Social Impact Assessment Research: A Status Report

Social Impact Assessment Committee
Canadian Environmental Assessment Research Council

A Manuscript Report Prepared for the
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INTRODUCTION

(i) Role of Council

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Research **Council was established in** January 1984 by the federal **Minister** of the **Environment to assess** the need **for** and promote research **aimed** at improving the **State-of-the-art of environmental** impact **assessment. It provides** independent **advice** to **the federal Minister of the Environment** on strategies for improving **the scientific, technical and** administrative aspects of? environmental impact assessment **(EIA).**

Over the past two years, CEARC **has undertaken** a number of **research** projects **and** has sponsored **several** workshops **which have** been attended **by** experts **from** Canada **and the United** States. These **are** listed in Appendix 1. **The** objectives of the workshops have been to identify key **issues** and concerns *in* **the** field, critically review CEARC-funded **research** reports and identify research needs. **CEARC** has **also** *sponsored* **a** total of 37 graduate student fellowships, **listed in** Appendix 2.

(ii) Research Themes

From **the beginning,** Council **adopted a** broad, cross-disciplinary perspective on **EIA** research requirements. **Its** research interests **encompass the full range of** scientific, technical, **procedural** and institutional aspects of **EIA as well as** **issues relating to the planning and** management contexts **within** which impact assessments are undertaken, Research *in a* number of substantive **areas has been** initiated including **such areas as:** social impact assessment, cumulative

environmental effects, post-project evaluation, modelling in environmental impact assessment, risk analysis, rnd mitigation **and** compensation.

To guide its **activities,** CEARC established four research themes specified in its Progress Report to 1985. They include:

- the development of integrated frameworks for linking **impact** assessment to regional planning and development processes;

  the improvement of the **scientific** rigour of ecological and social **impact** analyses;

  the development of *more* effective procedures for clarifying and incorporating **social** values in impact evaluation; and

  the **identification** of alternative mean6 for strengthening policy and institutional frameworks for linking the above elements.

From an operational perspective, the Council has indicated its commitment to developing new **perspectives** in the EIA field, promoting integrated research approaches and cooperating with other agencies to fund research.

(iii) Purpose of the Status Report

Social impact assessment was Identified early on by Council as **an important** area **of** research. It was clear that the implications **of** proposed projects **for** people's way of **life,** cultural traditions and communities were **becoming** increasingly significant issues in environmental assessment processes and that everyone involved **in** those *processes* **was** having considerable difficulty in

addressing these issues effectively. There **was** at that time *and* still is **a** lack **of consensus** on **how such** issues should be dealt with in **EA processes, the** meaning that should be attached to "social impacts, " what constitutes reliable assessment methods, and **the use** that should be made of social impact assessment findings **in** decision-making.

The purpose of this document is to report on the progress made by the Council in the area of social impact assessment research over the past two years and to **provide** recommendations *for* future initiatives. It was prepared with the assistance of Ann **Svendsen, a** consultant with **Synergistics,** who provided a critical assessment of Council's **SIA** research **activities.** The report includes:

1. a review *of* SIA research initiatives undertaken by the Council between September 1985 and October 1987;
2. **a** synthesis of the research findings;
3. observations and conclusions about **SIA** research in the context *of* existing **practices** and future trends; and
4. recommendations for future research,

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PART I: REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT **RESEARCH** PROGRAM

1.0 SETTING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

1.1 Initial Scoping of Topics

As a first step towards identifying **research** needs in the SIA field, Council commissioned a consultant, Dianne **Erickson,** to conduct a comparative analysis of two social impact **assessments.** **The Council felt that such a study** would assist in developing **a better** understanding of the methodological and institutional issues influencing SIA practice.

The results **of this** atudy, published as a Background Paper, were discussed at a **small** workshop of leading SIA professionals held in January, 1985. Based on **the** results *of* the workshop, **the SIA Committee of** Council **prepared a** Research Prospectus.   The **Prospectus** identified **five** potential research areas described **below:**

Orientation to **SIA.** Council's preliminary research into the **SIA** field revealed that **there were** competing models of SIA practice namely, **a** "technical" and a "political" one.   **Each embodied very** different   assumptions about **the** methods **and** role **appropriate** for SIA and, consequently, quite different conceptions about what constitutes an **"adequate"** social impact study.   The SIA Committee saw **a need for** research to determine what conditions and what **types of** projects were most appropriate for each **"model"** *of* **SIA** as **well as the techniques and methods which** might **be** common to both.

