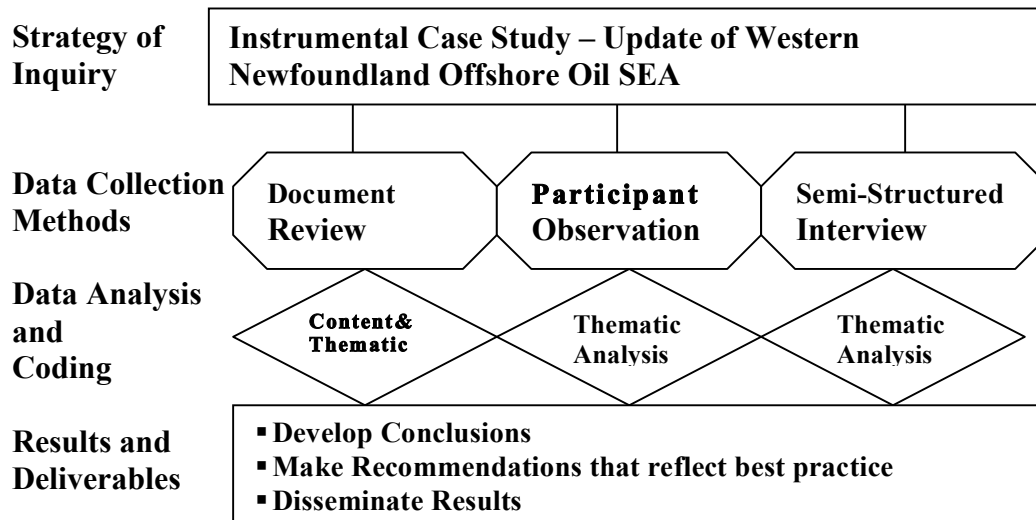
Table 4 Evaluation criteria used to choose an appropriate case study

Evaluation Criteria	Reason for Including Criterion	Met by Western NL SEA Case Study?
Canadian Case	As noted above, there are deficiencies in Canadian EA. Canada is trying to implement SEA to account for deficiencies in traditional EA but has had challenges with widespread application. Also, I am interested in doing my research in Canada. My advisor and other members of my thesis advisory committee have made significant contributions to EA in Canada.	Yes - Occurring in Western Newfoundland.
Recent (conducted within the past 3 years)	A recent SEA will ensure that the consultations and topics of discussion are fresh in the minds of participants and that participants will be accessible and potentially more interested in discussing their experiences.	Yes - The original SEA was done in 2005, an amendment was done in 2007 and currently an update of the SEA is being done, which began in December 2011.
High level of public participation	The bulk of the research participants will be members of the public; therefore it will be crucial for there to have been an active participation program from which to draw research participants.	This criterion is only somewhat met in that the focus of the participation efforts thus far has been on groups that represent the public (e.g. community board and council members) rather than a targeted public campaign, although the general public has been invited to offer comments online.
Public attention to SEA topic	One of the key obstacles to public participation in SEA identified in the literature is the lack of interest in the high-level discussions in an SEA.	Yes – There is increased interest in the issues of offshore petroleum development because of recent disasters (e.g. Gulf of Mexico oil spill).

The literature identifies three different types of case study research: the intrinsic case study, the single instrument case study, and the collective case study (Stake, 2008). The intrinsic case study investigates a unique or unusual circumstance. The single instrument case study is used when the researcher focuses on an issue of concern within a bounded case. The collective case study is when multiple cases are used to exemplify one issue of concern (Liamputtong, 2009). In this research I explored an issue (public participation outcomes in strategic environmental assessment) using a bounded case (update of the Western NL SEA). As such, this is an instrumental case study as the case plays a supporting role in exploring the central issue of public participation outcomes in a SEA.

In order to maintain rigour within a case study strategy, the procedural steps were laid out and chosen appropriately (Stake, 2000). Figure 3 depicts a simplification of the study design to demonstrate how the design supports the purpose of this research project. The Western NL SEA case was used as a strategy to explore public participation in strategic environmental assessment. The three data collection methods produced data that were analyzed and used to fulfill the research objectives. The terms describing data collection and analysis used in this schematic will be further linked and explained in the next sections.

Figure 3 Schematic representation of the research design



3.3 Data Collection Methods

As a holistic strategy of inquiry, the case study method is meant to identify the details of a situation from the viewpoint of the participants by using different data collection methods (Liamputtong, 2009). Using the case study strategy incorporated flexibility and allowed for use of several appropriate data collection methods. The combination of data collection methods allowed for an in-depth analysis of the case in order to fulfill objectives. In this study I employed document review, participant observation, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews to gather data. The use of multiple methods allowed for triangulation of data and ensured the collected data are valid and accurate.

3.3.1 Document Review

Bowen (2009) explains that document review can provide a cost-effective source of data that can be supplementary to other data sources in a study. The process of reviewing and collecting data using document review has many advantages, but the steps in conducting a document review in qualitative research are not well documented by practitioners (Bowen, 2009). Collection of documents began before entering the field as

publicly available documents pertaining to the case study were gathered, such as the original Western NL SEA, and the SEA amendment documents containing summaries of the consultation meetings, available from the C-NLOPB website. Judgment sampling was used to collect the appropriate documents, meaning that documents were collected according to their relevance in satisfying the research objectives. The main categories of documents that were collected were documents released by the C-NLOPB including the original SEA and the SEA amendment, records of public participation meetings, notices given to the public, and comments and responses provided on the C-NLOPB website. A complete list of the documents that were reviewed in this study is available in Appendix 1. Documents were imported into NVIVO™ software and coded using the coding book that had been developed throughout the research period. The coding book consisted of an ongoing record of themes from the literature, those emerging from the data, and the relationships between them. Document review contributed to providing context for subsequent steps in data collection, and a source for triangulation during analysis. Documents also provided the factual data related to the amount of notice given to participants, and the timing and location of consultations.

The document review followed a systematic procedure of reviewing and coding. Review of the documents also contributed to the creation of the emergent themes in the data. As Bowen (2009) indicates, throughout the document review process the author or institution producing the document was considered and their perspective was taken into account while the document was reviewed. Considering these factors make the critical lens of the researcher important when using document review as a form of data collection (Berg, 2004). In order to ensure a systematic process I evaluated and coded documents

using a consistent approach including developing categories and a coding scheme, and assessing coding consistency throughout the process. The documents served to supplement and triangulate the data collected using observation and interviewing.

In addition to the document review specific to the case study, my review of the literature on SEA continued throughout the research period so that findings were contextualized with the relevant work of others. This was part of an ongoing practice that added to the information in chapter two and further developed the framework for data collection and analysis throughout the process.

3.3.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation occurred in all settings that allowed for some insight into the dynamics of public participation in SEA while in the field. This included informal interactions with community members, participating in community gatherings, and observing the planned community open houses for the update of the SEA. Participant observation served as a valuable data collection method during the study, as it allowed for data to be collected with minimal reactionary response from participants. Rather than the carefully constructed responses sometimes given in interviews, attending meetings allowed for observation of candid discussions. Observation also served as a way of gaining rapport and meeting research participants for the interview portion of the research.

The events that had the greatest potential for a pre-planned approach to observation were the planned public consultations meetings (open houses). Four such open house meetings occurred in Western Newfoundland for the update of the Western NL SEA. I was able to attend the four meetings in Western Newfoundland (Channel Port-aux-Basques, Stephenville, Corner Brook, and Rocky Harbour) for the update of the SEA

conducted by AMEC and the C-NLOPB, and an additional project-level assessment public meeting in Cow Head for preliminary consultation for an onshore-to-offshore drilling plan by Shoal Point Energy. Stakeholder meetings were also held during the afternoon preceding each of the open house meetings, but I was not granted access to attend these.

The public meetings were held in an open house format and I was able to walk around the meetings as much as possible to observe the conversations and questions being asked by the public. Observing at the open houses was balanced with spending time recruiting and engaging potential participants.

Notes were kept while observing at the open houses whenever possible. Taking notes in real-time was much easier at the forum held for the project-level consultations. I attempted to record the meeting details while they were happening and if I was engaged or was unable to take notes at that instant I later recorded the observations in my ongoing research journal. My personal research journal served as a central location for recording field observations, reflection, and preliminary ongoing analysis through the field study.

In order to maintain a central focus, and stay within the scope of the research, I looked for certain interactions or discussions that occurred. I intentionally observed aspects such as structure (e.g., instructions and explanation, understanding of those present, methods of consultation used), communication (e.g., who speaks, for how long, amount of open dialogue, who is leading discussion, type of dialogue), interaction (e.g., who exerts power, what groups are represented, what groups are not present), transparency (e.g., intention and purpose of consultation made clear, information about use of discussion and concerns in next steps made clear, sincerity of represented parties),

and the substance of discussions (e.g., sustainability topics, broad ideas, long-term planning). These categories of what may or may not happen in consultation meetings ensured that I was able to systematically observe the same things in each meeting. During observation, other specific observations emerged through notes on interactions and those themes were carried throughout the rest of the observations.

3.3.3 Recruitment and Sampling

The majority (26 of 30) of participants that were interviewed were recruited at the open house meetings through engaging with them as they left the meeting. In order to avoid confusion I introduced myself as a researcher and explained that I was not affiliated with the C-NLOPB or the consulting company AMEC. I explained my research and asked the participants if they would be interested in participating in my research, which would involve their participation in an interview lasting approximately one hour. If they agreed they would be asked to provide their contact information. Conversation often followed the initial introduction and observation notes were made alongside their contact information once the participant had left. This information was later used in sampling.

Sampling was performed so that there was representation of participants across the four main communities where consultations were held, from different stakeholder groups, and with different views about offshore petroleum development in the Western Newfoundland offshore area. Although attempts were made to make the sample representative of a variety of perspectives, this was limited by the pool of respondents who had provided their contact information at the meetings. The disparity in representation of communities was because of the differing population sizes and attendance at meetings. For instance, Corner Brook is the largest community in Western

Newfoundland and the most represented community in interview data. The representation that resulted is detailed and categorized in Table 5. Since my topic was to determine

Table 5 Categorical representations of interview participants

Category	Number of Participants
Representation of Communities:	
Participants from Channel Port-Aux-Basques	4
Participants from Stephenville	3
Participants from Corner Brook	12
Participants from Rocky Harbour	6
Participants from Quebec	4
Participants from Other	1
Total	30
Representation of Stakeholder Groups:	
Participants from environmental groups	6
Participants from the tourism industry	4
Participants from the fishing industry	4
Participants from economic development groups	3
Participants from government agencies	6
Concerned/Interested citizens	7
Total	30
Type of Participation*:	
Online commenting	4
2005 SEA participation process	3
Stakeholder meeting of SEA update	6
Public open house for SEA update	26
View towards offshore petroleum development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence:	
Participants in favour	8
Participants against	19
Neutral participants	3
Total	30
Self-Identified Reason(s) for Attending**:	
To gather information	23
As part of job	6
Because of concerns about offshore oil development	11
To show support for oil development	4
Legal leverage	1
Interest in the process	2

*A number of participants were involved in several types of engagement activities

**A number of participants identified several reasons for participating in consultation activities

learning outcomes I wanted to interview those that were open to learning. As such, I identified the reason the individual chose to attend the meeting early on in each interview and accounted for this reasoning in their subsequent interview answers regarding learning outcomes.

3.3.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews as the prominent data collection method. The majority of research participants attended the public meetings held in Channel Port-Aux-Basques, Stephenville, Corner Brook, and Rocky Harbour, Newfoundland. Data were also obtained through interviewing those that attended the SEA update meetings held in Quebec.

Since the study investigated public perspectives on public participation and the outcomes of public participation, the personal nature of these experiences was most thoroughly investigated through interviews (Liamputtong, 2009) that were directed by questions and probes, but allowed for some leeway by participant-led tangents. Interviews also provided first-hand historical information of the past consultations in the case study area from the perspective of the participants.

The interviews explored what the participant experienced through participating in the SEA, and what outcomes were realized as a result of their participation. Twenty-six of the interviews were conducted in person. The remaining four interviews were conducted over the phone because in-person meetings could not be arranged. The average length of the interviews was approximately 45 minutes. I recorded the interviews using a digital recorder when given consent to do so. If consent was not given, detailed notes of the interview were taken. The interview schedule changed somewhat following several

pilot interviews and a better understanding of the case context gained through time spent in the field. The final interview schedule is located in Appendix 4.

Before the interview began, a letter of informed consent was given to the participant, detailing the confidentiality of the participant's information. The consent form was explained and the participant was encouraged to read the entire consent. The participant was also given a copy to keep for his or her records. The consent form used for all interviews is in Appendix 5. In order to uphold confidentiality I used a master code that matched the name of the participant to a code, to which only I, and my thesis advisor, have had access. Once the interview was underway, I used a notepad in addition to the audio recorder to document aspects of the interview that proved useful in analysis of the data and for recording the body language and other cues that may not be interpreted by a voice recording. The interview questions began with demographic information and several introductory questions to ease the participant into the more detailed interview questions. These demographic and introductory questions offer data that provided a basis for contextualizing the societal and historical perspective of the research participant's responses.

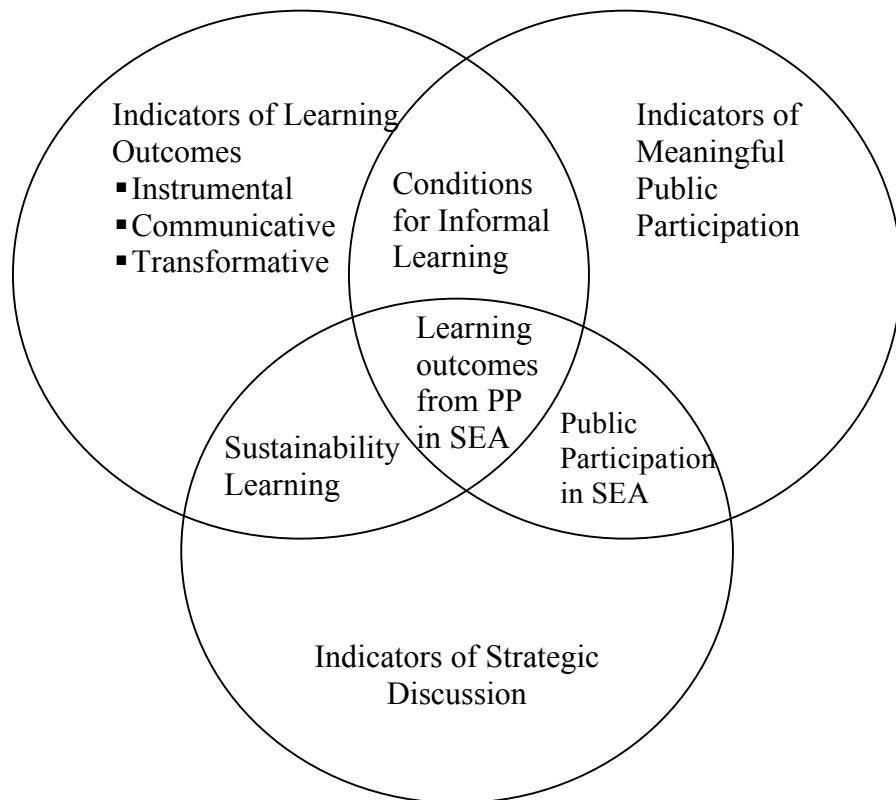
Participants were also sent a transcript of the interview for review and verification. I sent a brief summary of the interview, and the entire interview transcript back to each research participant once the interviews had been transcribed. Member checking allowed for research participants to respond to the data that had been collected and correct or add to any of the information they shared during their interview. In addition to member checking, throughout the process of data collection, triangulation of

data was implemented by reflecting on the data collected and validating what had been collected from other sources.

3.4 Data Analysis

The field data analysis required an ongoing process that used both the theoretical background knowledge and emergent themes from the case study itself. In order to collect and analyze data consistently, indicators of meaningful public participation, strategic discussions, and types of learning that were discussed and developed in the literature were used as a frame of reference and additions were made to support themes relevant to the context of the case study. Each part of the research is connected and the analysis was framed through the intersection of ideas, as is identified in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Framework for data collection and analysis



To frame the data collection and analysis of the three components of the research question I used ideas grounded in existing theory and literature. In order to assess and analyze the data related to the level of meaningful public participation in the case the general theme areas I adapted indicators from the CEA Agency (2008); Sinclair and Diduck (2009); Sinclair et al. (2007); and Stewart and Sinclair (2007). The themes came from research that looks at meaningful public participation generally, from a Canadian context, and from an outcomes perspective. The most important themes for meaningful public participation in addition to emergent themes, included:

- Integrity and accountability
- Openness to public influence
- Fair and reasonable timing
- Inclusive and adequate representation of public interests – participants indicate their input was used fairly
- Capacity building
- Use of multiple and appropriate methods
- Adequate and accessible information/informed participation
- Recognition and inclusion of tradition and citizen knowledge
- Effective and appropriate communication between the parties involved
- Participant assistance
- Quality and quantity of input improved the assessment
- Early and frequent participation in the decision making cycle

In order to evaluate whether the SEA was maintaining a strategic focus, and discussing higher-level topics, rather than what would be discussed in a traditional project level EA,

I used the list developed by Noble (2000). The indicators for determining if the discussions and topics in the public consultation were strategic in nature were:

- Directs future projects
- Discusses goals, visions and objectives
- Examines alternatives
- Includes back-casting and forecasting
- Is proactive – talking about things that may happen, not things that have already happened
- Is not project specific
- Covers broad topics
- Involves a low level of detail
- Addresses the full scope of sustainability and sustainable development considerations

Lastly, the indicators for analyzing the learning outcomes and which types of learning occur from consultation activities were extracted from Mezirow (2000). Outcome indicators were used for all three types of learning, and the process of transformative learning was explored using the steps outlined by Mezirow (2000, p. 22), when possible.

The indicators that were applied were:

Instrumental:

- Developing a new skill and knowledge of information
- Understanding of cause-effect relationships
- Developing problem-Solving capabilities

Communicative:

- Understanding how purposes, values, beliefs, intentions, and feelings stem from assumptions
- Understanding what others communicate

Transformative:

- Elaborating existing frames of reference
- Learning new frames of reference
- Transforming of points of view

Data were analyzed using the Nvivo™ Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). Coding was done in Nvivo™ by developing themes and theme families both from the literature, and from emergent themes in the data itself. A qualitative codebook was updated throughout the research to record emergent themes as they compared and contrasted to those that are evident in the literature. The hand written codebook was used throughout field study while preliminary reflection and analysis was being conducted. The observation guide above served as the basis for the coding scheme and the emergent themes were added throughout data collection and the coding process. Once all of the data had been collected, Nvivo™ aided in organizing and visualizing the connections between larger code families and how sub-themes were connected to one another. The final coding scheme used to code all of the collected data in Nvivo™ is in Appendix 6. Although the data were compiled and organized through coding in order to draw conclusions and meet the objectives of the research, representative quotations, directly from interviews are contained in this document to support the research conclusions as data that best exemplifies the evidence within a given theme.

3.5 Reaching Objectives

Although all of the objectives of this thesis contribute towards a common goal of fulfilling the research purpose, each one offers a piece that is important to understanding the outcomes of public participation in SEA. As such, each was addressed using an approach that logically fulfills the objective and since each objective is different this will require several different approaches. Table 6 details how each objective of the research was met from the data collection phase through to analysis.

Table 6 Intended methods, sources and analysis tools in order to fulfill objectives

Objective	Method(s) to fulfill objective	Research participant(s) and Source of Information	Theoretical/ Analysis Tool(s)
a. to establish public participation best practice in SEA and evaluate how these may differ from those in a traditional EA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literature Review ▪ Document review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Past studies on PP in EA and SEA ▪ Documents from case study SEA and traditional EAs in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Code documents ▪ Thematic analysis, comparison to literature conclusions
b. to determine the types of issues being discussed in a SEA case study, and whether these include higher-level strategic issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document review ▪ Participant observation ▪ Semi-structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting minutes from past SEAs in the region ▪ Attend consultation meetings ▪ Interview participants from multiple communities and stakeholder groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content analysis to develop categories ▪ Thematic analysis
c. to identify participants' learning outcomes as a result of participation in a SEA case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participant observation ▪ Semi-structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participants from multiple stakeholders groups ▪ Preference for public involved in multiple steps in the SEA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thematic analysis ▪ Transformative learning theory for determining types of learning
d. to make recommendations for amendments to SEA requirements that reflect best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document review ▪ Semi-structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Records of how consultation was organized in case ▪ Research participants that participated in SEA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comparison to successful cases ▪ Analyzing connections between consultation and outcomes

3.6 Addressing Limitations

During this research endeavour there were several limitations and obstacles that occurred. Using the strategy I had developed during the proposal and planning phases I was able to alter the research plan in such a way that maintained the research focus while still addressing the objectives. Using an interactive and adaptive approach (Nelson, 1991) I altered my plan for recruitment and approach towards certain interview concepts and questions.

One limitation I had anticipated was the potential for participant confusion with the concepts I intended to discuss. In past studies around learning in SEA (Jha-Thakur et al., 2009), the interviewing of SEA practitioners ensured a high level of participant knowledge of sustainability and learning concepts. I interviewed members of the public and this resulted in differing levels of knowledge and a range of interview data and results. In order to address this obstacle I developed different prompts that contained easily understood concepts in the interview. Also, a familiarity with some of the discussions that occurred in the open house meetings allowed me to use the same language and terms, maintaining some consistency for the participants. Using wording and terms that are familiar to the participant helped reduce the potential for confusion during interviews.

3.7 Reporting Findings

The results and discussion of the research are contained in this thesis document. A summary of the major findings as well as the completed thesis will be sent to all of the participants, pending the approval of the thesis. As well, for all of the communities and groups that were involved in public participation activities for the update of the Western

NL SEA, I plan to send a poster for display that details the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations made in the final document.

4 Public Participation in the Western NL SEA

This chapter describes how consultation was conducted in the Western NL SEA and what those who participated thought of their experience. Beginning with a description of the case and moving into the specifics of the consultation programs, the sections describing participation in this chapter represent the elements that were deemed important to meaningful consultation. The framework for data collection, identified in Table 3 above, served as the basis for observation and coding themes from the interview data.

The Western NL SEA, conducted by the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board, provided the data for this research. The data that were collected first-hand pertain mostly to the update of the original SEA. This chapter describes the case study including the public participation process, discusses the elements of meaningful consultation and participant perspectives on those elements, and the benefits and shortcomings of the process. All elements of this chapter are meant to determine how the case study measured in terms of providing a meaningful public participation regime in order to provide important context for discussion of the case in subsequent chapters.

4.1 Case Study Description

Provincial Profile and Statistics

Newfoundland and Labrador is the easternmost province of Canada with both an island (Newfoundland) and the mainland component (Labrador). In 2012, Newfoundland and Labrador had a population of just over 512 000 and a median age of 44 (Statistics Canada, 2012). According to the latest statistics from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRDC, 2005), in 2003 Newfoundland had only 45% of adult residents above a level three literacy score. So, approximately 55% of adult

Newfoundlanders had a level of literacy lower than what is considered a requirement for functioning well in Canadian society (HRDC, 2005), which was the second lowest provincial score for literacy levels.

In 2012 the unemployment rate was approximately 12.5% (Department of Finance, Government of NL, 2013). Oil and gas extraction and support activities represent almost 33% of the GDP for Newfoundland and Labrador, followed by mining at 10.4%. Fishing, hunting and trapping represents 0.7% of the GDP and accommodation and food services (tourism) represents 1.4% (Department of Finance, Government of NL, 2013).

More specifically to the case study region, Western Newfoundland is home to two UNESCO world heritage sites, Gros Morne National Park and The Viking Village. According to the Western Health Authority Profile (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012) the population of Western Newfoundland was 79,460 in 2006. Also in the 2006 census data, the unemployment rate in Western Newfoundland was 23.5%, compared to 18.5% provincially for the same data reference week (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012). Of adults aged 25 to 54 years, twenty-six percent did not have a high school diploma according to the 2006 census data, compared to twenty-two percent of people in the entire province (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012). These statistics represent an overall higher unemployment rate and lower literacy and education levels compared to the rest of the province and Canada.

Oil and Gas Activities

As stated above, oil and gas extraction and support activities represent almost 33% of the GDP for Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland and Labrador currently have three stand-alone offshore oil production sites, with a fourth currently in

development (Department of Finance, Government of NL, 2012). Hibernia, Terra Nova, and White Rose all operate on the eastern coast of Newfoundland and represent an important aspect of Newfoundland's economy (Department of Finance, Government of NL, 2012). Drilling and seismic exploration activities are occurring in several areas surrounding the island. In Western Newfoundland, exploration is being done by Corridor Resources Inc. with their proposed exploratory drilling program at the Old Harry site, and Shoal Point Energy Ltd. has planned onshore to offshore drilling using hydraulic fracturing (fracking) but has not yet submitted an official proposal for such activities (Department of Finance, Government of NL, 2012).

4.1.1 SEAs conducted by the C-NLOPB

The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) is a joint, federal-provincial board that oversees offshore petroleum exploration and operations in Newfoundland and Labrador. The C-NLOPB operates under the *Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Act* and the *Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland and Labrador Act* (CNL) (C-NLOPB, 2012c). Under these acts the C-NLOPB must ensure that oil and gas activities are carried out in an environmentally responsible manner (Doelle et al., 2012).

According to the C-NLOPB website (2012c) the role of the board is to enforce provisions for ensuring worker safety, environmental protection and safety, effective management of land tenure, maximum hydrocarbon recovery and value, and Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador benefits. More specifically, with regards to environmental protection, the C-NLOPB identifies their objectives as follows: to confirm that operators assess and provide environmental effects of their operations, to ensure environmental assessments are done and that mitigation measures are taken, and to verify that operators

comply with their environmental plans (C-NLOPB, 2012c).

There have been six SEAs completed in the Newfoundland and Labrador area by the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board: Southern Newfoundland (updated to combine the Laurentian sub-basin SEA and the Sydney basin SEA), Labrador Shelf Offshore Area, Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area, and Orphan Basin. These areas are illustrated in Figure 1. Currently, the C-NLOPB is conducting a SEA of the Eastern Newfoundland offshore area, which will update the Orphan Basin SEA and extend the area to the south that has not yet been assessed (C-NLOPB, 2012d).

The C-NLOPB's SEA Process

The C-NLOPB conducts SEAs formally according to the Federal Cabinet Directive on SEA. The C-NLOPB conducts and reviews the SEAs by first establishing the scope, hiring a consultant to conduct the assessment and consultations, and then publishing the report that they will later use to guide offshore petroleum activities in the area. In this sense, the SEAs are only required to meet the standards of the Cabinet Directive (which are very limited in comparison to what the literature describes as best practice SEA, as outlined in Chapter 2), and beyond that some might feel the process lacks a level of credibility or accountability because there is no review and approval process led by any independent or higher authority. There is no external body scheduled to review the process in this case, except insofar as the federal Commissioner for Environment and Sustainable Development in the Office of the Auditor General may conduct a review of compliance with the Cabinet Directive. The C-NLOPB dictates what will be included, and the extent of consultation. The only review of the information is

conducted through public comment periods online and the C-NLOPB can subsequently choose to accept those changes and incorporate them into the document or reject them, with no one to review those choices. The lack of oversight is problematic because the C-NLOB has conflicting mandates in that they are responsible for hydrocarbon development – the largest component of the Newfoundland and Labrador economy – as well as ensuring environmental protection.

Theoretically, the SEAs carried out are meant to direct the future development of offshore petroleum activities by providing guidance for licencing decisions made by the C-NLOPB and guidance at the project-level through dictating the measures that should be used in project assessments by industry. However, the effectiveness of this tiered system is unknown because there are no projects operating in the SEA areas. Currently, the C-NLOPB is conducting an expanded SEA of the eastern Newfoundland area, which will include the three offshore rigs currently operating off of the east coast. The tiering and influence of the SEAs on licencing decisions is also difficult to assess because the call for bids on licencing areas is often open before the SEA has been finalized for that area.

Within the tiers of assessment that the C-NLOPB oversees there are also the public consultation components. The types and extent of consultation used in any particular SEA have varied between the different SEAs. For project-level assessments the industry proponent is also required to conduct consultation depending on the level of project assessment. For the purposes of this research, only the public participation component of the SEA tier was studied.

4.1.2 Scope of the SEA Update

The scope of an assessment represents what will be included in and excluded from the assessment process. The scope of an SEA is much broader than the scope of a traditional

project-level assessment as it includes the discussion of broad alternatives, a broad geographic range, and cumulative effects of the development in question. The scoping document for the Western NL SEA update defined the spatial scope of the update as the area within the red line on the map in

Figure 6. The temporal scope for the SEA update was ten years (C-NLOPB, 2012b).

The scope of the content to be addressed in the SEA update (C-NLOPB, 2012b) as outlined in the scoping document includes:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Typical offshore petroleum activities | ▪ Mitigation measures and monitoring |
| ▪ Production alternatives | ▪ Areas requiring enhanced mitigation measures |
| ▪ Physical and biological environments | ▪ Effects and mitigation of accidental events |
| ▪ Data gaps | ▪ Potential cumulative effects of multiple activities in the update area |
| ▪ Marine activities | ▪ Implications for site-specific EA |
| ▪ Project-environment interactions | ▪ A historical overview |

The second bullet above (‘production alternatives’) shows that the scope included the discussion of production alternatives; these pertain solely to those that relate to exploration activities and not broader alternatives. SEA is an opportunity to consider alternatives that go beyond what would be considered in project EA, for example into other modes of energy production that might be implemented. The consideration of alternatives at a higher level provides the potential for making decisions early on that promote sustainability and can address shortcomings (Desmond, 2007). According to the draft update report issued by the C-NLOPB in June 2013, the scope is quite narrow:

“It should be noted that the SEA Update does not revisit previous licencing or other regulatory decisions or actions regarding offshore oil petroleum activity in the region. It also does not pertain to regulatory or policy decisions in areas that are outside of the

jurisdiction of the C-NLOPB, or address overall and generic issues regarding petroleum activities, the potential use of certain technologies or other matters in Newfoundland and Labrador which are not related specifically to offshore licencing decisions the Western NL Offshore Area.”

This signals that the scope of the SEA update pertains solely to licencing decisions, excluding any broader discussions about energy or other potential development options in the region, such as tourism. Therefore, the scope pertains to things related to licencing, such as: production alternatives, mitigative and monitoring measures, areas requiring non-typical mitigative measures, and a discussion and effects of accidental events.

According to the C-NLOPB’s scoping document for the SEA update cumulative effects were assessed in accordance with predictions for future offshore petroleum activities and other non-petroleum activities including commercial fishing, hunting, marine traffic, tourism operations, and fisheries research surveys (C-NLOPB, 2012b). This broad scope for cumulative effects represents a positive aspect of the SEA scope. However, in the draft report for the SEA update the cumulative environmental affects section is less than one page long and concludes:

“The nature, magnitude and spatial and temporal distribution of any environmental effects from planned seismic and drilling projects would have to be assessed and evaluated through project-specific modeling and analyses as part of individual EA reviews. Avoiding or reducing such overlap between offshore petroleum projects and/or with other unrelated activities in the Gulf (and therefore, any resulting cumulative effects) can therefore be considered in planning and reviewing any individual projects and activities as they are defined and proposed.” (AMEC, 2013)

The Canadian Cabinet Directive for the assessment of policies, programs, and plans notes that SEAs should be conducted in support of sustainable development and SEA literature points out that sustainability considerations are core to SEA (Arce and

Gullón, 2000; White and Noble, 2013). The Western NL SEA Update scoping document does not mention sustainability and is limited to consideration of effects on the biophysical environment. The information panels available at the public open house sessions also did not mention sustainability.

The scope also defines the relation of the SEA to EAs of project-level undertakings, often called ‘tiering’ of assessments. The influence of the Western NL SEA in this regard is unclear because projects have not yet been identified for the SEA area. According to the scoping document, the SEA will be used in planning of licence distribution and will identify sensitive areas that may be excluded from exploration licencing; the number of potential developments is not identified. However, bids were released before the update of the SEA was complete, indicating that the C-NLOPB had prejudged a positive conclusion of the SEA update.

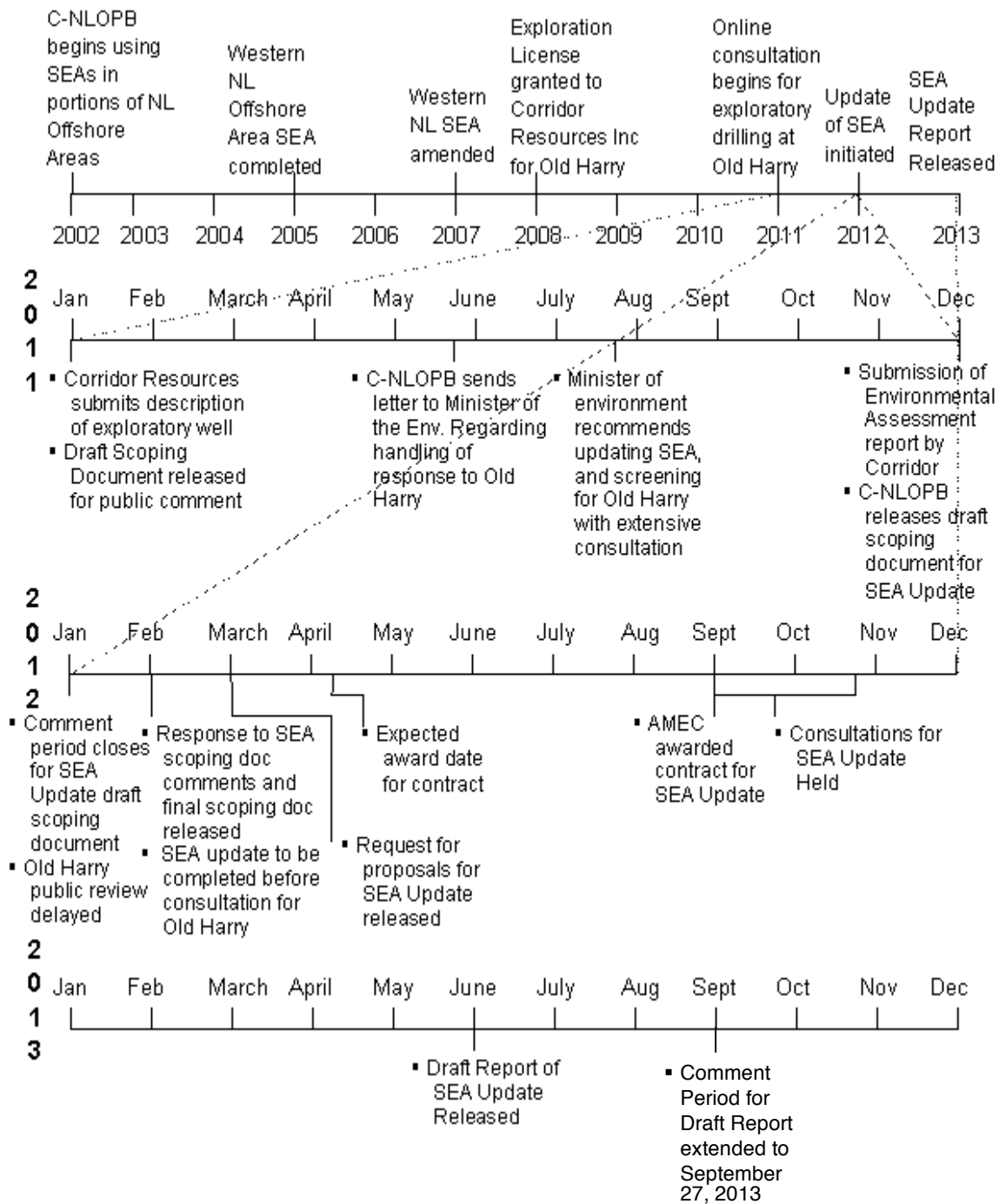
The scope of the Western NL SEA and SEA Update does not match with the literature’s concepts of a SEA scope in that there is no discussion of sustainability issues or long-term effects, a limited scope for cumulative effects and no discussion of broad alternatives. The scope is further discussed in the context of the strategic nature of the SEA in section 5.1.2.

4.1.3 Public Participation: Elements of the Process

As outlined in chapter 3, the focus of this study was the Western NL SEA (Figure 6), which was first completed in December 2005. In November 2007, an amendment was made to the original SEA in order to expand the geographic range southwest of the original SEA area for the purpose of granting additional exploration

licences. An update in accordance with the five-year review process began in December 2011. The details of the timeline of the case are in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Timeline of the Western NL Offshore Area SEA



The C-NLOPB uses the term ‘consultation’ when referring to public involvement in SEA processes. There have been different types and levels of interaction between the proponent and the public in SEAs overseen by the C-NLOPB. For the Western Newfoundland Offshore Area SEA Update online commenting, stakeholder meetings, and public meetings have been held at different stages in the progression of the SEA document.

With regards to face-to-face consultation, several methods have been employed. In the original 2005 Western NL SEA, the consultant company Canning and Pitt Associates Incorporated planned and conducted six separate meetings in four communities (Channel Port-Aux-Basques, Stephenville, Corner Brook, and Rocky Harbour) by inviting representative members from each community and stakeholder groups in the area as the core of the participation effort (LGL Limited, 2005). They also conducted consultation with the fishing industry specifically. The three meetings specific to the fishing industry were held in three different communities (Hawke’s Bay, Stephenville, and Corner Brook) with members of the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAWU) and individual fishers in attendance (LGL Limited, 2005).

The nine meetings for the first iteration of the SEA in 2005 all followed a similar layout and structure (LGL Limited, 2005). The meetings began with introductions and a short presentation on the purpose of the meeting led by the consultant agency and a representative from the C-NLOPB (LGL Limited, 2005). This was followed by a recorded round table discussion, allowing attendees to discuss their concerns with offshore oil development (LGL Limited, 2005). As explained in a summary of the consultations appended to the final 2005 SEA document, the public expressed concerns

about tourism impacts, protection of lobster fishing grounds, impacts of seismic operations on marine wildlife habitat, First Nations' land claims, fishers protection, timing of exploration, and potential for spills (LGL Limited, 2005).

In the current update of the SEA, a working group with representatives from federal and provincial departments as well as One Ocean (a fishing and petroleum liaison organization) was initiated in 2011 to develop the scoping document and oversee the process (C-NLOPB, 2012b). A draft scoping document was released online in December 2011, public comments were invited, responses to comments were released by the C-NLOPB for comments that they deemed relevant, and a final scoping document was released on February 21, 2012. The Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued to outline what is required for bids to conduct the SEA update and explains that the contractor was to coordinate nine meetings. The RFP stated that \$200,000 was the maximum amount to be paid for this work (C-NLOPB, 2012b). The RFP also stated that all deliverables and commitments must be completed before March 13, 2013 and that the expected award date for the contract would be April 20, 2012. The contract was awarded on September 13, 2013, and the consultation that provided the focus for this study was conducted in October and November of 2013.

Following the announcement of the contract being awarded to the consulting company AMEC, meetings were held in eleven communities, four in Newfoundland and Labrador and seven in the neighbouring provinces. In each community, stakeholders from that community were invited to attend a stakeholder meeting in the afternoon and in the evening the public open house was held, totalling 22 meetings (11 stakeholder and 11 open houses). The communities that were targeted for consultation are identified on the

map in

Figure 6 and listed in Table 7. The SEA Update report was then assembled by AMEC and the draft of the SEA update report was released on June 21, 2013 (C-NLOPB, 2012a).

Figure 6 Geographic boundaries of the Western Newfoundland and Labrador SEA (C-NLOPB, 2012a) and location of meetings held for consultation of the SEA Update
Written permission to use this image was obtained from the C-NLOPB on May 23, 2013.



Table 7 Meetings held for consultation of the Western NL SEA Update

	Community	Meeting Location	Date of Meeting Announcement (2012)	Date of Meetings (2012)	Approximate number of attendees at open house*
1	Channel Port-Aux-Basques, NL	Bruce II Sports Centre	September 21	September 30	22
2	Stephenville, NL	Holiday Inn	September 21	October 1	24
3	Corner Brook, NL	Pepsi Centre	September 21	October 2	87
4	Rocky Harbour, NL	Community Hall	September 21	October 3	44
5	Lourdes de Blanc Sablon QC	Salle Municipal	September 21	October 4	7
6	Miramichi, NB	Kinsmen Club	September 28	October 9	23
7	Charlottetown, PEI	Best Western Hotel	September 28	October 10	32
8	Sydney, NS	Holiday Inn Waterfront	September 28	October 11	19
9	Cap-aux-Meules, Magdalen Islands, QC	Galerie-Bar-Spectacles Les Pas Perdus	October 16	October 24	289
10	Havre Saint Pierre, QC	Salle Comm-unautaire	October 16	October 25	31
11	Gaspé, QC	Hotel des Commandants	October 23	October 29	65

*numbers from AMEC (2013)

All but one of the interview participants mentioned that the public meetings did not meet their expectations. Only three of those interviewed agreed with the format used by AMEC for the consultation, but they too made suggestions for improvement. The data collected show that most of those interviewed did not agree with the method of engagement, the type and amount of notice, and the information provided, as discussed further below. Throughout conducting interviews with those that attended the Western NL SEA meetings, participants mentioned that they had expected a presentation of some

sort and felt it was unfair to place the responsibility on the participants to develop questions, especially if they had no prior knowledge of offshore petroleum development. The following themes capture the details of the consultation and the input from participants regarding the consultation.

4.1.3.1 Notice and Timing

The first notice of public meetings was made on the C-NLOPB website, within the Western Newfoundland Offshore Area Strategic Environmental Assessment section, through a link to a PDF of a poster. The poster provided the meeting information for the first five meetings and mentioned that notice would also be made through local newspapers, radio, and TV stations (AMEC, 2013). Subsequently, notices followed for the rest of the meetings, with the same details provided for each.

Another common form of notice cited by participants was through word of mouth. Most participants heard about the meeting through email or speaking to friends, family, or colleagues. Twenty-four of 30 participants heard about the meetings from sources other than those officially used for notice by AMEC. Interest groups such as the St. Lawrence Coalition and One Ocean also made an effort to get people involved by creating posters and contacting individuals and other groups in order to inform communities about the consultation sessions.

The first meetings for the update of the Western NL SEA were held in the Western Newfoundland communities of Channel Port-Aux Basques, Stephenville, Corner Brook, and Rocky Harbour. The (mean) average number of days of notice given to the communities targeted for consultation was 10.6 days total and 7.9 working days, and it is important to note that this average timing was determined using the date that the notice was posted on the C-NLOPB website, not the dates that notice was provided through

newspapers, radio, TV stations, or by other means. The longest notice was given to Sydney, Nova Scotia (15 total days) and the least notice was given to Gaspé, Quebec (7 total days).

Table 8 Amount of notice given to communities for the Western NL SEA Update

	Community	Date of Meeting Announcement (2012)	Date of Meetings (2012)	Number of Total Days Notice*	Number of Working Days Notice*
1	Channel Port-Aux-Basques, NL	September 21	September 30	10	6
2	Stephenville, NL	September 21	October 1	11	7
3	Corner Brook, NL	September 21	October 2	12	8
4	Rocky Harbour, NL	September 21	October 3	13	9
5	Lourdes de Blanc Sablon QC	September 21	October 4	14	10
6	Miramichi, NB	September 28	October 9	13	8
7	Charlottetown, PEI	September 28	October 10	14	9
8	Sydney, NS	September 28	October 11	15	10
9	Cap-aux-Meules, Magdalen Islands, QC	October 16	October 24	9	7
10	Havre Saint Pierre, QC	October 16	October 25	10	8
11	Gaspé, QC	October 23	October 29	7	5

*includes day of announcement and day of the meeting

According to Stewart and Sinclair (2007) fair notice and timing considerations include not only the amount of notice given and the methods used to inform the public, but also the extent to which genuine effort was made to engage through allowing participants to properly prepare by reviewing available materials, and creating awareness about the timeline and the overall process itself. Participants who were interviewed from the Western NL SEA Update commented negatively on the amount of time provided for notice (22 of 30 participants), and negatively on the level of effort to engage (24 of 30

participants). When asked what they thought of the timing and amount of notice given, participants noted that they thought the effort to engage the public was lacking and that many members of the community were not aware of the meetings. Most of the participants interviewed found the methods and amount of notice were not sufficient for the consultation process. Several participants' reactions are as follows:

Did you think the amount and type of notice given was appropriate?