<u>Boundaries **of** the field</u>.   The geographic, **substantive** and time boundaries for **SIAs were** not well established.   This was seen to require research that would **aid** in developing an effective **process of** scoping **socio-economic** issues.

<u>**Relationship between** impact **prediction** and impact **monitoring**</u>.   Social impacts were proving very difficult to predict.   **Monitoring was** see-n as important not only to improve the predictive capability of the **SIAs** but also to facilitate impact management.   Council's **main** research interest in this regard was what constitutes effective social impact monitoring?

<u>Institutional arrangements</u>.   Procedural and policy arrangements for **EA** were seen as **key** determinants of the scope, methods, and integration of **SIA** with other assessment components,   Some types of institutional arrangements appeared to be more facilitative of the **SIAs** than others.   **It** *was* suggested   in the Prospectus that research **should** be undertaken which explored the effect of various institutional *arrangements* on SXA practice.

<u>Evaluating impact significance</u>.   Who decides what constitutes a "significant" social impact and *on* what **basis?** A lot of controversy in the SIA field **centered** around **these** two questions,   **Research in** this area *was* **seen** as needed to identify **ways** in which **SIA** could be strengthened **to** deal more effectively with the problem of evaluating impacts,

1.2 Research Priorities

If the five research areas, social impact monitoring and institutional arrangements for SXA were selected as Council's first priorities and, in September 1985, two research projects on these topics were initiated,

In the time between the publication of the SXA Research Prospectus and the start-up of research projects, a new issue began to emerge which Council decided also warranted priority in its SIA research agenda. This concerned the role of negotiation and mediation in the resolution of environmental disputes. Interest in alternative dispute resolution processes was beginning to &row rapidly and it was apparent that such processes had potentially profound implications, both positive and negative, for impact assessment practice. For this reason, Council decided to initiate research in this area as well.

2.0 SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

2.1 Impact Monitoring

The role of monitoring in managing social change was investigated in two CEARC. initiatives. The first was a study by Krawetz, MacDonald and Nichols (1987) entitled "A Framework for Effective Monitoring." The objectives of the study were to evaluate the effectiveness of alternate approaches to monitoring of socio-economic impacts and to develop a basic analytic framework that can be widely applied for this purpose. The study included a review and evaluation of

current monitoring programs, the development of a **monitoring framework, and** recommendations **for** improving **the effectiveness of** monitoring programs.

The framework set **out** three key elements *of* monitoring processes: objectives, the management **process and a** monitoring plan. It was used as ᴀ vehicle for evaluating the **rationale, requirements, and responsibilities for pre**- and **post**-decision monitoring in three case studies,

In **an** effort to *refine* **the** theoretical **and** practical **aspects of** the framework described in the **Krawetz** paper, CEARC then organized a **workshop, held in March,** 1987. **The workshop was designed** to allow **for** review of monitoring case studies and **to** explore **methodological** issues, especially those relating to **the** integration **of social** with bio-physical monitoring,

The Krawetz paper and the discussion at the workshop **emphasized** practical issues surrounding monitoring. **One** of the central themes that was discussed was the apparent incompatibility between monitoring **for** impact assessment where the objective is **to** verify impact predictions and **thus** contribute to **the** strengthening of impact assessment predictive methods, **And monitoring for** impact management where the objective is to **get** early **warning** of potential problems ꜱᴏ that **corrective** action **can** be taken **to** prevent or **minimize** the impending impact. **Krawetz** Argued that this **incompatibility** was **related** to the **fact that** fntervention **was a necessary** outcome **of** monitoring for impact management whereas it was not required within the scope of monitoring for impact assessment.

Moat participants at the workshops **agreed** that socio-economic monitoring programs could not be "all things to all people. " It was concluded that the two kinds of monitoring should be treated as separate processes with different objectives and results.

The appropriateness of a "socio-political" or qualitative approach versus a "technical" or quantitative approach to monitoring was raised as an issue at the workshop. A number of participant6 argued that qualitative research methods were not being given sufficient emphasis in socio-economic monitoring programs. This perspective was the focus of a paper presented by A. Armour titled "Methodological Problems in Social Impact Monitoring." *In* Armour's paper, it was suggested that given that there is a limited understanding of hots' to *measure,* and therefore, predict psycho-social impacts, qualitative approaches to monitoring may be the only viable alternative, Armour contended that, in any case, social impact monitoring should be primarily used as a tool for impact management and that, in terms of methodological perspective, the concept "intelligence gathering" rather than scientific analysis should be emphasized in data collection.

In relation to this point, Krawetz argued in her paper that community driven monitoring programs for impact management should take precedence over **programs** that are totally expert-based. Some workshop attendees raised concerns about the implications of this emphasis, They specifically brought up the issue of the requirements *of* a formal review process (e.g., is there a need for quantitative technical data to influence hearing boards?).

Overall, **some** of the major conclusions that can **be** drawn from CEARC's research into impact monitoring **include:**

○ Monitoring **for** impact *assessment* **purposes and** monitoring for impact management are basically incompatible.

○ The administrative process devised to implement **the** monitoring program **is** vitally important to its **success.** In particular the interpersonal and management **skills** *of* those involved in the administration of monitoring programs **can dramatically** influence the outcome.

○ Affected parties should be involved in the monitoring process and especially in scoping, even though efficiency may be compromised.

○ There are *many* barriers to effective monitoring to verify impact prediction, including limited **knowledge** about linkages between environmental and social factors, difficulties in establishing base line conditions, and the need to rely on **subjective** inputs.

2.2 Institutional Arrangements

D'Amore and Associates was contracted *to* research the implications of alternative institutional arrangements for SIA practice, The objectives of the research effort were to identify and describe the **organizational** models and institutional arrangements that **have** most successfully encouraged the production **of** SIA studies that are competent, integrated with the **bio-** physical environmental **assessments** and credible to the **community at large.**

D'Amore's research report described the effect of provincial legislation on the conduct of SIAs in B.C., Alberta, and Ontario; similarities ond differences in the way this legislation is administered across the country; the role of government reviewers and committees; process issues; the effect of hearings; and the involvement of municipalities and communities in the development and review of SIAs. More *importantly,* it highlighted the implications of institutional arrangements *on* the effectiveness of SIAs (in terms of both the process and the use of results by decision-makers). Institutional factors such as the fragmentation of responsibility *for* social impacts among many agencies and levels of government, the fact that many government *reviewers do* not have the background in the social sciences required to provide guidance and assess the adequacy of social impact studies, and the lack of a comprehensive social policy framework for evaluating benefits and dis-benefits all create a context which is not conducive to effectively predicting and managing social impacts.

D'Amore identified legislative changes which would improve effectiveness (e.g., explicit requirements for dealing with social impacts, and a requirement for a comprehensive public Consultation process). He also suggested a number of organizational factors which would aupport the integrated review of socio-economic impacts (e.g., meetings between reviewers, a central information base, a SIA steering committee).

In addition to these organizational or structural conditions, D'Amore discussed a number of issues related to the practice of SIA which, it was felt, warranted attention. They included: the importance of early involvement of all parties, (e.g. through scoping); the importance of interactive processes

(e.g., to transfer information, share perspectives, learn about the review process) ; and the importance of timing (e.g., of consultation, government review, establishment of social services).

D'Amore also described the types of "values" or perspectives which, from his point of view, seemed to be the most conducive to an effective SIA *process. He* suggested that all parties, especially the government reviewers, the proponent and the SIA practitioner should be supportive, committed and open minded. This suggestion stems from the observation that the needs and interests of impacted community **often** were not being met within the current **institutional structure.** The assumption put forward was that by changing the attitudes of the decision-makers, the process would be more "fair" and, hence, effective.

Overall, the following are the major conclusions that can be derived from the research on institutional arrangements:

0   Changes to legislation are needed to improve the effectiveness of social impact assessment.

0   *Government* review processes are often fragmented, leading to piecemeal consideration of social impacts.

0   Government **reviewers,** proponents and scientists responsible for EIA often do not have adequate grounding *in* the social sciences to contribute effectively to the SXA process.

0   The issue of accountability to the impacted community has not been resolved.   Often, the SIA process reflects the interests **and needs of** the proponent and the regulators.

⁰   More communication between **EIA** and **SIA** practitioners would help to ensure that **social** impacts were integrated with bio-physical impacts,

⁰   Communities often *lack* adequate financial **and/or** other resources to participate effectively in formal or informal review processes.