“Well when I found out how little notice was given I thought it was shocking and deceitful that so little notice was given.” (Participant 22)

“There was minimal notice given. I heard about it a day or so before it happened, so I had no time to prepare, as I also work.” (Participant 25)

“Well the only thing I am not sure of was whether the advertisements gave enough lead time. Maybe if they had some more notice, a couple more days in the paper and a couple days before. And then a person called me on that day, that was adequate for me, and then the municipal leaders must have had some prior notice for the other meetings.” (Participant 24)

One reason for the need for more notice that was mentioned was that many people are not well informed on the issues and would require additional time to access information before attending the meeting:

“The amount of notice was inadequate. For some of the documents, to really get up to speed, if one wanted to be well informed on it, we are talking about being in touch with people who watch this like hawks and as soon as there would be a whisper of these consultations we would know. And we didn't know for the longest time until the public consultations were upon us. And it wasn't like we didn't look or we weren't aware, and people were watching for the date and it was announced far too late for people who weren't informed. For people who this was their field of work or their passion you did your homework prior. Anyone who was dependent on an announcement of sorts and then there's a few days to get to grips with what this was all about, there was not enough time to adequately prepare. And therefore the consultation format was inadequate to help people actually grasp what was going on.” (Participant 2)

In this case, timelines were not met as they had been laid out in the RFP. The contract for conducting the SEA Update was awarded months after the expected award date, and once the contract was awarded the announcement of the first round of meetings was made within eight days. The participants' concerns about the amount of notice and types of notice were also linked to the expectations of the consultation program. Those who thought there would be an opportunity for meaningful involvement felt there was a lack of effort put into involving the public and more time needed for members of the public to prepare. Adequate notice differs for each participant, depending on their reason for attending and sought level of involvement, and in this case the majority of those interviewed did not feel they were given adequate notice of the meetings or time to prepare.

4.1.3.2 Structure of SEA Update Public Meetings

The SEA update public meetings in Newfoundland were open house style and were held on a 'drop-in' basis and open to the public from 5:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. When a member of the public entered the SEA Update meetings in Western Newfoundland they were asked to sign in at the front door and they were given an explanation of the set up. There were maps and business cards available to the public to take away. Six poster boards were set up around the room; the sub-titles on the poster boards were: The Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board, Previous Oil and Gas Exploration Licences and Activities, Project-Specific Environmental Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Western Newfoundland Offshore Area SEA Update, Potential Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration Activities, Environmental Setting and Context, and Potential Environmental Issues and Mitigation. According to the draft

report of the Western NL SEA Update document, released on the C-NLOPB's website on June 21, 2013, the reason the open house format was chosen was because:

“Firstly, it allows all interested parties to come to the sessions on their own time, and to proceed to receive information, ask questions and provide input at their own pace and in whatever manner and format that they felt most comfortable. By adopting this open house format, the SEA Update study team attempted to establish a relatively informal and relaxed environment, where participants could provide input and ask questions through one-on-one conversations, and/or in small groups, however they preferred.” (AMEC, Appendix A, p. 4)

At the public open house meetings, representatives from AMEC and the C-NLOPB were standing near the poster boards to prompt discussion and answer questions of those attending the open house. After participants were finished at the open house they were welcomed to complete or take home a ‘comment/feedback form’ that could be sent back at a later date. The set up of part of the room is shown in a photograph taken at the open house in Channel Port-Aux-Basques in Figure 7.

In order to have meaningful public participation multiple methods in a staged process are required (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007). Specific to SEA, public engagement in SEA requires forums for deliberation and involvement of the public (Lane 2005). The format that involved the public used one method of engagement, the open house method of reading poster boards and asking questions or voicing concerns to representatives. A meaningful public participation process uses a method that is appropriate for the situation and participants (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007). The following comments were provided on the use of poster boards for conveying information to the general public at the open house public meetings:

What did you think of the presentation of information at the meeting?

“Not to, you know, belittle people’s knowledge but is that [open house with information panels] the way fishermen gets information and responds to information? Is that the way the seniors and elders in the community respond to information? No, I think not. The trick with that is, well I guess the trick with that is what? The trick with that is what is the intent, right? I can’t help but have a certain amount of cynicism about it, about the process because I know people think that it’s easy to do that and it’s often very difficult to construct a really good public participation process but we kind of default to presenting information in panels that people have to read.” (Participant 21)

“And my comment sheet said that it was like walking into a science centre and then ‘how do you like the exhibit?’, but it’s like no, it’s actually really important and we should spend more time talking about this.” (Participant 9)

“Well I suppose it wasn’t too bad but you know for the most part, most of the people that are going are like myself and they don’t really have a real good understanding of it, and if you just go around and read something you know it is a little bit different than if someone is trying to explain something to you...You know, a lot of people don’t go around and read stuff either. They listen but you have all kinds of stuff in front of you and you’re not interested in it anyway, so if something catches your eye and something might not, but if you sit down and listen to somebody trying to explain something a little better you might get a little better understanding of it too right?” (Participant 12)

Figure 7 Example of the set up of the open house meetings, taken in Channel Port-Aux-Basques



Photo by M. Vespa (2012)

Participants felt that this format was not conducive to learning or engaging the public in a discussion. Even described as an information session, many thought that the information was inadequate (as will be explained in section 4.1.3.3) or that the format did not allow for information to be absorbed.

Of 30 interview participants, 26 commented during their interview, without prompting, that they thought a presentation would have greatly improved the consultation. Six of those within this group mentioned that they supported the choice to use an open house and ten others said they understood why an open house was the preferred choice, but the individuals within these groups thought the poster boards were ineffective on their own.

What did you think of the open house style used for the meeting?

“We do certainly acknowledge the benefits of that process because not everyone is comfortable speaking out in public in front of other citizens for various reasons. So giving them an opportunity to informally ask questions, quietly in a corner with a consultant one on one is certainly appreciated. And the opportunity as an open house to just drop in whenever your schedule allows, I had to work most of the evening and was able to drop in at a later stage. And those sorts of things we certainly appreciate, but that would have had to go in combination with a presentation of some sort.” (Participant 2)

“I was thinking about that this past week and in an attempt to make it more affective they should probably have been a formal presentation first and had the open house immediately afterwards. Because for people like me who didn’t know anything about it, a formal presentation would give me a better understanding of the whole project and what’s happening, what they are looking to get out of us, what we’re looking to get out of them and seeing if that’s going to happen.” (Participant 3)

“There was a lot of information there to digest, you know, and then going from one board to the other board was sort of, if you were challenged on it, it would be running back and forth. That’s why I thought that short presentations, staggered, with different groups coming; it could have been done better in my opinion.” (Participant 6)

After the first round of meetings was complete in Western Newfoundland, an announcement was made on the C-NLOPB website that adjustments were being made to the consultation process at the request of some of the stakeholders. According to the release on October 5, 2012: “The C-NLOPB will add a bilingual Power Point presentation that provides better context for the sessions (CNLOPB, 2012a).” The presentation itself was also linked on the C-NLOPB website and made available to the public in PDF format. Six of the targeted communities, none within Western Newfoundland, were shown the presentation at the public meeting.

The primary methods of involving the public were written, using the comment/feedback form and other written submissions. Other jurisdictions have moved away from these default methods or use them as an on-ramp to more effective

participation. According to guidance material for conducting SEAs from the government of the United Kingdom's Department of Energy and Climate Change (2013):

“Departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected. The choice of the form of consultation will largely depend on the issues under consideration, who needs to be consulted, and the available time and resources. Consideration should be given to more informal ways of engaging that may be appropriate – for example, email or web-based forums, public meetings, working groups, focus groups, and surveys – rather than always reverting to a written consultation.”

At the public meetings held in Iles-de-la-Madeleine, Havre-Saint-Pierre, and Gaspé, Quebec the format was altered to conduct the meetings as a forum/open discussion format rather than an open house (AMEC, 2013). To accommodate the large number of attendees and at the request of participants, chairs for participants and (at 2 of 3 meetings) microphones were provided. This enabled all of the participants to hear questions given by other participants and allowed everyone to hear the responses to those questions. As described by Participant 15:

“...we want formal meetings with a person in front, showing a power point. We want chairs and we want to discuss the issues and ask questions that everybody understands and hears and we want everyone to all hear the same answers and if an answer is not correct we want people in the audience that are correct to say it's not correct, so this is very important for us in Quebec.” (Participant 15)

4.1.3.3 Access to Information and Informed Participation

At the SEA update open house meetings held in Newfoundland, direct public access to information was limited to the six information panels placed around the room. Beyond that, participants could engage with representatives for additional information. Before attending the meeting, if a member of the public had learned about the meeting through the C-NLOPB website, information about the case and much more would have been readily available on the same website. If a member of the public became aware of

the meeting through a poster, newspaper, radio or other means used by AMEC and the C-NLOPB they were not directed to a website or other sources of information. The poster did provide contact information for an AMEC representative that could be contacted for more information about the sessions.

The original SEA document from 2005 that was being updated was not available in hard copy at the meetings for reference. One participant noted:

“The thing the people didn’t like is they had nothing in their hand, people said ‘okay you want to update the 2005 SEA and you don’t talk to us about the 2005 SEA’. You want us to add information and to give you extra information and sensitive zones but what is the basis? Where are the maps? So people were really upset because there was no document to discuss about... People should have documents to work on, and this was a big lag, they were telling us ‘oh, go back to the 2005 SEA’, so we asked ‘where is it?’, they didn’t even have copies of the 2005 SEA in their hands. We had copies, not them. They were telling the people ‘the 2005 SEA, that’s no good anymore’, but you’re doing an update of it? So there was lots of confusion.” (Participant 15)

In terms of providing adequate and accessible information, participants found the information panels lacking in certain types of information and that without having previous knowledge of the topic before attending, it was difficult to gather information from the poster boards.

What did you think of the meeting?

“If I remember there were six or seven posters and they were relatively meaningless in the context of the environment. If this was an environmental assessment there was basically nothing about the environment and possible impacts... all I remember are posters about the technology, how they drill, what a drill rig looks like, but that wasn’t the focus of what people are interested in, they’re not interested in the engineering.” (Participant 22)

“I went there and it was just this room full of these Bristol boards that were really ambiguous. I didn’t get anything from reading these Bristol boards. A lot of the information on them was actually outdated.” (Participant 4)

“Well when I went to the meeting I was expecting a meeting, conversation... probably they would get up and talk on their opinion like what they think s going to happen or what was going on, whether they had any places that if there was an oil spill but there was nothing, nothing there. Nothing there was interesting.” (Participant 13)

“I am going to give you my perception of that meeting; that meeting that I was at really was not very informative if you didn't know what you were looking at.” (Participant 14)

One participant went into detail about what they thought about the information and their thoughts about the inaccessibility of it:

“Like I said, the language was a little dry; I wish it was written in a little more layperson language. I have a fairly good grasp of the English language but some of the language [on the information panels] was technical and I wish they had put a little more structure around, or had a communications person in the room and explain ‘okay, what are we trying to say here?’ I wish it was written in a way where people could go to one station and know the information they are going to learn, and go to the other station and know the information they are going to learn. Some of it looked a little repetitive to me and some of it was going over my head...I talked about the high-level language that was there, that probably didn’t lend itself to accessibility for everyone because people that didn’t have a knowledge base were maybe making pre-judgements and it’s important for them to have the right information so they can make the right decisions, an informed decisions for themselves. And I think they [the proponent] shot themselves in the foot because they didn’t have a vested interest in this.” (Participant 1)

This participant mentioned that he/she was in favour of development and that access to accurate information is important in consultations. Another participant mentioned that illiteracy should have been a consideration in the public participation program:

“Statistically, Newfoundland is known for having one of the highest illiteracy rates in the country and if the fisher people are predominantly the ones that are going to be affected, not knocking fishermen saying they’re dumb but in certain regions education wasn’t important...If they’re illiterate and go to the offshore oil symposium how are they to get the information off of the bulletin boards or posters? I guess it all goes back to, if they had a general presentation in the beginning and a whole overview of what’s happening and not as deeply discussed everyone’s

own poster that would be a great way to really get the public informed. Because whether they attend is the wrong choice, but if they attend and don't understand it, that's the fault of the presenter." (Participant 3)

This participant made the important distinction that if a member of the public attends a meeting they are often attending to gather information and possibly add to that information using their knowledge, but that once they are in the meeting it is the responsibility of the proponent to ensure the information is correctly interpreted and understood (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007).

Meaningful participation requires that both the public and proponent have access to information so that an informed discussion surrounding the issues can take place (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007). As stated above, the availability of information at the meetings was limited, and so, the building of ideas through discussion was stunted in that participants felt they had to be prepared with questions and concerns prior to attending the public meeting. As explained by several participants:

What did you think of the format of the meetings, with the information panels and the representatives available for questions?

"I don't think I got much out of the people [representatives from the C-NLOPB and AMEC]. They were not there to educate, they were there to answer questions. And if you came with no questions you got no answers." (Participant 11)

"I was wondering if he [representative from AMEC] is on side with them or I don't know, he was asking questions and then he was not giving any answers. And to me they are there to answer but when we had questions there was just no, nothing." (Participant 13)

"You do default to that because it is doable, it's familiar, it gets the information out there, but it doesn't get at a real conversation." (Participant 21)

"And then the way the information was presented there was nothing to respond to because there was no information. It was walking into a room

and the walls are blank. How can you create a dialogue if there's nothing there?" (Participant 22)

"We need dialogue. There sure was not much conversation at the meeting. There was nothing to initiate it. They didn't encourage dialogue, that's why the few in attendance were subdued. I guess it meant less concerns to have to answer to." (Participant 25)

4.1.3.4 Collection of Information

From observation of the public meetings in Western Newfoundland there was very little recording by representatives from AMEC and the C-NLOPB of the discussions and questions that were raised by the public. Participants noted the lack of recording in interviews. For example:

"Anything that was said at the meeting was not being documented. It was more of a lip service from the representatives. I don't know what will happen with that little sheet of paper that was provided to fill out and leave with the representatives from the C-NLOPB." (Participant 25)

"How do you keep track of everything that was addressed in a one-on-one basis with nobody taking notes? And then there's no, you couldn't build upon information because there was no information." (Participant 16)

"Because it was more of a Q&A, they weren't recording people's questions, so they had no way of getting back to them, or following up with them." (Participant 7)

Despite these observations by participants, according to the draft of the SEA update:

"The SEA Update study team members were involved in continuously taking notes and otherwise recording any and all input received throughout the open house, and at the end of each session the consultation team met as a group to have a detailed debriefing and to further record and compile all information and input received." (AMEC, Appendix A, p.8)

In order to achieve the goals of an SEA it is important that the proponent be clear from the outset about how the public will be involved, how the input will be used, and what affect the input has on the decision(s) of the SEA (Heiland, 2005). Participants were

encouraged to fill in the comment/feedback form and return it at the meeting or at a later date through mail or email. In explaining how feedback would be processed, representatives said that comments that were deemed relevant to the SEA update would be considered and incorporated into the document. Many of the participants were unsure of how their input would be used, and several pointed out that they thought that their input would have no effect on the outcome of the SEA.

Were you made aware of how your input would be used?

“Well, some of them think it's going to go into the garbage. But sometimes you go and then you don't hear anything else about it. To me, if they want to go ahead, it's going to go ahead. It doesn't matter if you show up or not.” (Participant 13)

“That’s what I understood, public input is not going to change anything, and it’s the political level that can make a change.” (Participant 22)

The draft report for the update of the Western NL SEA linked the input from the public to the sections of the document where that topic is addressed in a summary table. A summary of the concerns is also contained for each stakeholder and public meeting in Appendix A of the document. The submissions that were sent were also posted according to the month they were received, totalling 81 submissions, 43 of which were submitted by individuals and the rest from interest groups. The C-NLOPB also posted a notice that if someone’s comment was not posted they could re-send the submission for a direct response from the C-NLOPB.

4.1.3.5 Representation of Groups

Inclusive and adequate representation of those affected is a crucial element to a meaningful participation process (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007). In this case, two types of meetings were used to engage groups identified as stakeholders, and involve the public

for the first time in the development of the Western NL SEA, since the first iteration in 2005.

Stakeholder Representation

The stakeholder meetings were held during the afternoon before the public open house and stakeholders within the communities were identified and invited to attend. AMEC recognized the challenge of inviting all stakeholders in each community and used a ‘snowball’ method of attempting to invite additional stakeholder groups to the stakeholder consultations (AMEC, 2013). According to the draft SEA Update report by AMEC (2013) groups in attendance at stakeholder meetings varied from the Western Oil and Gas Steering Committee to Parks Canada. A list of those represented at the Western Newfoundland stakeholder meetings are in Table 9.

Although not included on the list of groups present at the Western Newfoundland meetings, some environmental groups played a key role in informing fish harvesters and the public about the meetings being held for the SEA update. The St. Lawrence Coalition, which advocates attention to the overall cumulative effects of drilling in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, was represented at public meetings in Western Newfoundland and was active in promoting the Quebec meetings.

Table 9 Stakeholders present at SEA Update meetings

Community in Western NL	Number of Attendees	Represented Group(s)
Channel Port-Aux-Basques	0	n/a
Stephenville	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fish Food and Allied Workers (FFAW) ▪ FFAW
Corner Brook	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation ▪ College of the North Atlantic ▪ NL Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation

Rocky Harbour	14	▪ Corner Brook Board of Trade
		▪ Newfoundland & Labrador Oil & Gas Industries Association
		▪ Western NL Oil and Gas Steering Committee
		▪ Town of Rocky Harbour
		▪ Town of Woody Point
		▪ Bonne Bay Marine Station, Memorial University of NL
		▪ Gros Morne Co-op Association
		▪ Oceanfront Landowners of Bonne Bay
		▪ Parks Canada
		▪ FFAW
		▪ NL Dept of Innovation, Business and Rural Development
		▪ NL Rural Secretariat
		▪ Corner Brook / Rocky Harbour Regional Council
		▪ Individual Fisher
		▪ Citizen

Information from AMEC, 2013

One participant who had attended both the stakeholder and public meetings said that the stakeholder meeting was slanted towards ‘pro-development’ in the representation of groups:

“It was probably one-sided. I think everyone at that particular table was pro-development. I don’t think the other side of that was well represented. Now whether they were invited and chose not to attend I don’t know, so maybe a fault in that stakeholder system because it may have been leaning towards pro-development.” (Participant 1)

Another participant also thought there was inadequate representation, but had not attended the stakeholder consultation meeting. This judgement was made through conversations with other community members.

“So that [selection of stakeholders] was very poorly done so I don’t know if that was AMEC or who. AMEC should have known the difference because they have done a lot of work in this area and they would know who the players are. Whoever that is [that identified stakeholders], they were either very selective or they just didn’t do their job.” (Participant 19)

Several participants that attended the public open house mentioned that they felt excluded from the stakeholder meeting, and they felt it was secretive to hold a closed-door meeting, by invitation only.

“...people got the impression that they needed to be invited, so we told people that they could go to the meeting, [and told them to] just warn them that you will be there, so it was a big problem and many groups thought they were not invited, and that it was a secret meeting.”
(Participant 16)

According to the draft update report, excluding those who wished to attend stakeholder meetings was not the intention of AMEC or the C-NLOPB:

“The stakeholder meetings were not in any way planned to be closed or exclusive, and attempted to reach the largest number of groups possible, and at very least, to include a good cross section of the various types of groups and interests that may be interested in the SEA update – including local communities, fishers groups, environmental and social interest groups, industry and business associations, and others. Any and all organizations that requested an invitation or who otherwise received it and chose to attend a meeting were permitted to do so and were welcomed at the meetings.” (AMEC, 2013, p. 12)

Although excluding those interested in attending the stakeholder meetings was not the intention of AMEC (according to the above excerpt), it was felt by some of those that were interviewed.

Representation from Other Provinces

The process was inclusive with respect to consulting not only in Newfoundland/Labrador, but in the neighbouring provinces as well. Meetings were held in one community each in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, and four were held in different areas of Quebec. All of those interviewed agreed with holding consultation meetings in the neighbouring provinces, although some participants mentioned that the input from other provinces should be weighted differently than input

submitted by Newfoundlanders. One example of a participant's perspective on consulting in other provinces:

Did you think it was appropriate to hold meetings in other provinces?

“You're trying to get a range of perspectives on an issue and some people will say ‘well it's for the west coast of Newfoundland why are you going elsewhere?’ The thing is, it's in the Gulf of St. Lawrence right, so that is a larger part that touches on really all of the Atlantic and Maritime provinces so it doesn't seem inappropriate to go to those areas. There may be the perception that some places may be more directly affected than others, and that means you go there and you also go to the larger sphere.”
(Participant 21)

Representation of First Nations

Representation of First Nations in the consultation was initiated through a correspondence from the C-NLOPB that described the role of the C-NLOPB, described the SEA and the SEA process, an invitation to contact the C-NLOPB, and an invitation to the public consultations for the SEA update (AMEC, 2013). This correspondence was sent to two aboriginal communities or organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, and a total of 57 others in the neighbouring provinces (AMEC, 2013). Two separate meetings were held with individual aboriginal communities in accordance with the response received from the correspondence (AMEC, 2013).

4.1.3.6 Stages of Participation

Planning a staged process is an element of meaningful consultation as it allows for those affected to become involved at different levels and at different stages in the process (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007). Consultations for the Western NL SEA have incorporated different levels of involvement at each stage. In 2005 stakeholders were invited to meetings, and in 2007 several experts were consulted directly to amend the original SEA. The general public was included for the first time with the update of the SEA in 2012.