2.3 Negotiation

A workshop on the place of negotiation **in the** EIA processes was the major initiative undertaken *by* CEARC *on* this topic.   Three background *papers* prepared for the workshop provided the framework and stimulus **for** the discussion.   The objectives *of* the workshop were to analyze the ways and means by which negotiation can or should operate within environmental impact assessments, and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the parties *involved.*

A central question posed at the workshop was, "Should negotiation *and* mediation be institutionalized or left, as is the case in Canada, as a relatively informal, ad hoc adjunct to planning and regulatory processes?" The American experience with formal negotiation provided an important context for this discussion.

A paper prepared by Tony Porcey included an assessment of 30 dispute resolution cases which involved some form of negotiation, He concluded that *the* explicit use of negotiation has increased dramatically over the past **20** years, **and** that within the confines of "negotiation, " these are many different approaches (e.g., conciliation, facilitation, fact finding, mediation, and arbitration). *Dorcey* also developed a typology of negotiation contexts. He suggested, for

example, that most negotiation occurs in situations involving two government departments or other organizations which have the authority to make decisions independently of each other, and in situations where one authoritative body "consults" with an affected party. Dorcey suggested that further research be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of various approaches to negotiation, including American examples. He also recommended that more attention be directed towards improving the interactive skills of participants in the negotiation *process.*

The second background paper, *prepared* by Professor Paul Emond, examined the issue of accommodating negotiation in EIA and the project approval process, Emond identified various obstacles in current institutional arrangements which preclude effective use of negotiation and mediation processes. He *also* broached *some* important questions including What is the role of negotiation and mediation?", "Are some issues more amenable to negotiation than others?" and "Is there a point at which an issue is ripe for negotiation and mediation?" Emond argued that, due to the inadequacies of the existing assessment and review processes, negotiation should be established as a separate and distinct process. He suggested that this would allow more opportunity for experimentation. But, he recognized that this was unlikely to happen and, therefore, rather than adopt a position which would "throw the baby out with the bathwater, " Emond concluded that negotiation should be developed as an adjunct to planning processes, *assessment* boards, and management programs.

The third paper discussed at the workshop, presented by John McGlennon, also put forward the view that informal negotiation should be used to augment

formal decision-making procedures. McGlennon discussed issues of accountability, responsibility, and liability as they relate to the viability of such an informal process. He *reviewed a* particularly successful example of *"negotiated rule* making" in the **United** States **and** concluded that a similar process **could** be **used in Canada to** build consensus, improve working relationships amongst parties to an environmental dispute **and** avoid costly litigation.

Representative8 of environmental and community interest group6 present at the workshop expressed skepticism about the **advantages** of negotiation **and** mediation processes. Fear of co-optation and lack of power were primary concerns. Interestingly, similar reservations were also expressed by some government representatives.

Overall, some of the key conclusion6 that can be drawn from the *research* papers and the negotiation workshop are:

0   In Canada, negotiation and mediation have been primarily used to supplement environmental assessment and regulation. It appears that there are fewer examples of negotiated agreement6 than the literature would suggest.

' 0   Institutionalizing processes of mediation and negotiation **may** reduce the effectiveness of such **approaches**; voluntary participation is an essential pre-requisite to "good faith" negotiation.

0   Negotiation should be viewed *as a* tool for problem-solving and for enhancing *the* effectiveness and efficiency of impact analysis and decision-making.

o   Pre-hearing scoping, determination **of** mitigation and compensation measures, and post-approval revisions are appropriate areas **for mediation** *or* negotiation.

0   **To be** successful, negotiation must be clearly linked to decision-making to ensure the implementation of an agreement, Also, the parties **must** have developed **a** climate **of** trust **and each must carry** sufficient influence and **hnve the** resources to **be** taken seriously.

0   Ground rules for, selecting representatives must be known and accepted at **the** beginning **of the** process.

0   **An** independent mediator will usually be needed to facilitate the discussions.

0   A number **of** concerns, notably the coat effectiveness **of** negotiation, **remain** unanswered. Thus, a cautionary approach **to** the promotion of negotiation **is** in **order,** with **continued** scrutiny and further testing.