The public has had the opportunity to be involved at several stages in the update of the SEA. On December 21, 2011, comments were invited in response to the draft scoping document. Comments were accepted for 28 days total (21 working days) until January 18, 2012. Eleven comments and responses to those comments were released, and when deemed appropriate, were incorporated into the final scoping document that was released on February 21, 2012. In-person consultations were then held through stakeholder and open house meetings and the public and organizations were given the opportunity to submit comments using a two-page questionnaire, available at the meetings. The public had a chance to submit comments in response to the draft of the final report for the update of the SEA, which was posted on June 21, 2012. Fifty-two total days (32 working days) were initially given to the public to submit comments on the 441 page (not including appendices) document, but on July 12, 2013 the deadline for comments on the draft report was extended until Friday, September 27, 2013 (an additional eight weeks) (C-NLOPB, 2012b).

The concerns raised during consultation that were incorporated in the draft SEA update document were arranged in a summary chart that identified the concern, and where that concern is addressed in the document. The submissions that were made in writing were posted online in the same format that they were submitted. Appendix A of the document is the consultation report, totalling 69 pages and detailing the process and the concerns that were brought up in each meeting (AMEC, 2013).

Several of the research participants had also participated in other formats, through submitting written comments, attending the stakeholder meetings, or through their involvement in the previous iterations of the SEA. Many of those interviewed said that

they intended to submit their comments and respond to the questionnaire but had not yet done so at the time of the interview.

4.1.3.7 Comfort and Intimidation

Multiple and appropriate methods of consultation in a consultation program can ease the participants and ensure that all participants will feel comfortable in one format or another to voice their concerns or ask questions. Participants are comfortable in different settings, and providing different avenues for discussion can greatly improve the success of the consultation (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007). In interviews with participants, the varying levels of comfort and intimidation with their experience at open houses further reinforces the need for a variety of appropriate methods in all consultation activities.

Several participants noted that they felt comfortable with the open house format because they were able to ask questions in private conversations without feeling judgement from other community members. For example:

“I didn't feel stupid and that was the other good thing too, was that I find that in the town hall format you're less likely to ask questions because there's that fear of looking stupid or feeling silly or you know? Like if you're not informed. In this case you might be more comfortable saying to one of the presenters ‘okay look, what's this? What's that?’ Like, you could ask the stupid question.” (Participant 11)

In contrast, others noted that they felt uncomfortable due to the onus being placed on them to approach the representatives and pose questions and wanted a forum style meeting that would have allowed for hearing others concerns and questions. They noted that a meeting style would have improved their comfort and would have enabled them to gather more information.

“A lot of people don't like asking all kinds of questions and sometimes even though you're reading information even though you don't understand it you just don't be bothered to ask the questions, so if they're

explaining it at least when you walk away you have a better understanding of it.” (Participant 12)

“Some people may argue that it’s hard for one person to speak up in front of a crowd and ask a question but at the same time I didn’t like the strategy that AMEC took, where you divide groups and have a representative here and there and there and I don’t know, they seemed to break up.” (Participant 4)

Interview participant 4 recognized that the public forum may cause some discomfort in some participants, but also notes the importance of unifying the community in a consultation, rather than dividing groups and dispersing discussions.

4.2 Public Perspectives on Factors Affecting the SEA

The following sections detail the perspectives of those interviewed with regards to elements of the political system and region that may influence the SEA update. The participants’ perspectives on the factors that influence the consultation are important in gaining insight into why they felt the way they did about their experience with the SEA update.

4.2.1 Community Polarization

One thing that was clear from nearly all interviews with Newfoundlanders was the strong sense of place felt by those that had been in Newfoundland their whole lives and by those that had come from away. For example:

“I love this place. I have a very strong connection to this land. My father, my grandfather and generations before them lived here. It is a beautiful life here, and I want that for my children and future generations too.” (Participant 25)

“I love my house, I love my shore, and I love my water. I love this park. And I am a landowner, and a mother who wants to give this place to her children.” (Participant 22)

Many of those interviewed mentioned that there is a level of polarization of opinions with Western Newfoundlanders when discussing offshore oil development in

the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Many participants, both in favour and against development of this sort noted that there are two sides, often cited as the environmentalists versus those who support economic development. Most participants (22 of 30) alluded to their feeling that despite their personal views there must be accurate information available and both sides must be open to that information:

“You get more people opposing it, that's usually the environmental groups that oppose it until they get more information. Sometimes they don't even listen to information they just make up their minds and go against it. That to me is not being responsible. You have to listen to both sides and then make a decision.” (Participant 24)

“And they probably got thousands, fifteen hundred fishermen in the northern peninsula and up to Labrador, and if you go out and there's four thousand people wants to go ahead and then there's a big concern, yes, on both sides. On my side and on their side too.” (Participant 13)

Clearly, differences in opinion about the direction Western Newfoundland should take in developing offshore petroleum may result in division within communities. There are those that believe the two renewable and currently economically important fishery and tourism industries are worth protecting and would be incompatible with offshore oil development. Others are eager for the economic development and the potential for jobs that are promised to come with offshore petroleum development. For those that are not supportive of offshore petroleum in the Gulf of St. Lawrence the prospect of jobs is questionable.

“Well, you can set up the well, you can do the exploratory and it might be a five year process. You're not going to have that many jobs and you're going to have to bring in specialists. It's not local people who will be doing the drilling.” (Participant 18)

“I think there will be [some jobs], some higher skilled people might get work but not much else, no trade so we don't know, but there it is. Not many jobs for Newfoundlanders.” (Participant 13)

“I think that even just the perception of that kind of industrial activity could have a negative impact on the economy as it is currently and I'm always a little leery about the prospect of jobs, and ‘this will bring much-needed jobs to an area that has high unemployment’. Well will it really? ... I just don't buy those kinds of arguments and I don't see that there that they contribute a whole lot to the debate because it's assuming that any job as a good job...again in terms of some of the concerns that I have and wondering why certain things- typically with certain kinds of developments, resource developments are often, extractive resource developments are often pursued with business and economic goals and it always seems to me that we don't often evaluate the impacts of those types of developments with respect to existing economic activities existing activities that are also using and based on those resources, and using them in a different way.” (Participant 21)

“These people were totally self-sustaining for the most part, and everything was starting to get good and then when the cod were gone, imagine watching your home just die, imagine watching everyone move away, and the psychological damage that was done there. I think they may see the good times turning and I think they're being sold that image that everyone's going to come back and everything will be great again, and I don't buy it.” (Participant 8)

The divergence in opinions was mentioned in many interviews (21 of 30). Those in favour of offshore oil development noted their support, and also noted that they do not wish to have development without protection measures in place. Several caveats were mentioned, including: not risking the environment or other industries, and that regulations and precautions had to be in place.

“I think if it's done properly and obviously you have to drill where the oil is. Obviously you can say ‘okay, we're not going to drill in this area.’ Obviously it's got to be done properly and regulated and environmental assessments and procedures followed or else something is bound to happen.” (Participant 6)

“I think you can have your development but I think you can do it safely, you can't rush it, take your time and find out all of the information.” (Participant 11)

“I believe this should be developed. It should be done responsibly, properly invested in the area and infrastructure built up in the area. This

is what I believe, not just profits going somewhere else in the world, but reinvestment here.” (Participant 14)

“I hope that overall it would have been well received in the area, where it has the highest unemployment in the province and one of the highest rates in Canada. So obviously if there is some oil and gas development in this area it would hopefully show some improvements in the area.” (Participant 23)

“There's always a risk of going offshore. There's a risk on land. There's a risk going up to the gas tank to fill your car. You know, but you have to try to mitigate those risks.” (Participant 24)

One participant explained that the issue of sustainability has not yet reached the general consciousness of Newfoundlanders, and that the shift towards sustainability thinking may be why many citizens are supportive of the potential offshore development:

“ ...and their [other province's] organic farms and a sustainability mentality where people are just making things and going to markets and selling them and being successful and that is lacking here very much and when I moved I kind of figured out that everything was moving up together, but as I moved home I realized I was somewhere different. And in Newfoundland it has kind of stayed, and it's changing slowly but not fast enough because right now people are seeing dollar signs over a potential environmental disaster that could just wipe everything out.” (Participant 8)

In a situation such as this where views differ greatly in what is an emotional issue for some citizens, access to accurate information and being involved in dialogue and discussion with other community members can be crucial to improving understanding. Views may not be entirely changed, but having accurate information and hearing the perspectives of those that live in the same region, using the same resources and sharing the same spaces may help in reaching a level of understanding that will be helpful in all subsequent interactions. The quotes above establish both the need for and potential benefits of people getting together to discuss their views in an open forum. Consultation provides a unique opportunity for those discussions to occur and for all different views to

be voiced, but unfortunately in this case those occurrences were rare and occurred mostly by chance as the main forums were not set-up for any dialogue among participants.

4.2.2 Politics and Process

Many of those interviewed did not believe that their input would have an effect on the outcome of the SEA. Participants mentioned that the politics in favour of development are too strong to overcome and some felt that the reason for holding the consultation was not to acquire valuable information from the public; rather, the consultations were just part of fulfilling the requirements of the process. In other words, some of the individuals that were interviewed felt the process was not legitimate in that the input from the public would not have an effect on the outcome, and that collecting input was not the purpose of holding the meetings. Stewart and Sinclair (2007) describe this as ‘integrity and accountability’ and establish the requirement of a sincere commitment by the lead agency to listen to the input given and respond to it. According to those interviewed (21 of 30), there was a sense that the input of the public would not affect the outcome of the SEA. A few examples of this are as follows:

Do you think there is any level of participation that could change the outcome?

“The one that has the most money, they're going to make the rules. They're going to say yes it's going to be and it's going to be done.”
(Participant 14)

“If it's going to be done, then it's going to be done. Everybody knows they are more powerful in the oil and mining and that, I know who is going to win. It's not me. And I will tell you, I think it's coming. I hope not, I hope not. I hope it's not.” (Participant 13)

“I suppose it's possible, but I don't really believe it, no. I think that when some of those things are going to happen, I think that the powers that be at the end of the day are making the final decisions and it doesn't matter really. Sometimes it does happen but more likely it doesn't happen and definitely not in places like this, I mean you aren't getting people, there's

not enough people here to sway the decision, I don't think so anyways.”
(Participant 12)

Several participants connected their thoughts about distrust of the lead organization to views that their input would not have an effect on the outcome of the SEA:

“I don’t think it was impartial and I don’t think it was non-biased. These people working for AMEC have a job, they’re hired by the petroleum board and they want to get paid, and I think there’s an agenda there right? That’s the way these things are done now, the politics, and it’s a big game right to get what you want, but always cover your ass when you do something so there’s no questions asked. And they always say – well we had a big public forum, and nobody showed up, and well that was three years ago and it wasn’t even advertised. I think it was under-handed and sneaky really.” (Participant 8)

“If anything I was disappointed. I kind of trusted in our system of government that they would try to get people involved in the decisions that are going to be affecting our lives more.” (Participant 4)

Despite the efforts of the consultant and statements made that the input of the public was a valued component of the SEA update, the views of those interviewed were clear in their distrust of the process.

Adding to their distrust of the overall process, others noted their doubts about the lead organization responsible for the process, the C-NLOPB, and that the petroleum board alone should not be conducting the assessment without independent reviewers because they have a vested interest in offshore petroleum development.

“The fact that the petroleum board is soliciting development and overseeing the environmental assessment as well as worker safety is one fell swoop is mind bogglingly ridiculous. That there are no independent auditors or oversight, per say, that this is all captured within one organization and many of the board members have vested interest through other affiliations with oil and gas being developed in the province, but that is the story of life in most of capitalism, so no surprise.” (Participant 2)

“So it was almost a conflict of interest because if they [the C-NLOPB] don’t get the right results from the assessment they’re not going to go

ahead with the project, but they really want to go ahead with the project, I am assuming like any company would they all want to make their money.” (Participant 3)

In addition to the experiences discussed with those who were interviewed, other elements of questionable integrity and accountability have come up since the in-person consultations were held. The draft SEA update report that was released on June 21, 2013 did not include any conclusions, likely one of the most important pieces of the document for those that participated. There is a place for a section titled ‘Summary and Conclusions’ and the C-NLOPB note reads:

“The Draft SEA Update Report has identified sensitive areas, data gaps and planning considerations for the SEA Update Area. Following the conclusion of the regulatory and public comment period for the draft SEA Update, recommendations and conclusions regarding the issuance of rights and any requirement on the restriction of offshore oil and gas activities in the SEA Update Area will be finalized for inclusion in the Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area SEA Update Report.” (AMEC, 2013, p.440)

So, the public did not have an opportunity to comment on any of the final recommendations and conclusions that were made as a result of the update process. They are commenting on a document but cannot comment on the conclusions, because those have not been released.

One element of meaningful public participation that may contribute to the public’s impressions on the sincerity of the lead organization is providing funding to participants in the process. In accordance with the many resources available to proponents, providing participant funding encourages more informed participation and a more meaningful experience for participants. Unfortunately, in this case there was no mention of funding provided to participants or organizations in any of the documents released by the C-

NLOPB and four interview participants mentioned the a lack of funding. Of those, three represented special interest groups. For example:

“When we submit comments and participate we make sure to be on time and none of this is funded or supported. We are required to do these things on our own.” (Participant 10)

“We have zero budget, so it’s volunteer work, we have quite a few collaborating scientists in various fields, oceanography, seismic, marine mammals, toxicology, so we have people looking at things and tell us if they are missing things, this is right, this is not right. So we arrange our own peer review for that.” (Participant 15)

A lack of funding for participants affects the fairness of the process, and the ability of some groups to continue involvement through all of the stages of the process.

The politics of the consultation process was at the forefront of the minds’ of many of those that were interviewed. The problems at the base of the consultation were noted, including the scepticism of the public as a result of the lead organization and the broader politics surrounding the issue of offshore petroleum development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

4.2.3 Public Participation Experiences

In the interviews, participants were asked several direct questions about their past experiences with public consultation, why they chose to participate in this consultation and if they would participate again if the opportunity arose. The responses indicated that even though all but two participants that had attended a meeting for the SEA update did not approve of the consultation they had participated in, they still described that they think public consultation is valuable and that the public should be consulted on the decisions that affect them.

Did participating in the SEA update meeting change your views on consultation?

“I am a firm believer in public consultation. So no, it didn’t change my mind then, it reaffirmed that it’s important, it needs to happen and I wish it was happening more frequently.” (Participant 1)

“Well I still believe that the process is flawed in its current form but I will continue to participate in all of the SEAs in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.” (Participant 10)

“You know, because of their lack of information it made me start researching the effects of cold weather and cold water. I love my house, I love my shore, and I love my water. I love this park and I am just sort of like as a landowner, as a mother who wants to give this place to her children, I am definitely going to participate. And continue to participate.” (Participant 22)

Participants mentioned the low numbers of participants at consultation activities in Newfoundland, but many did not cite a reason for why that is the case.

“On a personal level I think they could have different setups and change people's involvement. It wasn't good for involvement. It was nice to go walk around and have a look, but I don't know if people come out of it any smarter or any more informed.” (Participant 11)

“I think it’s good. I think it gets people out. It gets people involved that want to be involved. You know I think most people don’t really have any idea what’s going on, they’re just doing their day-to-day thing and whatever happens, happens.” (Participant 6)

4.3 Summary

4.3.1 Benefits of the Process

The update of the Western NL SEA had few benefits to those involved in the consultation process. The update of the SEA was the first time that the general public was involved in the Western NL SEA, and if participants were aware of the C-NLOPB and their opportunities to participate they would have had several chances to become involved. A public participant that had a keen interest would have had the opportunity to comment on the scoping document for the SEA update, attend an open house meeting, and comment on the draft report.

There was minimal, if any, notice given to the public about the opportunity for commenting on the scoping document for the SEA update. So, again, if members of the public were aware of the opportunity, allowing for comment on the scoping document ensured the public could participate in deliberations on what would be included in the update. The C-NLOPB's provision of responses to all of the online comments gave a sense of legitimacy to this early stage of the process and started the process with an image of respect for the public. This stage has not been included in any of the other SEAs that have been conducted by the C-NLOPB. Recently, the SEA for Eastern Newfoundland posted the scoping document with no opportunity for public comment.

Considering this consultation program was conducted by the C-NLOPB, an organization with interests based in Newfoundland, the breadth of the consultation may have been appropriate with regards to the locations that would be affected by offshore petroleum development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Targeting communities in the neighbouring provinces extended far beyond the consultation effort for the previous iterations of the Western NL SEA, and this was highly regarded by interview participants. They felt it fair and encouraged consultation with all affected in such important decisions. As well, holding stakeholder meetings during the afternoon and a public meeting in the evening reached the public in a way that the previous consultations for the Western NL SEA had not done before. Also, AMEC and the C-NLOPB were available through mail, email, and telephone to address the concerns of those who were not able to attend meetings in the targeted communities, according to media and notices, but the researcher did not confirm this.

Several interview participants (5 of 30) mentioned that although they thought the consultation program could have been improved, they appreciated the choice of using the open house format because it did not allow for any single person to dominate the meeting. Of those who spoke about their appreciation of the open house format, three also noted that they found the open house to be a less intimidating format in that it allowed for attendants to approach representatives as they pleased. In contrast, it was also noted that some participants found this approach more intimidating than a meeting-style in that they did not feel comfortable and felt they may ask “dumb questions” to a representative in a one-on-one interaction.

The SEA process initiated interest from some members of the public, and several community groups have been started following the public consultation for the SEA and the meetings for the project-level EA (discussed further in Chapter 5).

4.3.2 Shortcomings of the Process

The public participation process fell short of what would be considered ‘meaningful engagement’. As was noted in Doelle et al. (2012), many of the same issues are present in the Western NL SEA update as were identified in their study of earlier SEAs conducted by the C-NLOPB and the C-NSOB. That is, limited access to information, low participation levels, limited time and resources made available to participants and not enough steps taken to encourage direct participation (Doelle et al., 2012).

The process did not provide adequate notice for participants and it was not predictable for the public to follow. Many of the dates mentioned in documents that were made publicly available were not met and therefore the public could not predict when

meetings were going to be held, when their submissions were due, or when documents would be publicly posted.

At the update meetings there were no original SEA or SEA amendment documents available for reference. The six information panels and a map were made available to participants, diffusing discussions, and placing the onus on participants to raise issues as individuals. Attending participants without previous background knowledge of offshore petroleum development were met with the challenge of determining the issues on their own through reading the six poster boards and posing questions.

As noted by Stewart and Sinclair (2007), using multiple methods provides valuable and multiple opportunities for the public to engage in consultation activities. In this case study the general public was given only the one format to engage in-person.

4.3.3 Implications

Using an open house style meeting as the only face-to-face method of involving the public for the first time in such an important SEA was not a meaningful method of engagement for a number of reasons but mainly because it did not allow participants to engage in discussion and dialogue among themselves, or with the proponent, resulting in little consideration of key SEA issues such as alternatives. Considering that this SEA was initiated in response to the impending exploration for what may be the first major offshore petroleum development project in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the first time members of the public in Western Newfoundland were being included, a more thoughtful and involved process of inclusion would have been beneficial. The format, lack of information, and limited amount of notice were the three most prominent areas contributing to the overall feeling that the process and lead organization lacked.

According to the indicators of meaningful consultation used for evaluation, this case study did not employ meaningful public consultation. According to the data obtained the process and lead organization did not have integrity; the C-NLOPB was not open to public influence; the timing and notice for the consultation was not fair; the choice of method for consultation was not appropriate and there was only one method used; the information available was not adequate or accessible; communication between the parties involved was not effective, and participants were not provided assistance.

5 Strategic Elements of the Case Study Participation Program

Introducing a strategic assessment process, especially in relation to regulations and governmental processes, requires that value must be added and that the strategic considerations must go beyond matters addressed adequately in the existing project-assessment processes. When SEA supplements an existing EA regime, the public consultation process should remain at the strategic level and not be project specific, while still providing information relevant to potential projects relevant to the SEA. It should maintain a broad scope and achieve a discussion of broader concerns related to the type of activity, policy or program. A new process that is markedly different and brings new benefits to the overall regime will aid in enabling a successful introduction. What sets SEA apart from traditional, project-level EA is, most basically, in the differences in title and agenda: SEA is strategic. Noble (2000) along with several other researchers discuss indicators and necessary principles of a SEA, which I use to present data related to whether the discussions and issues raised as part of the offshore oil case were strategic in nature. A list of the central principles of SEA presented in the literature and how those compare to the elements of the case study are presented in Table 10.

Even though many of the participants felt that their attendance at the public meeting was not of value to them as individuals, they did think that strategic environmental assessments (and other environmental assessments) are valuable. This view was consistent among those in favour (18 of 19) and those against (8 of 8) offshore petroleum development. When asked directly what a SEA is, many participants did not know, but recognized the importance of assessing the area in relation to the risks of petroleum development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Table 10 Principles of SEA from the literature and the Western NL SEA,

Principle of SEA	Publication	Principle Followed by Case Study?
Use good communication means	Partidário, 1997	No, communication was limited with participants and the effort to engage
Determines a range of options based on a vision, and then forecasts the likely outcomes of each option	Noble, 2000; Partidário, 1997	No, a vision was not determined and options were not determined. Assessment of exploration licences was determined
Clearly identify feasible policy and planning options (alternatives) and compare them in an assessment context	João, 2005; Noble, 2000; Partidário, 1997	No, planning alternatives were not given although the option to exclude certain areas from exploration licences was possible
Scope of SEA must be comprehensive and wide-ranging to be able to act as a sustainability tool	Partidário, 1997	No, the scope focused on the distribution of exploration licences, rather than a comprehensive range of trajectories and considered only the biophysical environment.
Examines strategies to accomplish particular goals and objectives	Noble, 2000	No, strategies outside of distributing exploration licences were not examined
SEA must improve (and not just analyse) the Strategic Action	João, 2005	No, the SEA was an analysis of the strategic action
Focus is on alternatives, opportunities, regions and sectors	João, 2005; Noble, 2000	Yes and No, alternatives and opportunities were not explored, but the region and petroleum sector were
Assessment is broad, usually non-technical and qualitative	Noble, 2000	No, the assessment was not broad and it was technical in the information provided to the public and in reports

Several participants noted that they think strategic environmental assessments can be valuable, if done in a different format or at a different stage in the process. The following sections discuss the merit of describing the case study as a strategic environmental assessment through the topics that were discussed at meetings and through the perspectives of those interviewed on how the language and the term ‘SEA’ did not fit with the process that was employed.

5.1 Fulfilling the ‘S’ in SEA

Noble (2000) discussed the importance of defining what strategic means in the context of SEA in the interest of a common understanding, and reducing confusion. According to Noble’s (2004) discussion of defining strategy for SEA, the SEA should lead to a “strategy for action” (p. 206), meaning there should be a desired vision or set of goals for which the SEA is evaluating to determine the best direction to reach that vision. Several research participants (8 of 30) explained in interviews that the definition of ‘strategic’ being followed in the case study SEA was unclear. Four of the interviewed participants did not think that ‘strategic environmental assessment’ was an appropriate name for the process that was followed for the SEA for several reasons, including offshore activities were already occurring, the SEA only pertains to one sector, there was no consideration of broad alternatives, and it would not be used for strategic planning for the entire region.

5.1.1 Tiering of Assessments

A SEA is working towards directing a strategic action by creating a plan for the future of a sector or region. In order for a SEA to fulfill that purpose it must precede development activities and decisions about resource management. In the fall of 2012, the Office of the Auditor General issued *Report of the Commission of the Environment and Sustainable Development*, which discusses Atlantic offshore oil and gas activities (Office of the Auditor General, 2012). The report criticises the C-NLOPB and the C-NSOPB because the board issued a call for bids on parcels of land in regions before the SEA for that area had been completed (Office of the Auditor General, 2012). Completing SEAs before a call for bids ensures that potential bidders can incorporate environmental protection measures in their bid and have the complete information to do so (Office of the

Auditor General, 2012). On May 16, 2013 the C-NLOPB issued a call for bids on four parcels in the Western Newfoundland offshore area, before a draft report had been issued. In that news release they do note “the Board will consider any recommendations made in these SEA reports and, where necessary, may amend the Calls for Bids.” They also noted that the closing date for bids would be 120 days after the SEAs are completed.

Part of the scope of the SEA update is to “Assist the Board in determining whether exploration rights should be issued in whole or in part in the SEA Update Area” (AMEC, 2013, p. 9). So, determining whether or not to go ahead with additional exploration licences is a part of the reason for conducting the SEA update. According to the Draft SEA update document:

“The specific “strategic decision” that the SEA Update is intended to inform is therefore whether to issue further exploration licences in the Western NL Offshore Area, and if so, to identify any environmental components and issues which should be considered in taking these future decisions and actions.” (AMEC, 2013, p. 5)

According to this statement, the SEA update is intended to determine whether to issue additional exploration licences in the region. However, the influence of this document in determining future offshore petroleum activities in Western Newfoundland is questionable because no conclusions or recommendations have been made in the draft, and licences are already up for bids.

Several participants mentioned the issue of misguided timing. One participant made note of the confusion about the past iterations of the SEA and that activities have been occurring on the west coast of Newfoundland since then. In this sense, the participant did not feel that the label of ‘strategic environmental assessment’ fit the process they had experienced:

Did participating change the way you view SEA?

“...obviously there’s stuff going on out there. This is the strategic environmental assessment after the fact. So, I am still not really clear on that and I don’t even remember the first ones going around, I didn’t go to any meetings, I don’t think they had any meetings, I don’t know how the data was gathered, I don’t know anything about the one in 2005, so I don’t really even know what was done there. So it’s a bit vague as to how does strategic environmental assessment fit when things are already going on? So it doesn’t seem to fit the normal definition, you know? That seems a bit odd.” (Participant 5)

5.1.2 Scope of the SEA

The scope of a SEA should be broad, encompassing a broad range of geography, timelines, topics, and alternatives (Gibson et al., 2010; Noble, 2000; Noble, 2009).

Participant 7 thought that the scope of the SEA was not broad enough to be called a strategic environmental assessment:

“I have a different scope I guess, or what’s the word? I have a different desire surrounding SEAs, than the one that they’re doing. The one they’re doing is still focusing mostly on petroleum development. I think a true SEA looks at the full economic portfolio of a region, multiple sectors.” (Participant 7)

Participant 7 pointed out a principle of SEA that is often cited in the literature; that SEA should examine a broad range of activities in the region.

Based on your experiences, how would you define strategic environmental assessment?

“I would rename it and call it 'exploratory' environmental assessment because I think it lacked strategy, and I mean I am going to sound kind of harsh when I say that but I think it should be renamed ‘exploratory environmental assessment’. Strategic, strategic is a strong word and if you're not going to completely fit the definition of strategic then I think exploratory would be a better way to define it, kind of make it a little bit more blanket that you're looking for the information. And I know it's an update but it's an update for a reason.” (Participant 18)

“I think at the very least a strategic environmental assessment would address the environment. And to be strategic we were asking the question, is development sustainable? However, they’ve tried to avoid

the question of if development is sustainable because they don't provide the risks, they don't allow people to comment, and you give people five working days notice and you have meetings in areas that are less dependent on the fishery, for example, do you really want to know what people think? I think a strategic environmental assessment would get people to elaborate on if it is sustainable, but it's an update in the sense that they've already approved development in Western Newfoundland, so are they just paying lip service? Is this a puppet show?" (Participant 16)

Participant 16 described the restrictions placed on the discussions at the consultation and did not think that was appropriate for a strategic environmental assessment.

"You can kind of break that down, into just looking at the words that comprise it. So, you're doing an assessment of the environment and you have a strategy to do that. I guess with all scientific methods it's all pretty similar, you collect your data, you have a hypothesis, you do some testing, and you work your way to a conclusion. So, compared to just any regular environmental assessment you can assess how things are now, but I guess I think their strategy should be, because it's kind of unclear what it is, they should be assessing how things were before everything started, how things are now, and then each different stage of development of the project and then in the end how it is afterwards." (Participant 3)

All four of the interview participants quoted above noted scoping issues that they took issue with from their experiences with the Western NL SEA. The scoping issues mentioned in interviews were about the scope excluding attention to important alternatives and effects, the influence on future decisions, and the baseline and future studies. The Western NL SEA had a narrow scope and in areas where the scope seemed adequate, such as for cumulative biophysical effects assessment, the draft update report explains that such studies will be completed in the project-level assessments, as they are conducted. The scope of the assessment update excluded some areas of key public concern and restricted the discussion about the options that could have addressed these concerns.

5.1.3 Use of the SEA

A SEA may lose legitimacy if it is not used in the way it is intended and, if so, it may be disregarded as a process and may have little influence as a planning document. As described by interview participant 15, the purpose of the SEA should be clear, and leave all higher-level topics open for discussion:

“Because SEAs are ways to look at the overall picture and decide if it’s okay to go ahead or not, and if we go ahead, under what conditions. And big issues have been discussed in the SEA, so that’s why it’s so different from a site-specific project. When we discuss big issues they tell us ‘we are not there to discuss energy strategy issues and all that’, so people get confused about what the SEA is for.” (Participant 15)

As a participant that had been involved in the first iteration of the SEA, participant 23 spoke about a lack of follow-through once the SEA was completed:

“Not every strategic initiative is always a set plan, because as we know it is not always set in stone. I find I am kind of sceptical with a strategic plan because I think that a lot of times strategic plans are set there to present to the government agencies and say 'okay, this is what we want to do' and at the end of the year rather than follow the strategic plan I have often times seen organizations say 'well ok, what did we do?' and then they just write down what they did. Rather than seeing it as a template and a guideline they often just revisit it once a year and check off a list. So, I think it, I don't know if that's the jaded view of it but although it may be in the strategic neighbourhood I don't necessarily think it's strategic.” (Participant 23)

5.2 The Use of Language

Several participants also objected to the use of the term ‘consultation’ to describe the open house meetings. The term consultation was used on the posters with the title ‘Western Newfoundland Labrador Offshore Area Strategic Environmental Assessment Update Public Consultation Sessions’ and throughout the other stages in the Western NL Offshore Area SEA.

“But the other aspect I felt, and speaking quite objectively, I question why they would call this process, what they did in that format, a “consultation”. Because it was more of a Q&A, they weren’t recording

people's questions, so they had no way of getting back to them, or following up with them." (Participant 7)

Participant 20 was not comfortable calling the open houses 'information sessions'. This participant, like others, did not approve of the lack of discussion around alternatives and did not feel there was an adequate amount of information being shared.

"I don't know what you'd call that. Display boards and I wouldn't even call it information sharing. It was examples of how things are done. How work is done, how drilling is done. There was nothing there about any of the rock structures and what might we consider a new way of exploration, or not consider, or anything like that. It was just you know like a grade eight science project kind of thing that's the way I sort of saw it." (Participant 20)

5.3 Topics Open for Discussion

The topics of discussion at the SEA give insight into the interests and concerns of the initiating agency and bound the public discussions. For the sake of analysis, topics that were open for discussion or 'on the table' were those for which information was made available at the meetings, through the material provided. At the open house meetings held in Newfoundland this consisted of the informational panels placed around the room. The most common topics described by participants related to offshore petroleum development were spills, the environment, the fishery, and development. Others that were discussed less prevalently were aesthetics, hydraulic fracturing (fracking), wildlife, jobs, seismic testing, sustainability, and tourism. Few of these topics mentioned by the participants were prevalent on the information boards.

Spills and Accidents

The potential for and consequences of an oil spill in the Gulf of St. Lawrence was the most prevalent concern and discussion topic from those who attended the SEA update meeting. The appendices of the 2005 Western NL SEA discuss citizens' and fish harvesters' concerns about spills (LGL Limited, 2005). These concerns centre on the

protection of the fishery and pollution of the environment (LGL Limited, 2005). Seven comments mentioning concerns about spills were submitted in response to the draft scoping document for the 2012 SEA Update.

Only two sentences on the information panels were about spills and spill prevention. The following sentences were contained under the heading ‘Potential Environmental Issues and Mitigation’:

“Potential accidental emissions or discharges (blowouts and spills) and associated environmental effects” and

“Oil spill prevention, preparedness and response procedures” (CNLOPB, 2012a)

In relation to the material available at the open house, the two points on the information panels about spills were not specific and did not detail what the spill preparation measures would be.

In interviews, twelve participants noted their concerns about a spill in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and five of those mentioned the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

“I talked to some guys about the actual environmental protection and what their plans are and made a few comments and just to see if they’d be ready and of course everybody says they’re ready but nobody plans for a huge accident or a disaster.” (Participant 6)

“Well, the ones I have talked to - the fish harvesters have the obvious fear of a blow-out disaster here. I didn't hear much in terms of the part leading up to that. It's just that fear of something large, as opposed to specifics. 'I'm scared of a blow-out', well, so am I, but I am not opposed to something because of something that might happen.” (Participant 11)

The topic of spills was made available for discussion, and participants often related this to their experience and fears that were based on the BP deep water Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Overall, as described by the participants, the discussions regarding spills and accidents that occurred at the open houses were not strategic in

nature, and participants were not led towards strategic discussions on this topic by the information made available.

Environment

The environment, including the physical and biophysical environments (according to the scope of the SEA update), was a main concern for many involved in the consultations and it was a prevalent topic at meetings and in interviews. For both those in opposition and in favour of development, environmental protection was a key concern. At the open house meetings the information panels had several sections relating to the environment. The sections related to the C-NLOPB's role with environmental protection, how the environment is included in a SEA, the environmental setting and context, and environmental protection measures. The environmental protection measures were listed and were specific and may be those that would be detailed in the mitigation measures of a project-level assessment.

Five of the online comments for the SEA Scoping document discuss environmental concerns. Fifteen of those interviewed mentioned that they had discussed environmental concerns at the meeting they had attended and noted environmental protection as a key concern.

What were the main topics of discussion at the meeting?

“And that’s what I am concerned with...You are going to get people in there wondering ‘how much money are we going to make? How much oil is in there? Is it profitable?’ But in my opinion that’s not the view that you should walk in there with – it’s how are we affecting our environment? This is all about sustainability.” (Participant 3)

“We talked more about the marine environment, that was the main kind of thing.” (Participant 18)

“I would say, I don't recall offhand but I would say some of the [concerns that were mentioned were] environmental impacts, fishing in the area, that would have been one for sure.” (Participant 23)

Participants described their conversations about the environment at the open houses with regards to the impacts on the broader environment including the marine environment of the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence, shore environments, and the physical, biophysical, and human environments. These responses about discussions and concerns that they had voiced in meetings were low in detail and some mentioned sustainability.

Although the information made available on the information panels was specific in nature, in interviews participants described their desire to discuss this topic more broadly at the open houses.

Development

Economic benefits and the potential for jobs were mentioned as important issues at meetings and noted in interviews with members of the public. Three of the comments submitted online in response to the scoping document for the update of the SEA mentioned the potential impacts of development and these were deemed to be outside of the scope of the SEA update.

The information provided on the information panels detailed the existing offshore activities in the Western Newfoundland area, and did not mention job opportunities or the potential economic benefits to the region.

In interviews, some participants that had had discussions about development were interested in the reality of the situation on the west coast of Newfoundland, and how close they are to developing a deposit to the point of production. Those in favour of

development spoke about their wanting to keep the reinvestment on the west coast and that the benefits of development should be realized in the area.

“Some of the questions I had, for example, one of the questions I had there was some discussion about the Old Harry deposit. And I am curious about whether there is a boundary dispute with the province of Quebec on that, in terms of the structure of the deposit...And I was curious about questions of that nature, you know, which of these projects looks like it might go online, are there any promising prospects, what’s the status basically?” (Participant 7)

“I want to see what comes out of it and I would like to see what happens, but I would like to think that we all have to see the benefit out of oil and gas and development.” (Participant 11)

“I believe this should be developed. It should be done responsibly, properly invested in the area and infrastructure built up in the area. This is what I believe. Not just profits going somewhere else in the world, but reinvestment here.” (Participant 14)

Speaking generally about wanting to ensure that the benefits of offshore development are realized in Western Newfoundland represent a strategic mindset. Participants voiced these concerns during interviews but it was not clear whether similar discussions occurred at open house meetings. Information about these topics was not provided at the meetings

For some participants the questions about jobs were more specific, asking for the number of jobs that would be available for an offshore drilling well and what types of jobs would be available for local people. These specifics were not addressed in the information provided in meetings or in the draft report. The information provided on the information panels did not contain any information about jobs and therefore did not provide opportunities to initiate strategic discussions surrounding jobs. These topics would most likely be dealt with on a project-by-project assessment basis and would be included in the scope of a project-level EA.

Fisheries

Given Newfoundland's long history with fishery development and decline, fishery protection is a topic of concern for many citizens in Western Newfoundland, which was evidenced in the interviews. During the 2005 consultations for the original SEA there were consultations held specifically for fish harvesters.

The information provided at the open house meetings stated that interference with fishing is a possible effect of seismic surveys, and that fishing industry coordination and communication would be used as a mitigation measure (AMEC, 2013).

In the meeting in Channel Port-Aux-Basques in October 2012, fish harvesters met with the Fish Food and Allied Workers (FFAW) representative and the petroleum liaison in a nearby room outside of the open house to ensure their concerns were voiced and documented. Following these discussions, participants involved in the fishing industry stated that several concerns about protecting the existing fishery were voiced.

“To me, I don't want anyone else there messing with the fishery. Now if they come in here and they offer me a job, I would take it. I would take it right away. Because right now we don't know what is happening from day to day.” (Participant 13)

This quote pertains to the existing uncertainty of the fishery, and concerns with the increased uncertainty of fishing quotas and restrictions from the government. The participant describes that although he/she wishes to see the fishery protected, it is currently in an unstable state and he/she would take another job if one were to become available. Other participants that were interviewed who did not have a direct relationship to the fishing industry made comments about their concerns that petroleum development might have on the fisheries:

“We still have a food fishery and it seems like the northern cod stocks are slowly coming back. Although the stocks of cod and wild salmon are uncertain, how will there ever be any hope for them if the offshore oil and hydraulic fracturing goes ahead?” (Participant 25)

“We have to consider the fishery and especially around Newfoundland and on the west coast as well.” (Participant 23)

Concerns about the fishery were evident for those that are directly involved in this industry and those who do not have a direct relationship. Speaking broadly about what the fishing industry means to the entire province makes these strategic concerns, but it was not clear whether the participants had had these discussions during the open house meetings.

5.4 Reaching a Higher Level

The discussion of broad alternatives, policy issues, sustainability, cumulative effects and other foundational themes allow consideration of the types of concepts that are particularly relevant to a SEA and can aid in the streamlining and efficiency of later participation processes for project-specific assessments (Runhaar and Dreissen, 2007). One of the problems that practitioners and the public have with project-level consultations is the stunting of those higher-level discussions. Practitioners take issue with this because it can slow down project-level consultation processes, and participants struggle with limiting higher-level discussions because they desire a venue for these discussions (Benevides et al., 2009). SEA provides an avenue for the public to bring those questions forward, in an environment that is open to having those discussions. In this case, one participant who was interviewed made note of his/her wishes to have broader discussions at the open house and that those were not fulfilled in with the open house format. For example:

“But when I went there it was really a poster session with a Q&A and people were in and out within ten minutes. I found that a bit disappointing, personally. Because even some of the questions I had, for example, one of the questions I had there was some discussion about the Old Harry deposit. And I am curious about whether there is a boundary dispute with the province of Quebec on that, in terms of the structure of the deposit. I don’t know if you’re familiar with this but the same thing with some of the deposits in Saskatchewan and Alberta. And I was curious about questions of that nature, you know, which of these projects looks like it might go online, are there any promising prospects, what’s the status basically?” (Participant 7)

Participant 7 went on to discuss that SEAs should be made even broader, and that in order to be truly strategic the entire region, and all of the activities in the region should be considered and discussed.

“I have a different scope I guess, or what’s the word. I have a different desire surrounding SEAs, than the one that they’re doing. The one they’re doing is still focusing mostly on petroleum development. I think a true SEA looks at the full economic portfolio of a region, multiple sectors...[Here,] the forest sector operates completely independent of the mining sector, the petroleum sector...So my understanding of what a SEA should do, is a more comprehensive and holistic way and not strictly sector-based. And I think the fact that we have partitioned our governments and organizations into sectors, and the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.”(Participant 7)

The second section of the Draft SEA Update highlighted several policy questions that were raised in the consultation meetings:

- “Comments and questions about the nature and purpose of the SEA process, its relationship to project EAs, and the C-NLOPB’s role, mandate, composition and licensing and permitting procedures.
- The need to ensure that environmental standards and regulations are adhered to, while at the same time avoiding unnecessary regulatory duplication.
- A perceived need for clarity and certainty around offshore jurisdictions in Eastern Canada, particularly between Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec.

- Various opinions and perspectives about the SEA process and its utility, including a perceived need for an integrated planning framework and a larger, multi-jurisdictional review and decision-making process related to oil and gas activity in the Gulf of St. Lawrence as a whole.” (AMEC, 2013, p.16-17).

Most of the general topics and key themes that are identified in the second section of the Draft SEA Update report are specific in nature; with very few of the over-arching questions about broad alternatives and none of the questions of necessity addressed in the document. However, in Appendix A of the Draft SEA Update broader concerns that were submitted or recorded are stated (AMEC, 2013). For example, investment in alternative energies, the time scale of studies must be longer, protection and promotion of existing sustainable industries, impacts of possible future infrastructure (e.g. pipelines), inter-jurisdictional governing structure needed for the Gulf of St. Lawrence, a broad and comprehensive study of the Gulf of St. Lawrence were issues raised by the public but not included in the body of the Draft SEA Update. These broader concerns are contained in the consultation report but not addressed elsewhere. As stated in the beginning of the document:

“It should be noted that the SEA Update does not revisit previous licensing or other regulatory decisions or actions regarding offshore oil petroleum activity in the region. It also does not pertain to regulatory or policy decisions in areas that are outside of the jurisdiction of the C-NLOPB, or address overall and generic issues regarding petroleum activities, the potential use of certain technologies or other matters in Newfoundland and Labrador which are not related specifically to offshore licensing decisions the Western NL Offshore Area.” (AMEC, 2013, p. 5)

Similar to project-level assessments, despite participants voicing their concerns and suggesting the discussion of alternatives, these issues were not within the scope of the SEA so they were recorded but not addressed.

Fidler and Noble (2012) had similar findings and in their discussion of objectives and purpose of SEAs in Atlantic Canada describe that the SEAs conducted by the C-NLOPB do not fit the pure definition of SEA under the Cabinet Directive. This is partly due to the limiting mandate of the regulating body (the C-NLOPB) that may not be equipped to address larger policy alternatives in a broader assessment (Fidler and Noble, 2012). More broadly, Gibson et al. (2010) notes that narrow SEA agendas and short-term perspectives may be possible reasons contributing to disappointing SEAs in Canada.

5.5 Comparison to Project-Level Consultation

The strategic nature of SEA implies the importance of public involvement, and the possible need to conduct public participation processes differently from those in a project-level EA undertaking (Elling, 2000). In this case, the project level consultation held by Shoal Point Energy Ltd. and the SEA update consultations held by the C-NLOPB and AMEC were conducted very differently, with the latter using an open house format for the SEA update, and a lengthy, public forum used as the method for the project-level consultation.

Shoal Point Energy Ltd. held three meetings in Western Newfoundland to discuss a preliminary plan to conduct exploratory onshore to offshore drilling using hydraulic fracturing on their three leases in Western Newfoundland. At the meeting in Cow Head a presentation was given and then a panel of those from Shoal Point Ltd. answered questions for the rest of the evening as those in attendance approached the microphone in the middle of the room. There were many more in attendance at the Shoal Point Energy Ltd. meeting, held in Cow Head with a population of under 500 people. Heiland (2005) notes the participation paradox, stating that although it is important to include the public in the broader decisions of a SEA, it is often those broad discussions that are much less

engaging. In this instance, that may be one of the factors that contributed to the disparity in attendance at the SEA meetings compared to the preliminary project meeting, but it is likely that the different approaches to consultation had a significant impact as well.