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIA **RESEARCH ISSUES** AND **COUNCIL'S ROLE**

3.1 Uncertainty and Fragmentation

The **SIA** *field* **is characterized** by **a** high level of uncertainty and fragmentation. **CEARC's research** to date *clearly* **reflects this reality, Bach of** the three SIA research initiatives highlighted a **range of** theoretical and practical **issues.** Essentially, more questions **were raised than** answered. More importantly, research in each *area* revealed a continuing lack of consensus *in* the field. The **SIA** community is still exploring and debating alternate

conceptual frameworks and procedural principles to guide their work. A unified view of "social impact assessment" has yet to *emerge.*

The problem is that those involved in the broader field of **environmental impact** assessment, especially those responsible *for* technical analyses and decision-making, are looking toward SIA research to provide methods to predict social impacts more accurately and reliable procedures for managing unforeseen impacts . In addition, it is hoped that the SIA process, because of its public involvement emphasis, will somehow provide a vehicle to assist in the resolution of conflicts that arise in planning and development processes. Basically, what is wanted is a "cook book" solution to the dynamic problems of impact prediction and management.

The *tensions* apparent within the SIA field and the broader EIA field create a demanding *research* context. Council's approach to date *has* been to aim its SIA research towards the clarification of issues and the fostering of dialogue and debate. Given the degree of uncertainty and fragmentation which exist in the field and the likelihood of this *continuing* for *some* time, Council's *research* approach seems an appropriate one. It is far too early in the field's development for Council to adopt *a* strong advocacy position in favour *of one* conception of SIA over another or. to support research of the "cook book" type, In other words, Council's research thrust should continue to be exploratory (helping to define and track changes in the dimensions *of* the field) rather than directive (promoting particular procedural principles and methods).

In **this** regard, Council's SIA Research Prospectus, prepared in 1985, identified two fundamental points of **debate in the** field. These concerned the role **of** the **SIA practitioner** (scientist or advocate?) and the orientation of **the** SIA *process* itself **(technical or oocio-political?).** CEARC's research initiatives **have revealed the continued relevance of** these points *of* **debate.** It also pointed to the **need** *to* **question** assumptions underlying "ideal" models.

3.2 A Question **of** Role: The **SIA** Practitioner **as** Scientist or Advocate?

It **has** become apparent that the boundaries of social impact assessment have been extended in the past several years from *a* focus strictly **on** impact assessment **per** se to a broader concern with process management. To a large extent, this *stems* from the observation that **the** process itself can have a significant social impact. Thus **SIA** practitioners have **become concerned** not only about ensuring that impacts **are** accurately and comprehensively predicted and **evaluated** but also that the assessment process **is** minimally disruptive of community **life** and that **affected** individuals regard **the process as "fair"** (e.g., that they have had full opportunity to make their interests known and that **these** interests **have been** fully *considered). As a* result, the role of the SIA practitioner has gradually shifted from that **of scientist** to advocate,

While increasing the equitability of the impact assessment process was not explicitly identified as a' goal of CEARC research, it **has** become an underlying theme **of its SIA** research efforts. The research on monitoring, for example, grappled with this issue in the context *of* methodology. Krawetz argued that a qualitative approach to monitoring and assessment, with **a high** degree **of**

community participation in establishing priorities **and** procedures, was more conducive to creating a **"fair"** process. **Her framework** for effective monitoring also explicitly acknowledged the importance of monitoring objectives and the management process for ensuring the equitability of SIA monitoring. Similarly, the research into institutional arrangements **and** the role **of** negotiation a n d mediation in the EIA process raised questions regarding the fairness *of the* process and the equity of **its** outcomes.

In **each case,** *however,* not much effort **was** directed **toward** clarifying **and** critically assessing the underlying assumptions which were being made about the appropriate role of the SIA practitioner. All of the research initiatives implicitly ascribe to the **goal of** increasing **"fairness"** **and** **"equity"** but t h e implications of this for practice remain ambiguous. This **reflects** the lack o f *a* shared understanding in the impact **assessment** field *of* the role of the **SIA** practitioner and the place **of** social impact assessment and management **in** the decision-making process.

More critical thinking and discussion amongst experts in the field is needed to **answer** such questions as: Should **SIA** practitioners act as **advocates** *for* impacted communities? Are responsibilities for objective, scientific reporting of change compatible with advocacy of fair compensation? How **can** development decisions be influenced to **minimize** social and psychological impacts? Council, through its research activities, aims to create opportunities for such questions to be addressed **and, in so** doing, to help elevate the debate.