5.6 Summary

The concerns that were mentioned in interviews and the concerns recorded at meetings and released in the draft SEA update show that those who participated in this study were interested in having strategic discussions about offshore oil in Western Newfoundland, including visions of sustainability for the region and broad alternatives. Unfortunately, as discussed in chapter 4, the lack of information provided at the open houses and the lack of discussions, especially discussions involving community members from different groups, at the open house meetings prevented these strategic concerns and topics from coming to fruition and reaching and involving many of those in attendance. Also, from the beginning of the update, the scope was limiting in that it did not allow for addressing broader topics or alternatives. Several of those that were interviewed recognized that the SEA lacked strategy and the consultation program was not fitting of that title.

The Western NL SEA and the SEA Update did not determine a vision for Western Newfoundland and the desired role for petroleum exploration and development in the region, one of the key characteristics of a SEA. If this SEA were to correspond with the guidelines for a SEA, it would be determining if developing offshore petroleum, in all or some portions of the area identified, is in fact the preferred option, rather than discussing the issuing of licences. As was understood by some participants, presenting the vision for offshore development was a necessary component to understanding the purpose for the assessment.

Similar to other past oil and gas Canadian experiences (Doelle et al., 2012), the Western NL SEA was too narrowly focused to discuss the broad alternatives and sustainability issues that should be addressed in a strategic EA.

6 Participant Learning Outcomes

The consideration of learning as an outcome is important in any public consultation process and provides an outcomes indicator of whether the process was effective and/or meaningful for those involved (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007). As was described in the previous chapter, the consultation process was not completely without benefits, but I explained in Chapter 4 that it would not be considered meaningful consultation using the indicators identified through the literature review. However, the interviews revealed that there were several learning outcomes that were evident as a result of participating in the Western NL SEA Update, and as the data below show, much of this learning was the result of self-directed, personal research conducted by some participants after attending the open house. The learning that occurred has been examined through the lens of transformative learning and the following sections are organized to outline examples of learning within each of the three realms: instrumental, communicative, and transformative.

6.1 Learning through the Lens of Transformative Learning Theory

In this study, transformative learning theory provided a flexible, context-based system to determine whether the realms of learning recognized in the theory were occurring as a result of members of the public participating in consultation activities. Through attending the open house meetings in Western Newfoundland, participants showed evidence of instrumental, communicative, and a few indicators of transformative learning outcomes that were determined using the characteristic of each realm. Table 9 provides a summary of the learning outcomes as they correspond to the domains and indicators of learning provided by Mezirow (2000).

Table 11 Participant's learning outcomes

Learning Domain (Mezirow, 1995)	Characteristics of this type of learning (Mezirow, 1995)	Themes and Examples of this type of public participant learning in the Western NL SEA Update
Instrumental Learning	Obtaining skills and information	<i>Drilling Information:</i> Awareness of existing exploration activities Awareness of location of exploration leases <i>SEA Process:</i> Learning about the timeline of the SEA process Learned about submitting comments in writing Learning that information would have to be gathered through personal research <i>The Petroleum Board:</i> Learning about the role of the petroleum board Learning that the C-NLOPB cannot be trusted to conduct public consultation
	Determining cause and effect relationships	Learning that a significant reaction from the public will cause action from the C-NLOPB Learning that a regulator will conduct a participation program in their best interest Learning that a lack of information frustrated some participants
Communicative Learning	Understanding values and normative concepts	Learning the value of public involvement through realizing ones lack of awareness and involvement Realizing the need for accurate information
	Understanding others' points of view	Learning different types of community members' values of The Gulf of St. Lawrence Understanding reasons for opposition/support for development
Transformative Learning	Elaboration of existing frames of reference	Realizing that opposition must be seen and heard through actions taken personally, rather than standing by in opposition
	Transformation of points of view	Standing by idly is no longer appropriate when development may occur nearby

6.1.1 Instrumental Learning

Instrumental learning refers to one's learning about how to achieve desired ends, and this includes learning a new skill, learning new information, developing problem-solving capabilities, and understanding cause and effect relationships (Mezirow, 2000). Predominantly, the instrumental learning amongst participants was related to acquiring

new information and knowledge, that is to say, they learned something about offshore petroleum development, the process, or a procedure that they did not know about before.

Petroleum Activities

Instrumental learning outcomes mostly had to do with learning about activities that individuals were not previously aware of occurring in the area. For example, one participant mentioned not knowing that seismic testing and exploration had been happening in the area for quite a while.

What did you learn through your participation in the SEA?

“Did I learn anything? Well I suppose I learned some stuff, like one thing was that I didn't realize that they were doing some seismic and not only the seismic but even that much exploration that has been taking place so long in this area and other than that, not really.” (Participant 12)

Other participants also talked about knowledge of information gained through attending meetings, particularly with regard to activities they were not aware of before attending the meeting.

What did you learnt through your participation in the SEA?

“I didn't realize – I knew the Old Harry thing was going on, but I didn't realize they had leases going on all along the coast, that was new to me. I didn't know they had leases up and down, off of Gros Morne and off of Stephenville and all of these other places.” (Participant 5)

“There was some stuff there that was new to me, I wasn't aware of before. Me, personally, I like the drawings or sketches because it is easier to process while I am looking at it as opposed to just reading. For instance, when you're talking about seismic work and they had the ship diagram. That, to me, I had heard about it but I had never put it together and after seeing that diagram and reading about it, I thought 'okay, now I can see why there's concerns with this.’”(Participant 11)

“I learned some stuff. I had no idea what was actually going on up the coast. So I thought it was very good that way.” (Participant 6)

“Yes, even when you're looking at maps you hear all of these terms like Bay St. George basin, but to actually picture it and see how much of an area and putting in context and knowing ‘okay, this is the oil field and Old Harry.’” (Participant 11)

Process - Strategic Environmental Assessment

Instrumental learning about the basics of the strategic environmental assessment was essential for many of those who had been interviewed because even though all but five participants had been involved in the SEA previously, many were not aware of what a SEA was before attending. Several participants noted learning about the basics of the SEA process:

What did you learnt through your participation in the SEA?

“It was an interesting format, that I hadn’t thought about before or seen I guess, that’s one thing I learned.” (Participant 7)

“When I got there I found out that every five years they have to re-do the strategic environmental assessment, and that's what it was about, and so, in that case maybe it was appropriate because this is not ‘okay, we are going to start drilling, this is just gathering more information and providing people with an opportunity to comment and learn about the whole activity of drilling in the gulf, exploration to drill.’” (Participant 17)

“I had an opportunity to talk to one of the representatives and ask him one-on-one ‘So, I didn’t know much when I came here. Just tell me what’s going on? What is the whole purpose of this?’ And they told me the purpose of that was just to, they sent out a memo to the community saying they were going to have this information session, and they wanted to collect data from residents in the area about the areas that were going to be developed. So their goal was to come and collect data from residents.” (Participant 4)

For some, learning about the basic components of the process was beneficial but they felt this was not enough for someone who wished to participate actively in the assessment:

“I know the timeline on what they do, and I know that they are going to take the concerns they collected and the little sheet that hopefully some people filled out and I know that they will have a draft report probably early in the new year. I understand the process but what makes it up? What are they looking for? What is going to come out of it? I don't know any more than before.” (Participant 11)

The lack of information at the open house meetings is what first initiated or fuelled some of the scepticism already felt by some of those interviewed. Some of the participants then learned that they would be required to do their own personal research outside of the consultations in order to gather sufficient levels of detailed information. Participants noted learning that they would have to look elsewhere using the internet and speaking to other community members. In addition to determining this information, some participants also learned the cause and effect relationship between the lack of information and the desire to take further action initiated by the feelings of distrust. This is further explained in section 6.3.1, ‘Self-Directed Learning.’

Process – Regulatory Body

For several of those interviewed, attending the open house was the first time they had heard about the C-NLOPB. So, for them, that instrumental learning component was part of the key basis of information needed to understand the process.

“I learned that there’s potentially a lack of continuity of information, that there is a government sector that’s devoted to offshore petroleum and that’s a good thing...” (Participant 3)

“Going into the C-NLOPB site and reading the information contained within helped me better understand the petroleum board’s role.” (Participant 25)

Several participants mentioned learning that related to understanding cause and effect relationships. This had to do with learning how an organization like the C-NLOPB responded to the atypical amount of concern that was voiced with online comments for

the Old Harry exploration proposal and, in some cases, the interviewees expressed surprise and approval that the organization responded in a responsible manner to the public concern.

“I think we learned that the C-NLOPB is listening in a way to what people are saying and looked to rectify that. I think that shows that a large response will get attention and that they do have to take notice at a certain point.” (Participant 10)

Others had the opposite response to learning about the role of the regulatory body and reported new understanding that the C-NLOPB could not be responsible for such an important assessment:

“Yes, yes I did. I learned that the C-NLOPB cannot be trusted to manage our environment and renewable resources in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. And if they had have been serious about being mediators or a safeguard, safeguarding our resources or had taken it seriously they would have never set it up in this kind of format...They proved that they are incapable of being impartial.” (Participant 16)

“I learned that supposedly the Board’s environmental assessment has no bearing on any of the drilling projects. The way the meeting was set up it made me not trust the board at all. So, really, yeah I found it a really disturbing thing that I went to.” (Participant 22)

Process – Becoming Involved

Often times in participation experiences, it may be a member of the public’s first chance to contribute formally to a process and this can be confusing and difficult to navigate without a clear explanation of the process and the use of submissions. Feedback forms were made available to participants that had attended the open house meetings. Many participants learned that they can provide their comments through this venue and although many still believed the comments would not be used in a constructive way, they had learned about the possibility of submitting written comments through attending the open house.

For some of those interviewed the lack of information available helped them to learn that they must increase their personal responsibility for finding information about offshore petroleum development. One participant noted that in order to participate more actively in the future he/she had to do self-initiated research, as will be discussed further in section 6.3.1.

“I learned that I have to do my own research and from the second meeting [project-level] I had a good twenty five, thirty questions.”
(Participant 22)

6.1.2 Communicative Learning

Communicative learning is a valuable in circumstances where a clear solution to a problem is not available and information is not entirely clear (van der Veen, 2000). In the Western NL SEA the answers about whether or not to proceed with offshore petroleum development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence are unclear and those at meetings noticed the resultant contention.

In addition to the feeling of opposition between community members, another possible outcome of this situation of differences of opinion is communicative learning, which occurs through interaction between people, resulting in reflection (van der Veen, 2000). Within the realm of communicative learning participants learn to understand what others communicate and how to communicate with others (Mezirow, 2000). Efforts towards communicative learning can be especially beneficial in these circumstances, to work towards establishing understanding between those that disagree, even when consensus is not reachable.

Participants described their learning about others' values and beliefs and intentions, and some described learning how those stem from assumptions:

Did you learn anything from participating in the SEA?

“Yes I have learned something. I have learned that a lot of people do not really understand what is happening there, or what is about to happen. That much I have learned.” (Participant 14)

“I learned one thing – is that people think The Gulf [of St. Lawrence] is important... I learned that there were so many comments that came out and people speaking with their heart, the importance of The Gulf to them from generations and generations of fishermen talking. So this was something that I knew about, but seeing it live, that was very impressive, people speaking their heart about the importance of the gulf.” (Participant 15)

“I was disappointed in a couple people’s comments, I guess you can understand because we live in a cynical age, but they assumed that if an oil and gas company did research then it was tainted.” (Participant 1)

One participant described that they had seen a change in another participant. They had observed someone attending the meeting that had entered with fears about what offshore petroleum development would do, but after they had been at the meeting their perspective had changed.

“When I first came in there was a woman that came up to me and said 'they are going to damage our fishing ground!' Once she got some information, once she had gone around the room and at the end of the evening when I talked to some people and that person there was a change in attitude. That person had realized we have got to watch it closely and watch the facts and figures and make our decision from there. There was a change in her.” (Participant 24)

Although the specifics from this story are not clear (for instance, what caused the change in attitude, where the original information came from), the person that Participant 24 is describing had understood what others had been communicating through the information at the meeting. She had apparently had a change in attitude from the attitude indicated by the fearful statement that she had made when entering the meeting.

6.1.3 Transformative Outcomes

Transformative learning is a resultant perspective change and reorganization of known facts and arguments after experiencing a disorienting dilemma or a gradual shift in views (van der Veen, 2000). There was very little indication of any transformation in behaviour or ideology among participants even though there were a number of instrumental learning outcomes and some communicative learning outcomes. This same outcome of few transformative learning experiences among participants has been shown in other studies (Sims and Sinclair, 2008; Sinclair et al., 2007).

This may be because the process did not provide people with the opportunity to debate and discuss issues in a deliberative way and/or provide adequate information – in other words many of the shortcomings on the participation process outlined by participants.

A similar conclusion was made in Sinclair et al.'s (2007) study of 16 different public participation cases. Their study concluded that certain elements of the participation program, encouraging interaction and dialogue among participants in particular, are linked most strongly to transformative learning outcomes. Congruent with that, the diffusion of and lack of interaction between participants in the Western NL SEA case may have contributed to the lack of transformative outcomes.

Only one participant (Participant 25) showed evidence that a transformative process may have begun through attending the public consultation open house meeting and learning outside of that meeting. This particular participant had not yet had a transformative experience at the time of the interview, but they had experienced a disorienting dilemma through realizing their personal action would be required to start work towards 'saving' (from their perspective) the place they cherish. The participant has

since joined a community group and has participated in organizing community awareness activities. The participant mentioned that they had often felt lonely in their views and that when they attended the open house that feeling was further emphasized. Becoming further informed and involved after attending the SEA open house through additional research, etc., has provided a place where their views and activism is regarded as valuable and appreciated.

Participant 25 answered that he/she had never attended any type of public consultation before the SEA update open house. In a description of the participants' perspective towards the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the prospect of offshore petroleum development she/he said:

“I am worried about the whole Gulf of St. Lawrence. It's so important to protect it. The west coast area of our island is a part of the gulf and what happens here will affect not only us, but the whole gulf as well. I would not wish to see any part of our province, especially the west coast, at risk from accidents with oil and gas development. All of the gulf provinces have a stake in what happens in the Gulf.” (Participant 25)

Participant 25 went on to talk about the actions they took after attending the public open-house meeting, such as writing letters and sending them to MPs, the Prime Minister, and the C-NLOPB, and going online to do additional research. In response to a question about the impact of participation the participant answered:

“People aren't properly informed about the issue. Either it's not an issue for them or they're too busy with their own lives to make a stand. Here in Newfoundland, I often feel we're perceived as an insignificant little island in the sea. I wonder if people in PEI, Cape Breton Island or the Magdalen Islands ever feel the same way. Hopefully, we can get support through a petition, like 'No Fracking in Anticosti' to have a ban placed on development. I know if it ever comes down to a demonstration or protest, I'll be out there fighting for a moratorium.” (Participant 25)

Although the transformative learning cycle had not yet been complete, the description of the disorienting dilemma through realizing the threat of change and the need for action, and subsequently taking action are indicators of a transformative outcome.

One other participant had noted realization of the need for action through becoming aware and involved in the SEA update. With the realization of impending development in offshore Western Newfoundland, Participant 8 made note that although he/she would be concerned if this happened elsewhere in the world, because of the emotions surrounding development that would affect his/her 'home', participating in the open house underlined the need to become more involved in this issue:

“But you know, it’s just hitting so close to home now. It makes you seem so selfish because you hear about so many things going on, and if this was in Jamaica or something, I would care but I didn’t really think I could do anything about it. But now that it’s here... I definitely have too much emotion about some of this, so I will have to be careful not to let that cloud things I say or do.” (Participant 8)

Participant 8 had a similar realization to Participant 25 after attending the SEA update open house in that they both had a change in frames of reference because of the high potential of and the proximity of this development to their homes. Both described having concerns about the natural environment before attending consultation meetings, but had not been involved in activism. Now that there was potential development the two participants described as potentially affecting their lives, they had become prepared to be involved in activities opposing development. Participant 25 took action after the interview as outlined above, but I do not have data to indicate whether Participant 8 had done the same.

6.2 Conditions for Learning

The public participation program for this case did not align with what would be considered ideal conditions for learning. Mezirow (1994) describes these conditions as:

- accurate and complete information,
- freedom from coercion,
- openness to alternative perspectives,
- ability to reflect critically upon presuppositions,
- equal opportunity to participate and
- ability to assess arguments in a systematic manner and accept a rational consensus as valid.

Using Sinclair and Diduck's (2001) operational definitions for each of the conditions that apply to this case, and others that are specific to this case to evaluate the conditions for learning, it is clear that the consultation program did not meet the conditions for learning. The following sections discuss the challenges and opportunities for ideal conditions of learning made available through the public open house meetings for the Western Newfoundland SEA Update and how these compare to the ideal conditions for learning.

6.2.1 Opportunities for Learning through Participation in the SEA

When research participants were asked what aspect of the meeting best facilitated their personal learning, all of the participants who had spoken to representatives and other members of the community at the meetings cited those discussions as the most beneficial.

What component of the meeting best facilitated your learning?

“I would say speaking with the representatives was best. In a one-on-one environment. A lot of the time when a representative was approached by five or six people it seemed like they were shutting people out or not taking questions or dancing around points and I could only really get anything valuable from them when I cornered them one-on-one.”
(Participant 4)

“The conversations, probably, if you want to encapsulate a word, but the conversations that happened with the representatives too. The conversations and people questioning and challenging things and

someone able to be there and bring balance to the conversation, I think that was the most beneficial thing. Like I said, I wasn't in love with the poster boards, the visuals were good, the seismic visual, I learned, and maybe that's how I learn...I think the conversation piece was the most beneficial to me." (Participant 1)

"I learned that there were so many comments that came out and people speaking with their heart, the importance of The Gulf to them from generations and generations of fishermen talking. So this was something that I knew about but seeing it live, that was very impressive, people speaking their heart about the importance of the gulf." (Participant 15)

Instrumental learning occurred through several different means. As above, some participants had learned through reading the information panels, but most of the instrumental learning that occurred at the meetings was through speaking to representatives from AMEC and the C-NLOPB. Learning through discussion and dialogue also occurred through community members in attendance speaking with each other. When one participant was asked if they understood the information that was presented they answered:

"Not without asking. And I asked a couple of representatives about some things and they couldn't answer me and there was one fellow from the community that could answer some of them and he helped me out. He told me what some of the acronyms meant that the representatives from AMEC didn't know." (Participant 4)

Discussions amongst community members can be an effective way for members of the community to learn from knowledgeable people that they understand and can understand them. Community members may be less intimidating to engage in a conversation and some community members may be more familiar with certain aspects of the area or the case, as was described in the quote above.

6.2.2 Challenges to Learning through Participation in a SEA

Lack of Group Discussion

As was mentioned above, conversations among community members can be valuable for learning, and developing a consultation plan that promotes dialogue are supportive of the ‘openness to alternative perspectives’ and the ‘ability to assess arguments in a systematic manner’ conditions for learning. Unfortunately in this case, community members felt they were purposely diffused so that these types of conversations did not occur, so the above example of learning from a fellow community member at the open house is the only one mentioned in the interviews. Other participants mentioned the diffusing set up of the open house meetings.

“The other thing is that I found it difficult to access some of the representatives because they were immersed in conversations with others, you do a few circles and keep coming back but you can’t get them. Chances are they might be answering the same question I have but I just wasn’t there for the beginning of it, there’s a synchronicity of it.” (Participant 7)

“Some of us are not spokesmen. We prefer to listen. People with the confidence and knowledge to speak out are passing on information that everyone can benefit from. We need dialogue. There sure was not much conversation at the meeting. There was nothing to initiate it. They didn’t encourage dialogue, that’s why the few in attendance were subdued. I guess it meant less concerns to have to answer to.” (Participant 25)

The literature describes that learning in groups can be superior to individual learning in certain circumstances (Johnson and Johnson, 2000). As was described by many of those interviewed that had attended an open house meeting (23 of 26), simply reading a information panels was not conducive to their learning. Discussions were most valuable for participants, and if there had been a format for those discussions to occur between community members and facilitated by the C-NLOPB and AMEC, there may

have been an increased opportunity for communicative learning among participants and the lead organizations. As described by one participant:

“Kind of like, it kind of dispersed the crowd, you know, if you sat down in a meeting and you had someone go up to a microphone and really bring up thoughts and it would make you realize other opinions, things you might not think about.” (Participant 8)

Others felt that the effectiveness of communication was lacking, and thus limited learning. For example:

“And a presentation, all three forms of learning should have been addressed – the written, the oral, and the visual. And the fact that they didn’t do that was highly disappointing. And if people were not engulfed in the material prior to that they had no opportunity to grasp what the issues were and therefore had no opportunity to really ask the relevant questions than pertain to their particular concerns. So, yes I was disappointed.” (Participant 2)

Confusion

One of the challenges to learning in this case may have been the confusion felt by those who were interviewed. Many felt confused by the purpose of the meeting, what a strategic environmental assessment is, and what their role was in the process. The ‘accurate and complete information’ condition for learning was not met because the information provided at the meetings did not provide enough detail in an effective method about the SEA process itself.

Only seven of those interviewed knew what a strategic environmental assessment was and of those, five had had previous knowledge of SEA before attending consultation activities for the SEA update. When asked directly ‘*based on your experience, how would you define SEA?*’ thirteen attempted to answer but were mistaken in their definition and ten participants answered ‘no’ in some form. For example:

“No, I wasn't really aware of it before I went, didn't know what it was before anyway, and I still don't know.” (Participant 12)

“In the end yes, because I did have a long one-on-one conversation with a couple of the representatives there and they told me kind of about. Actually no, I take that back. I have no idea what an environmental assessment is.” (Participant 4)

Without clarity on these basic elements of the consultation, additional learning beyond the instrumental learning of facts was difficult for the average participant. For example, the following quotes represent the confusion among participants about what was appropriate to discuss at the consultations.

“I think it is an environmental assessment, an opportunity to voice concerns, hopefully to get feedback, and know that those concerns will be addressed. An SEA is vague covering a whole area. I couldn't pinpoint any one thing to address as I didn't know if I should be asking about Shoal Point or Old Harry.” (Participant 25)

“I talked to some of my friends and it seemed to me they were frustrated and they don't seem to be getting anything and there seems to be like they weren't gaining anything from the experience. They wanted to know, they wanted answers about what is going on, how to stop whatever might be going on, and it seemed like it was a lot of confusion.” (Participant 4)

If the purpose of the SEA had been made clear it may have reduced this type of confusion and improved the first condition for learning: accurate and complete information.

6.3 Other Outcomes Related to Learning

6.3.1 Self-Directed learning

Several participants mentioned that they had learned very little from attending the meeting, but that their attendance had made them sceptical (or more sceptical) because of the lack of information that was presented. The individuals spoke about how they conducted their own research after the meeting to find more:

What best facilitated your learning?

“I only learned what I learned when I came home and looked at websites after.” (Participant 19)

“I went on a Canadian-Newfoundland offshore petroleum board website to try to see a little bit more about it and also went on to other websites to try to see a little bit more about it and on to other websites that I was referred to.” (Participant 21)

“The most information I gained was through the kit provided by the St. Lawrence Coalition and going online to find out about hydraulic fracturing myself and checking out the sites given in the kit. Listening to interviews and watching videos online helped.” (Participant 25)

“Offshore drilling has been going on for a while now, but this fracking thing, I don’t know. I watched Gas Land [documentary film] after and I read and tried to find the spin on both sides.” (Participant 8)

In addition to mentioning doing their own research, Participants 4 and 6 also noted the relationship between the missing information at the meetings, the onus of the participants, and the need for additional research.

“Well, I am glad that they did have something. Because going there has at least inspired me to do some research on my own on this topic. And it has created a lot of interest in the community as well. From the people who went there to do research of their own. And so, if anything it lit a fire with the people who were there that were frustrated and thinking ‘I don’t know what’s going on.’ So I think a couple of people walked away from that with plans to do further research and get involved. But as for if that was the best way they could have gone about it, I don’t think so.” (Participant 4)

“...because it’s not easy to find the answers if you don’t know what questions to ask, because no one is letting you know what questions you need to ask. On this particular case I am definitely going to keep talking to people and keep researching.” (Participant 6)

6.3.2 Action Outcomes

After becoming aware of the meetings for the SEA Update, several (seven) research participants noted that they had become involved in raising awareness about the

meetings through contacting other community members, putting up posters, or developing materials to be distributed.

Since the SEA meetings and the project-level meetings held by Shoal Point Energy Ltd., several community groups have started groups in opposition to petroleum development (particularly hydraulic fracturing [fracking]) on the west coast of Newfoundland. Several research participants in this research have attended or been involved with the planning of those events.

6.3.3 Learning Nothing

Almost half of those interviewed (14 of 30) felt they had not learned anything from attending an open house meeting. Despite many participants citing their reason for attending the open houses as a way of gathering information, many felt they did not have that opportunity in this format. Participants who may have not been open to the learning opportunities available through attending the open house meetings are not quoted in this section, as their learning nothing may have resulted no matter the format or circumstances of a meeting. Some examples of participants who answered that they had learned nothing are as follows:

Did you feel you learned anything through attending the meeting?

“It wasn’t a great environment for absorbing the information I didn’t think.” (Participant 20)

“Well you're going around and reading everything they had up there right, and I am not sure there was lots there to learn.” (Participant 12)

“No, not really. I got to be honest with you I don't think I came out of it any more educated.” (Participant 11)

Many of those that had this feeling noted that it was the lack of information being presented that did not allow for anything further to be discussed or learned from:

“They were telling me stuff on what had been done down in Port Au Port, and that's basically all he told me, so you don't really learn anything from that kind of a thing because you know, they're not telling you what their vision is for oil and gas development here in Western Newfoundland.” (Participant 19)

“Well, this particular open house, nothing was really deemed presented. This particular open house, how can I say it? Did not allow people to learn anything. It was like a game of twenty questions. How do you know what to ask when you don't know what it's about? Where do you start?” (Participant 22)

“And then the way the information was presented, there was nothing to respond to because there was no information. It was walking into a room and the walls are blank. How can you create a dialogue if there's nothing there? So if you're an oil company it was a successful environmental assessment because people couldn't say anything, couldn't learn anything. I think if you had a background, a basis to ask questions on, they might have been able to answer them but they weren't presenting anything. They weren't being honest. They were being dishonest I found, in omission.” (Participant 22)

Participant 22 thought that they had learned nothing from participating, and that may have been true of learning the information that was being presented, but later in the interview it became clear that Participant 22 had learned something through attending the open house: that the process was lacking. Interestingly, nine of those fourteen participants who answered that they had not learned anything through participation would later in the interview describe something they had learned. So, at the time of direct questioning they thought they had not learned anything but with alternative probing and other lines of questioning would describe something they had learned, often an instrumental element.

6.4 Summary

Learning is one of the indicators of the meaningfulness of a public participation process. In this case study the learning outcomes were limited by the process design and the lack of meaningful and interactive engagement of the public.

Interestingly, although many interview attendees had learned something through their participation (as was evident from the instrumental learning either about the information that was presented or through learning about the lead organization and process because of a lack of information), when asked directly, fourteen of them responded that they had not. As has been shown in other studies, instrumental learning was the most common, with some communicative learning outcomes, and few, if any transformative learning experiences were initiated through participation.

The limited amount of information available and diffusing of participants and discussion at the open houses limited the amount of learning that occurred at the meetings did not meet the conditions for learning, but participants learned from their own research activities as a result of their interest that was initiated through attending the open house. In this case, those who were familiar with the topics and concerns surrounding offshore petroleum development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence gained very little from the meetings because they were aware of most of the information that was available meeting, and those that were unfamiliar gained very little because they did not know which questions to ask and which dialogue was important.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Summary of Research

The purpose of this research was to study the substance of SEA participatory processes and participants' learning outcomes achieved to formulate recommendations for future SEA processes.

I used a case study approach and applied methods including review of case-relevant documents, participant observation of communities and of meetings, and semi-structured interviews with community members who had participated in the Western NL SEA public consultation. These methods revealed data in support of fulfilling the research objectives, which were to:

- a. establish public participation best practice in SEA and evaluating how these may differ from those in a traditional EA;
- b. determine the types of issues being discussed in a SEA case study, and whether these include higher-level strategic issues;
- c. identify participants' learning outcomes as a result of participation in a SEA case study; and
- d. make recommendations for amendments to SEA requirements and processes that reflect best practices.

The following sections review and synthesize the research, with conclusions being drawn for each objective and recommendations flowing from these. The conclusions related to each of the objectives are also linked to literature to determine how my findings support or contradict those of others. I end with thoughts about potentially beneficial future research, concluding comments and a contextualization of this research within the larger political setting.

7.2 Strategic Elements

7.2.1 Related to the Case

When asked whether SEA is a valuable process, nearly all participants responded ‘yes’, and of those, most followed that response by saying that SEA is valuable if it is actually strategic and employs effective consultation, meaning a two-way exchange with participant access to all relevant and accurate information. In interviews, research participants pointed out that the process and content of the Western NL SEA Update was not representative of their interpretation of a strategic assessment, the scope was not inclusive of the broad concerns of the public, and the use of the term ‘consultation’ was inappropriate.

In the case study it was difficult to determine if the open house meetings had any real focus on strategic issues because the only information provided to participants in western Newfoundland was through information panels and these only displayed bulleted points about overview issues. Using the data from the discussions in interviews and the concerns that were voiced by participants I found that there were a variety of participant concerns ranging from the specifics of the number of jobs to the overall sustainability effects of the proposal, and concerns about the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence. Many of the concerns mentioned in interviews and recorded and presented in the draft SEA update report consultation appendix were higher-level and strategic (such as energy development alternatives, creating a plan for the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence, etc.), but were not addressed in the draft report or in the materials that were offered (the information panels) at the open house. According to the report, these issues were outside of the scope of the assessment.

Of the thirty research participants that had attended SEA update meetings, twenty-five had not been involved in a SEA before this consultation experience, and many left the meeting unsure of what a strategic environmental assessment actually is. In interviews, many of those who participated mentioned strategic concerns, even if most did not recognize them as such. Questions about using alternative types of energy, and the long-term benefits that would be realized in Western Newfoundland communities are just two examples of the broader concerns of research participants that may have been brought up in meetings, but were not addressed in the Draft SEA Update Report.

One of the central reasons for the lack of strategic focus in the case was that the scope of the Western NL SEA did not fit the literature's description of an SEA in that it did not allow for a discussion of broad alternatives, did not include a cumulative effects assessment, and did not discuss the best options for the region. Instead, the granting of exploration licences was the central focus, so it was more closely aligned with project-level considerations. Although some of the strategic concerns from the public were recorded, they were not addressed or considered in the assessment because it was not within the mandate of the C-NLOPB.

7.2.1.1 Recommendations

Clarity of SEA Purpose

With this being the first experience most participants had with participation in EA and with SEA for even more, there should have been a clear presentation of the purpose and role of the SEA process and how that relates to the participants. Following that, an introduction to the broader issues and a facilitated discussion of those concerns may have maintained the strategic focus and allowed for an understanding of the purpose for the assessment. Encouraging a discussion about broad topics and addressing the concerns

that come from these discussions adds to the value of including the public in the SEA, but unfortunately these broad discussions were not encouraged.

Authority over Processes

The C-NLOPB undertakes SEAs and oversees SEAs. This situation is unique in that the proponent is the regulator. There is no review of the consultation and SEA to ensure that there is a meaningful and effective process that will protect the environment. On the contrary, the SEA has a mandate to protect the environment and promote offshore petroleum development. In that sense there must be a change to the system to give the SEA credibility. In this and other SEA cases an independent party should conduct the SEA or review the SEA once it is complete.

Funds for the Process

In addition to a new organization for conducting or reviewing SEAs, an appropriate amount of funding must be set aside to allow for an independent lead organization to conduct a meaningful consultation program that objectively examines the circumstances and broad alternatives in order to direct the strategic action. Such a system would also ensure that SEAs would be complete before development occurs or decisions are made.

Maintaining the strategic focus of the assessment, having a clear and appropriate purpose, and being upfront about the purpose may reduce confusion amongst participants and increase clarity about the purpose. A clear purpose may include preparing a regional plan with a zoning map for exploration and drilling and specific guidance for proponents for project-level assessments in each zone. If there is a legitimate follow-through with

that purpose it may ensure the tiering of processes and the realization of the benefits of developing a plan for the management of the resource early on and before development.

7.2.2 Support from the Literature

Keeping SEA strategic in the sense of the scope and topics encouraged in consultation activities is important (Partidário, 2012) and twelve of the research participants that were interviewed noted that in their opinion, the approach to the Western NL SEA was not strategic, mostly taking issue with the narrow scope. Proper scoping is key to an effective assessment regime that includes broad SEAs contributing the strategic decisions, and narrower project-level assessments contributing to project-specific decisions (Gibson et al., 2010).

In accordance with criteria developed for SEA as outlined in my literature review, the Western NL SEA did not fit with the principles of a strategic environmental assessment. One contribution to combating this issue would be appointing an independent organization to conduct SEAs. Doelle et al. (2012) made a similar conclusion in making recommendations for the planning of oil and gas activities in the Beaufort Sea. At the very least, SEAs should be subject to review by an independent authority (Gibson et al., 2010), which would increase the credibility of the SEA and subsequent decisions.

Beginning a SEA with the basic principles as outlined in the literature will initiate the SEA with a broad scope, a clear and appropriate purpose. These substantive elements are key to all of the SEA process steps that follow, including public consultation. The potential for improving the chances of achieving meaningful consultation are improved if these basic elements are approached and executed according to the basic principles of SEA.

7.3 SEA PP Best Practices

7.3.1 Related to the Case Study

My case study of the Western NL SEA revealed that in the minds of the participants, the proponent did not provide a meaningful participation experience for most of those who were interviewed. Among other things, they noted the lack of available information at the meetings, the absence of a more interactive approach to engaging the public, an increase in distrust of the proponent as a result of participation, and a lack of desired types of interaction at meetings. My own review of the documents and attendance at the consultation events supports these views. Despite these negative aspects the Western NL SEA experience can, however, provide a tool for institutional learning for future SEAs in Canada, particularly those done by the C-NLOPB or for other offshore activities.

For a practitioner interested in a meaningful consultation program for a SEA, the majority of lessons from this case are about practices that should be avoided, but there were a few elements from the case that do exemplify good practices. The following sections outline the conclusions about the best practices that were lacking or employed in the consultation program for the case study in this research and the recommendations that stem from these.

7.3.1.1 Recommendations

Notification

First, the need for longer notification times and innovative methods of notification was clear from the case study. Means other than the traditional newspaper, radio and television notices should be used in the future, such as tapping in to social media networks and directly contacting key social groups. These would serve as a best practice. The lack of fair notice for participants was noted in interviews and through calculating

average notification times. Giving appropriate time for the public to prepare for meetings, especially at the first point in the SEA process in which the general public is included, would have allowed for more informed participation and possibly an increase in the number of participants, as citizens are given the chance to inform others within the community.

Methods of Engagement

Open houses (such as were used in the Western NL SEA Update) may be applicable in certain consultation circumstances, or when used as an on-ramp to other consultation processes, but with SEA open houses should not be the only method used. Many of the research participants cited their reason for attending was to gather information, and to find out what others felt about the proposed developments, and felt the open houses did not accomplish that. So, the open houses would have been a good first step in the consultation process to share information with people, answer questions and prepare them for more meaningful participatory activities. Presenting information in multiple ways (such as a presentation and question and answer session along with the information panels) would improve the likelihood that participants will learn and have a positive participation experience at open house events.

In an effective public consultation program for SEA, open houses should not be the single method of including the public. Although several participants mentioned the fear of confrontation as a reason for understanding the choice of using the open house style, this outcome is not a result of all meeting-style formats and can be dealt with through effective facilitation. So, future PP programs should be structured with a well-

trained facilitator mediating and maintaining order in the discussions and question-and-answer portions of the meeting.

Genuine Engagement

Most importantly, as with any consultation effort, effective and high quality public participation proceedings for a SEA process require willingness on the part of the proponent to interact genuinely and include the public in the SEA. Some participants in the case study noted that in discussions with representatives from the consulting company and lead agency, the input being provided by the public was not being recorded (to their knowledge), and felt the input was not being considered. Some participants noted that this contributed to their views that the process was disingenuous. Consultants should ensure that they at least record and respond to all questions and follow up with any questions that cannot be answered at the meeting. In addition, a clear explanation of how that input will be processed and incorporated into decision-making will add to the legitimacy of the consultation.

Although genuine engagement is a requirement for any EA public consultation program, genuine inclusion of the public is especially important within a SEA because SEA provides a unique opportunity for a community to become involved in the resource management planning for the region they live in; genuine consultation offers the possibility of fostering a sense of trust and awareness before development occurs, and that may be thread through subsequent participation processes. Fostering trust has potential benefits for all of those involved, including government organizations, the public, stakeholder groups, and industry. In addition, there is the prospect that later development may be more sustainable as a result.

Broad Geographic Range

A best practice that I observed in following the case study was holding consultation meetings in key locations of the provinces that may be affected by the decisions directed by the SEA. This is something that needs to be repeated in the future. Since the development of offshore petroleum in the Gulf of St. Lawrence could potentially affect the neighbouring provinces, including the neighbouring provinces in consultation efforts serves as a best practice. SEAs are often relevant to a far-reaching geographic area and must also have a far-reaching consultation program.

Adaptive Approach

The Update of the Western NL SEA demonstrated that adapting to circumstances could serve to improve the consultation program. Rigid participatory approaches that are not adaptive do not allow for changes that could serve to benefit all parties involved in the consultations and should be avoided. In the case study, the lead organizations adapted the consultation program when they received a vast amount of feedback from participants about the need for a presentation of basic information about the SEA at the open house meetings. Unfortunately for Newfoundlanders, this modified presentation was not given at the meetings held on the west coast of Newfoundland, but was available in the meetings held in the neighbouring provinces.

Another adaptation of the consultation program occurred in several Quebec public meetings when residents requested a presentation, chairs, a microphone, so that everyone in attendance could hear all questions and answers. The participants in those particular meetings in Quebec did not appreciate the open house format and in adapting it they made some strides toward making the consultation more meaningful.

Public Involvement in the Scoping Stage

Another element that was beneficial and can serve as an element of best practice for SEA exemplified in this case was the opportunity for the public to submit comments on the Western NL SEA Update scoping document. Inclusion of the public early on in the development of a SEA is an important element to ensure credibility and improve levels of participation at subsequent stages in the consultation program. Best practices for early involvement would differ from what was done in the case study, in that the scoping document should be distributed widely and the commenting period should be advertised beyond the lead organization's website. As discussed above, the purpose could be clearly outlined in the scoping stage of the SEA and made available and clear to the public.

Development of a Consultation Plan

Important contextual elements for the Western NL SEA Update were: that the public was being involved for the first time in this SEA process, the literacy levels of some key stakeholder groups, public knowledge of existing offshore activities, and the networks of community groups. These would have all been important considerations in development of a consultation plan, but were seemingly neglected, as was pointed out by some participants in interviews. SEA consultation plans should be developed in consideration of all contextual elements in order to establish a comprehensive plan that will contribute to reaching the ultimate goal of guiding the strategic action.

7.3.1.2 Support for the Recommendations

A SEA in support of other processes should be markedly different from a project-specific EA, while still directing the lower-tier decisions, and thus the public consultation process should also be different from consultation in a traditional project level EA (Elling, 2000). SEA and consultation theory and studies from SEA cases show that

consultation for SEA should be done in a way that fosters knowledge, bringing communities together to empower them in making the high-level resource management decisions from which they are so often excluded (Fischer, 2007; Gibson et al., 2010). Specifically, this means consulting on the program design, early involvement in the process, and the implementation of an SEA process well before any decisions about development have been made. These elements are also true of effective consultation in project-level EAs. SEA consultation should differ in the type of information available, the effort to have involved discussions amongst a breadth of stakeholder groups and the public, and the broad geographic range that should be reached through consultation. Most importantly, consultation for SEA should differ in content and types of discussions, as was discussed in section 7.2.

The use and practice of SEA has been adapted and interpreted in different ways depending on the resource management issue. The importance of context in SEA has been emphasized (Chaker et al., 2006; Runhaar and Driessen, 2007) and further supported by this research. So, each consultation plan must be developed in consideration of the specific context. Elements that are necessary for developing an effective consultation plan are: whom the consultation is targeting, how much information the participants have, the information the proponent hopes to gather from participants, and what methods are most appropriate for engagement (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007), all of which were neglected in the case study, resulting in a poor consultation.

A reliable source for improvement to SEA processes may be learning from those that have already been conducted. Although there is room for improvement with each SEA, most public participation programs for a SEA have elements of best practices that

can be adapted to the context of the SEA in question. Within the repertoire of the C-NLOPB there is an example of good consultation practice in a SEA. The Labrador Shelf Offshore Area SEA conducted in 2008 by Sikumiut Environmental Management Ltd. consisted of two rounds of consultation meetings (presentations and question and answer period) with stakeholders and the public in 2007 and 2008. In this case special emphasis was placed on aboriginal consultation and the collection of traditional knowledge (Sikumiut, 2008). The first round was to establish concerns and answer questions, and the second round was to present the draft report and discuss the work that had been done up to that point (Sikumiut, 2008). More opportunities to participate, through rounds of discussion, would surely deal with some of the concerns participants of my case study held.

As described by Doelle et al. (2012) a range of mechanisms and a considerable amount of consultation, including the Nunatsiavut government engaging citizens in culturally appropriate ways made this consultation program exceptional among others conducted by Atlantic petroleum boards. Although there are several contextual differences between the Labrador Shelf SEA and the Western NL SEA, several best practices can be taken from the Labrador Shelf consultation program. The most important are incorporating several stages of in-person consultation, holding meetings in which the general public and stakeholders interact, and ensuring clarity of purpose. Using multiple methods in consultation activities is recognized as beneficial (Stewart and Sinclair, 2007), but it is especially relevant to SEA proceedings. The participation elements from the Labrador Shelf SEA would have been beneficial to the Western NL SEA Update, and since the Labrador Shelf SEA was completed in 2008, knowledge transfer within the C-

NLOPB could have been used to implement these practices in to the Western NL SEA Update.

Open discussions at meetings including voicing concerns and answering questions is the type of consultation style promoted in the public participation literature (Delin et al., 2011; Saarikoski, 2000), especially in matters of higher-level discussions and around broad topics. In Naddeo et al.'s (2013) exploration of methods used in several SEA phases, open houses are not considered as a 'main methodology' for evaluation in SEA. Methods that are evaluated in the paper as main methods are workshops and public meetings, focus groups, the Delphi method, and Q methodology (Naddeo et al., 2013). Consideration of the context will determine which of these methods would be best applied to a consultation program for a SEA.

7.3.2 Implications for SEA Best Practice

The issues inherent to PP within SEA have been discussed within the literature (Chaker et al., 2006; Gauthier et al., 2011; Heiland, 2005; Lee, 2006; Rauschmayer and Risse, 2005); so best practices will attempt to overcome the challenges that are specific to SEA while incorporating the basics of good consultation. The elements of effective consultation have also been well documented in the literature (CEA Agency, 2008; Sinclair and Diduck, 2009; Sinclair et al., 2007; and Stewart and Sinclair, 2007) and are further emphasized by the shortcomings of this case, as noted in observations and by participants during interviews.

Overall, the Western NL SEA demonstrates that despite a wealth of guidance and resource materials available (such as Canada, 2010; CEAA, 2004; Partidário, 2012) and a history of the lead organization (the C-NLOPB) conducting consultations, public consultation processes are still being conducted in an ineffective manner that is not

meaningful for participants. The benefits of the Western NL SEA were mostly realized by the lead organization, and not by those in attendance. AMEC and the C-NLOPB collected input from the public without any accountability for addressing higher-level concerns in front of larger groups or within the report. Consultation without meaningful engagement resulted in few beneficial outcomes in this case, and, as was evident in interviews with those that participated in the Western NL SEA Update, such approaches to PP can cause an increase in public distrust and scepticism of such processes.

7.4 Learning Outcomes of the SEA Update

7.4.1 Related to the Case Study

In this case study, few learning outcomes were found among the participants that were interviewed and of those, most of the learning was not about the information that was presented or discussed at the meetings, but rather, learning about the elements of the process that were lacking and that the onus would be on the participant to learn from other sources if they wanted to provide valuable input.

The majority of the learning that did occur was instrumental in nature. In terms of acquiring information, most participants had learned something about existing petroleum development, locations of exploration licences and the strategic environmental assessment process. Some participants had learned about cause-effect relationships having to do with the connection between public involvement and the reaction of the petroleum board. There were also some communicative learning outcomes that often had to do with understanding the perspectives of other participants, and community members learning the differing values that are held in relation to The Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Responses about learning from participants indicated a lack of effort by the lead organization to engage people meaningfully, in that many had felt they had learned

nothing from attending the public meetings and in fact were required to do self-initiated research as a result. Participants had learned that if they wanted more information they would be required to pursue information from sources outside of the open houses.

At the time that the SEA update was initiated, Western Newfoundland had not yet had any significant interest in offshore oil development. It was indicated by two research participants that before the SEA update there had previously been little interest in offshore petroleum development provincially, but at the realization of the possibility of imminent offshore petroleum development on the west coast of Newfoundland they were caught off guard and began to take action in response. Three community groups have since formed in opposition to the notion of offshore oil development as a result of the discussions the SEA generated. The community groups have organized their own meetings and forums in the interest of educating the public and initiating a discussion about offshore petroleum development in the region, particularly in opposition to hydraulic fracturing (fracking). The building of experience and information amongst local groups could be connected with more experienced groups that exist outside of the region, improving engagement at the project-level in the future. These community groups would provide an interesting case study of learning and action for sustainability.

Transformative learning may not have occurred solely through attending SEA consultation meetings, but for one participant in particular it was the beginning of a transformative process of change. Those that had little experience with activism in their community were joining community groups with those who shared their feelings of opposition. Community members attended meetings for the SEA and the project-level assessment and formed groups in opposition to the activities proposed. In interviews, a

few participants mentioned that although they had shown little interest in offshore activities occurring in other areas before this, the recognition of the proximity of development was what caused this issue to enter their direct consciousness and moved them to take action in order to prevent the negative outcomes they fear may occur near their home.

7.4.1.1 Recommendations

In order to enhance learning opportunities for the public to ensure the best possible input to the SEA process and to encourage other community benefits such as empowerment and learning about sustainability, several different tools should be employed in SEA consultations. Encouraging discussion amongst community members and ensuring there are several methods of conveying information would provide some short-term, feasible steps towards improving the learning outcomes of strategic environmental assessments.

Long-term systems should be put in place to foster community, institutional and industry learning to fulfill a much more involved recommendation for improvement of learning outcomes. SEA can provide a platform for higher-level discussions not occurring in project-level assessments and in order to promote higher levels of learning several steps of consultation should be planned at different stages in the process to foster long-term community involvement and understanding of what is being considered. This would enable community members to gain information, reflect on that information, and return to subsequent meetings having built upon the initial information with time and thought. At that point, community members may continue to build on the initial dialogue and new members interested in participating would have the opportunity to join the discussion. These types of long-term, relationship-building systems may develop trust amongst

stakeholders and facilitate a movement towards sustainability goals developed by the community that can benefit all involved.

7.4.2 Implications for Learning Theory

This study made conclusions similar other studies; learning outcomes are limited in assessments with poor consultation practices (Buuren and Nooteboom, 2009; Hayward et al., 2008; Jha-Thakur et al., 2009; Sinclair et al., 2008). At the same time others (e.g., Doelle et al., 2012) believe that learning outcomes for members of the public, government, and industry should be a priority for practitioners of SEA. There is probably little to be learned theoretically from participatory processes that are not meaningful, EA and otherwise. The findings do indicate that learning does occur, even in circumstances that are less than ideal, but that these only add to what has already been documented in the literature (e.g., Sinclair et al., 2008).

When examining a consultation program that is not recognized as meaningful by the participants, and does not meet Mezirow's condition for learning, it is difficult to assess and properly measure the aspects of the consultation that contributed to the three different domains of learning. Clearly, without meaningful consultation, learning was limited as an outcome for participants. Participants did learn some basics of offshore petroleum development, the process, and the perspectives of other community members through their participation.

A summary of this chapter up to this point including the conclusions and recommendations for the first three objectives of the research are outlined in Table 12.

Table 12 Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

Objective	Main Conclusions	Recommendations
a. to establish public participation best practice in SEA and evaluate how these may differ from those in a traditional EA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultation was not meaningful ▪ Lack of available information ▪ One method (open house) was not effective for participants ▪ Increased distrust of proponent among public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innovative and longer notification ▪ Genuine engagement to develop trust ▪ Consult over a broad geographic range ▪ Use an adaptive approach ▪ Involve the public in the scoping stage ▪ Develop a consultation plan
b. to determine the types of issues being discussed in a SEA case study, and whether these include higher-level strategic issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The SEA was not strategic according to the basic principles of SEA ▪ There was a limited scope ▪ The assessment did not address the broad concerns of the public ▪ Participants recognized the key issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A clear purpose is needed ▪ A broad scope including broad alternatives, sustainability, and long term outlooks ▪ The SEA should be conducted by an independent organization ▪ An appropriate amount of funding to cover these broad issues effectively is needed
c. to identify participants' learning outcomes as a result of participation in a SEA case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There were few learning outcomes ▪ Mostly instrumental; acquiring information about offshore petroleum development and the SEA process ▪ Some communicative outcomes; understanding opposing values ▪ Some action outcomes with community groups forming ▪ Self-led learning occurred outside of the consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage discussions at SEA consultations ▪ Use several methods of conveying and acquiring information ▪ Develop a long-term dynamic process with opportunities to discuss, reflect and return to meetings continually over time

7.5 Future Research

The need for further improvement to consultation in SEA was clearly exemplified by this study, and in order to ensure continued progress, further research in areas where there are gaps in knowledge would be beneficial.

One important component of future research would be the consideration of why practitioners make the choices they make when planning and conducting consultation for a SEA. The guidance materials for conducting an effective consultation process and literature studying SEAs that have been conducted are readily accessible to practitioners and yet there are still lots of cases such as the one focused on in this research that are not inclusive, do not encourage discussion of broad topics, and generally do not capture the value that can be theoretically added with a SEA process. The lack of specific legislative direction for public participation in SEA should be considered in this context.

In the current political regime, efficiency is the word commonly used to describe the reason for changing environmental assessment (Hanna, 2009), and SEA has been shown to do this in other jurisdictions, but only if it is conducted in a credible manner that reaps the benefits in the lower tiers, including satisfying the need for an effective consultation before development has occurred. Without the effort and planning put forth during the early stages of SEA, the benefits, including improved efficiency are likely not to be realized in the lower tiers. It would be beneficial for future research to study ways of incorporating strategic elements and ensuring that SEA has a strategic focus.

As was noted by Sinclair et al. (2008), the analysis of a case that has been established as including meaningful public consultation with appropriate scope would be beneficial in studying learning outcomes. Considering a case with meaningful participation would allow for stronger conclusions that tie consultation to transformative learning theory and aid in determining if fostering conditions for learning leads to a transformative learning process in individuals or transformative social learning. A study of an effective public consultation program in SEA would also be important in

determining if SEA provides the expected potential for higher levels of learning, including learning for sustainability.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

At the most basic level, that of providing information to the public, the consultation program for the Western NL SEA Update was not successful according to the data obtained in my interviews. According to indicators for good public participation, the Western NL SEA was not effective. Members of the public that take time to attend a meeting about the future of their community deserve more than minimal, superficial information on information panels – this only provides a potential on-ramp to more meaningful consultation. Providing a meaningful opportunity for engagement of the public is key to the success of a SEA because it increases the credibility of the entire process and allows for the inclusion of relevant and local knowledge and input (Runhaar and Dreissen, 2007). As demonstrated in discussions with participants from the Western NL SEA Update, successful consultation would include the early involvement of participants that provides a clear understanding of the SEA process and relevant information. Also necessary for a meaningful SEA consultation program are an appropriately broad scope, the inclusion of higher-level topics such as broad alternatives, sustainability, and the tiering of assessment stages.

SEA is beneficial as part of a tiered assessment process that focuses on providing an efficient and effective evaluation of development (Brown and Therivel, 2000; Doelle et al., 2012; Sadler et al., 2011). In Canada, as the focus on efficiency of project level EA gains even more momentum, second-generation assessment processes like SEA provide an opportunity for realization of the potential of a tiered assessment system, with benefits such as avoidance of delays, minimized confrontation, early acknowledgement of

possible problems, increased chance of acceptance and application of decisions, and opportunities for higher-level discussions that will not slow project-level assessments (Heiland, 2005; Runhaar and Dreissen, 2007). These benefits can be realized, but the SEA must originate with strategic intentions and maintain a strategic focus throughout.

Until recently, the evolution of EA practice in Canada has been towards improvement, and the guidance materials that have been developed and the studies on past practices have aided in those efforts. Avoiding further breakdown of EA may require changes outside of federal practice, and just as many other countries have realized the value and importance of SEA, so can Canada. SEA was excluded from the recent overhaul of the CEAA and as such, SEA may instead become part of the assessment undertakings of provinces with an interest in proactive planning of potential natural resource developments.

A key component to an effective system incorporating SEA will be achieving genuine inclusion of participants, which will require more than a change of process; it requires a shift in values and recognition that input from the public and the discussions and dialogue that occur in a meaningful participation setting are valuable for all of those involved. Particularly with SEA, early discussions can foster a sense of trust between the lead organization and the public that may be perpetuated and reinforced throughout all subsequent assessment processes.

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Appendix 1 Case Study Documents that were analyzed

Document Title	Year	Source	Coded Section
Report on Community and Agency Consultations West Coast SEA June 2005	2005	C-NLOPB	p. 336-350
Scoping Document: Strategic Environmental Assessment Update Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Information Panels: Western Newfoundland SEA Update	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Public Consultation Presentation Western Newfoundland SEA Update	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Request for Proposals Western Newfoundland SEA Update	2012	C-NLOPB	p. 1-6
Public Consultation Sessions Announcement: Western Newfoundland	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Public Consultation Sessions Announcement: Maritime Provinces	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Public Consultation Sessions Announcement: Magdalen Islands and Havre Saint Pierre, QC	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Public Consultation Sessions Announcement: Gaspé, Quebec	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Response to public comments regarding scoping document	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Comment/Feedback Form	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
News Release - C-NLOPB making adjustments to its public consultation process for the Western Newfoundland and Labrador Strategic Environmental Assessment update	2012	C-NLOPB	Entire
Appendix 1 - Persons Consulted for SEA Amendment	2007	C-NLOPB	Entire Appendix
Chapter 1 - Introduction to SEA Amendment	2007	C-NLOPB	Entire Chapter
Draft SEA Update Report	2013	C-NLOPB	Ch. 1 Appendix A
Chapter 1 - Introduction to SEA	2005	C-NLOPB	Entire Chapter

Appendix 2 Recruitment Contact Information Form

Take-Home Project and Contact Information **Project Title: Participation and Learning Outcomes of the** **Western Newfoundland Offshore Oil Strategic** **Environmental Assessment**

Contact: Morgan Vespa

E-mail: ***.*****@gmail.com**

Phone: 709-*-******



Project Description: The purpose of this research project is to study public participation in the Western Newfoundland Strategic Environmental Assessment. This project is part of a larger project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba.

The primary source of information for this research will be interviews with community members who have participated in the Strategic Environmental Assessment. If you are willing to participate in an interview with me please fill out your information below. If you have any questions about the project or you decide to participate at a later date please use the contact information provided. Interviews will be conducted in October and November of 2012 and will be scheduled to accommodate participants.

(Please complete and detach from above)

Your participation and input is very valuable! If you would like to participate in an interview please fill in your contact information. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Appendix 3 Recruitment Script

My name is Morgan Vespa and I am here as part of my thesis research in pursuit of my Masters of Natural Resource Management degree at the University of Manitoba. I am in no way affiliated with the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board or the consulting company AMEC.

The purpose of my research project is to look at public participation in strategic environmental assessment in Canada. This is part of a larger project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Through doing this research I want to find out how public participation is being done, what are the best practices and how it can be improved. I hope to do this by using documents, observation (such as at this meeting), and interviews with members of the communities involved in the Western Newfoundland and Labrador Strategic Environmental Assessment.

A large part of my research will be conducting interviews which are intended to ask participants about their experiences with strategic environmental assessment, what they learned through those experiences and their impression of the process overall. If you are interested in participating in this research project the interview it will take approximately one hour and all of your personal information will be kept confidential. I will be able to coordinate a time that is convenient for you. My contact information will be made available to you or you can leave your name, telephone number and your email so that I can reach you to set up the interview. Thank you for your time.

Appendix 4 Western Newfoundland Offshore SEA Final Participant Interview Schedule
To be used for all interviews, Open: Explanation and Signing of Consent Form

Introductory Information:

Name, sex, occupation, affiliation to SEA, affiliated organization (to be recorded manually)

How did you hear about the meeting?

Why did you go to the meeting?

Did you go to the meeting with concerns and questions in mind?

Experience with SEA:

Have you ever participated in a SEA before?

Have you participated in any project EAs?

Or any other types of public consultation meetings?

Could you tell me about that experience?

What did you like/dislike about the project EA?

Was it different from the SEA? How so?

Was the participation structure different?

Did you learn anything about the SEA process by participating in the project EA?

Did you think the type and amount of notice was appropriate?

Did you think the timing of the consultation was appropriate? (5-9pm)

Did you think the length of the consultation was appropriate? (4 meetings in Western NL)

Did you think it was appropriate for the meetings to be done in those four communities in Newfoundland? (Port aux Basques, Stephenville, Corner Brook, Rocky Harbour?)

Did you think it was appropriate to hold meetings in the maritime provinces and Quebec?

Did you think the method of the consultation was appropriate? (open house)

Were the consultations accessible to different members of the community?

(Both physically and with the presentation of information)

When were the consultations held?

Where were the consultations held?

Was any group or community member excluded from consultation activities?

Did you think you had enough information to actively participate in the consultation activities (e.g., online comment, meetings)?

Was there any information provided to you before consultation?

Did you understand the information provided?

Did you understand more after participating in meetings?

Did you speak to or are you aware of any members of the community speaking to experts in order to help with participation and gathering information?

Was there any funding provided to the community or community groups to do so?

Do you remember the topics of discussion in the SEA?

Who led the discussion?

How were topics and concerns brought up?

Were they addressed adequately?

What were the main issues/topics?

Perception of SEA:

Based on your experience, how would you define SEA?

Do you think SEA is different from a project EA? If so, how?

Reflection:

What sorts of things did you learn anything through participating in the western Newfoundland offshore SEA?

Did you learn about:

what an SEA is? the SEA process?

Environmental assessment? offshore oil development?

Sustainability? Sustainable development?

Where did you learn the most during the SEA?

Was there anything about the meetings that made learning easier?

Did formal participation aid in learning or were there other aspects that you learned from? E.g. website information, talking with others in the community, etc.

Did participation change any of your individual attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours?

Participating in similar consultation activities?

Taking interest in offshore oil development and the environment?

Changing habits with the environment in mind?

Beliefs about the environment, development, sustainability?

Did participation change the way your organization's views of SEA, public involvement, offshore oil development, the C-NLOPB?

Do you know how the input from the public or how your own input was used?

Do you think doing SEAs is valuable? Should we continue to do them and update them?

Would you participate in another SEA in the future?

Do you know what the next steps are in this process?

How would you change the SEA in order to improve the public participation component?
(follow-up: a presentation was added to the format of the meeting after the Newfoundland meetings were complete)

Appendix 5 Consent form used for interview participants

Research Participant Consent Form



Natural Resources Institute
Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of
Environment, Earth, and Resources

303 Sinnott Building
70 Dysart Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-8373
Fax (204) 261-0038

Research Project: Public Participation and Learning in Strategic Environmental
Assessment: Outcomes from Western Newfoundland Offshore Oil

Researcher: Morgan Vespa
Masters Student, University of Manitoba
Phone: (709) ***-****
Email: *****@gmail.com

Research Supervisor: Dr. John Sinclair
Phone: (204) ***-****
Email: *****@ad.umanitoba.ca
Sponsor: Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Dear Research Participant:

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Research Purpose:

The purpose of this research project is to determine the outcomes of consultation activities of the Western Newfoundland and Labrador strategic environmental assessment. The researcher wants to find out what the members of the public thought of the consultation process and what they may have learned through participation. This is in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Natural Resource Management.

What you are consenting to:

You have been asked to consent for your participation in an interview. You may withdraw your consent at any time. The interview will be recorded with an audio recording device if you consent to the use of one. If you do not wish to have the interview recorded using an audio recording device the interview will be recorded manually. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. The information you provide during the interview will be transcribed and analyzed with other interview information in

order to draw conclusions about the research topic. I do not expect that your participation in this interview will expose you to any risks other than what you may encounter in everyday life. You may benefit from participating in this research project through further exposure to and possibly learning about the strategic environmental assessment process and outcomes. This may enhance your future participation in such activities.

Confidentiality:

Your name and all of the personal information you share during the interview will be kept confidential. Research participants' names will be kept confidential with the use of a code. Only the researcher and the research advisor will have access to the information collected and in order to ensure confidentiality, all of the hardcopy interview information and transcripts will be kept locked in a cupboard, and all of the digital files will require password access.

There may be some information you share in the interview that you feel may identify you to others in the community or those that may know you. If you wish to keep this information confidential please inform the researcher during the interview or after you review the transcript. You may request that information be removed from your interview transcript at any time.

Debriefing:

A summary of the interview and the interview transcript will be sent to you after the interview process has been completed. This will be sent within four months of the interview. At that point you may review and correct any of the information you shared during the interview and as stated above, you may withdraw your consent for the use of information at any time. You may do so by informing the researcher that you no longer wish to participate or to have your information used in this study. There will be no negative consequences for this decision if you wish to withdraw at any time.

Results:

A summary of the results of the research will be sent to you either through the mail or email (whichever you choose) by June of 2013. A poster containing the results and conclusions of the research will be posted in a public community space. The entire thesis will be publicly accessible through the University of Manitoba database. The research will also be submitted and potentially published in an academic journal. Your confidential information will be destroyed once the data has been analyzed, by approximately April of 2013.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or Margaret Bowman, the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 204-***-****. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

- ☐ Yes, I agree to have the interview recorded using an electronic audio recording device.
☐ No, I do not agree to have the interview recorded using an electronic audio recording device.

I, _____ agree to participate. I understand that the interview will be recorded and that researchers may quote from my written or oral comments, but that my name will not be associated with any of my remarks.

Research Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Name: _____

I would prefer to receive the transcript and results of this research via:

☐ Email: _____

or

☐ Mail:

Mailing Address:

Town or city:

Province:

Zip or Postal Code:

Country:

Thank you,

Morgan Vespa and John Sinclair

Appendix 6 Coding scheme used to code data Tree Nodes

Name
Improvements and Recommendations
Access to Information
Advertising
Discussion
Format
Timing
Public Perception
Confrontation
Deception
Rumours
Importance of Issue
Negative View of Offshore Oil
Positive View of Offshore Oil
Politics and Power
Distrust or Trust
Polarization - two sides
Skepticism
Process
Comfort and Intimidation
Confusion
Consultants
Expectations
Public Participation
SEA
Quality of Public Consultation
Adequate and Accessible Information - Informed Participation
Capacity Building
Dialogue and Discussion - Building of Idea
Early and Frequent Participation in the Decision Making Cycle
Fair and Reasonable Timing
Fair use of input

Inclusive and Adequate Representation
Integrity and Accountability
Openness to public influence
Participant Assistance
Quality and Quantity of Input Improved the Assessment
Recognition and Inclusion of Traditional and Citizen Knowledge
Type and Amount of Notice
Use of multiple and appropriate methods
SEA Description
Central Information
Process - Written
Reason for SEA
Reason for Update
Reasoning - Public Consultation
Strategic Discussion
Backcasting and Forecasting
Broad topics
Directs Future Projects
Discusses goals, visions, and objectives
Examines Alternatives
Low level of detail
Not project specific
Proactive
Topics of Concern
Aesthetics
Development
Environment
Fishery
Fracking
Jobs
Seismic
Spills
Sustainability and Sustainable Development
Tourism

Wildlife
Types of Learning
Communicative
Understanding how purposes, values, beliefs, intentions, and feelings stem from assumptions
Understanding what others communicate
Instrumental
Developing a new skill
Knowledge of information
Problem-Solving capabilities developed
Understand of cause-effect relationships
Learning about SEA
An SEA Itself
Felt Learned Nothing
Learning about Process
Source of Learning
Transformative
Elaboration of existing frames of reference
Learning new frames of reference
Transformation of points of view

Free Nodes

Name
Reason for Attending
Other Participation Experiences
History

Appendix 7 Permission for Copyrighted Material

Figure 1, page 6: Permission (through email) on May 23, 2013:

In regard to your request to use the following in your thesis;

1. C-NLOPB Environmental Affairs Department (2012). Figure 1 - Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area SEA Update Area. Scoping Document. <http://www.cnlopb.nl.ca/wnlsea.shtml>.

My thesis, entitled 'Participation and Learning Outcomes of the Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Oil Strategic Environmental Assessment', is part of the requirements needed to graduate from the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba.

The C-NLOPB has no problem with your use of our graphic for this purpose. Would it be possible for you to send us a copy of your thesis document when published? If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Trevor Bennett, CET
Access to Information Coordinator
Information Resources Manager

Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador
Offshore Petroleum Board
5th Floor TD Place
140 Water St.
St. John's NL A1C 6H6

709-***-**** Tel
709-***-**** fax

Figure 6, page 64: Permission (through email) on June 4, 2013:

The C-NLOPB has no problem with your use of the graphic from our website for this purpose.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Trevor Bennett, CET
Access to Information Coordinator
Information Resources Manager

Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador
Offshore Petroleum Board
5th Floor TD Place
140 Water St.
St. John's NL A1C 6H6

Appendix 8 Ethics Approval Certificate



Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

August 9, 2012

SSHRC

TO: **Morgan Vespa**
Principal Investigator [REDACTED]

FROM: **Wayne Taylor, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: **Protocol #J2012:114**
"Participation and Learning Outcomes of the Western Newfoundland and
Labrador Offshore Oil Strategic Environmental Assessment"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). **This approval is valid for one year only.**

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

umanitoba.ca/research/orec