3.3 The Orientation of SIA: Technical or Socio-political?

In recent years, the definition of "social" concerns in the context of impact assessment has grown to Include **not** *only* the aocio-economic impacts Of a potential **undertaking** but also the measures that will *be* put *in place to deal* with them. **For example,** impacted groups are becoming involved in developing monitoring programs, determining levels of compensation, **and identifying** community service needs. Meetings are held between government officials, the proponent and representatives of impacted communities to "negotiate" *how* these benefits and dia-benefits will be allocated. The SIA process, because public **involvement is** central **to** it, has corns to **be regarded as a vehicle for** facilitating such negotiations. Rather than simply predicting impacts *on* the community and individuals, as SIAs were more likely to do a decade ago, contemporary processes **are** often expected to provide opportunities for interested parties *to* become involved in the development and implementation of programs **to** manage potential **impacts.** In other words, the SIA process has shifted *from being* just **a** technical process to a socio-political one.

CEARC's decision to research institutional arrangements **reflected a** recognition of the importance **of socio-political factors** in determining how. SIA *processes* **work.** .**Each of its** SIA research initiatives have **revealed a need for on**-**going** critical analysis **of** structural arrangements. The key analytic questions are: **how** do structural arrangements serve to *reinforce* **the** power and influence of certain groups in impact identification, impact management and the allocation of resources? **whose** objectives are being met by the current process? and how do structural factors help to perpetuate the status quo?

The **socio-political** dimensions *of* the impact assessment process and their influence **on SIA** practice are significant concerns and are intricately related with the issue of the role of the SIA **practitioner.** Research into socio-political issues will **be** difficult **and *no*** doubt contentious. Council, as an independent research body, **is** well positioned *to foster a* more explicit consideration of such *factors* and promote research which aims to clarify the socio-political implications **of** structural arrangements

3.4 Negotiation: An Idealistic Model **of** Environmental Decision-Making?

Negotiation hart been seen, by many **EIA** practitioners and others, **as** a panacea for **resolving** disputes related to the **environmental** and **social implications *of*** now projects **or** developments. Furthermore, **as** evidenced by the discussion which took place at the **CEARC** workshop on negotiation, a commonly accepted premise is that **community** participation in a negotiation process **will** result in qualitatively better decisions, that is, ones that are more sensitive and socially acceptable than those resulting from the traditional, highly **technical** approaches **to** impact assessment.

At the workshop, however, participants did raise a number **of concerns** about the extent to which current negotiation processes are fulfilling these expectations. **Dorcey's** review of case studies revealed that the emphasis in planning and impact **assessment processes** tends **to** be on information sharing or consultation rather **than** shared decision-making, Emond reinforced this perspective. After discussing **some** of the obstacles that preclude or impede

negotiation, he concluded that it was unlikely that existing legislative and

decision-making structures would change to accommodate **multi-partite decision-**

making. In his opinion, negotiation would continue to be used **as a** stop-gap

approach to resolving planning and impact asaessment **issues.** Joint decision-

making, despite its potential, to **minimize** conflict, waa unrealistic given

current **social** and political realities.

Overall, what is apparent is that the conditions which **are** necessary **for co-**

operative planning and principled negotiation -- **trust** between the parties,

adequate resources for all parties to participate **fully,** and willingness to

share decision-making responsibility -- are **rarely** present, The obvious

questions are why and what, if anything, can be done about it? **Is joint**

decision-making a basic tenet of alternative dispute resolution processes, **an**

unattainable ideal?

It is clearly too early **to** make definitive statements on such questions, There

has not **been** enough experimenting with alternative dispute resolution processes

to **enable supporting** and constraining factors **to be** fully **identified and** the

potential of such processes to **be** conclusively **addressed.** Council, however,

can **support** knowledge development in and critical **analysis of negotiation-**

based approaches to impact assessment.

PART **2: RESEARCH** PRIORITIES

4.0 POSSIBLE **RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

In attempting to identify possible SIA research **topics,** the SIA **Committee** considered three questions:

- Which, **if *any*,** of the research initiatives undertaken to date warrant further research by Council?

- Should **any** of the research areas identified in the **1985 SIA** Prospectus **that** have *not* yet been addressed be ***now given*** priority in **Council's research** agenda?

- **Are** there **any new research** topics which should be considered as **candidates** for Council-sponsored research?

4.1 Follow-up Research

Council's SIA Committee **research** activities have focused on three **topics:** social **impact** monitoring, **institutional arrangements** and environmental negotiations. **All** of these warrant further follow-up research.

With respect to social **impact** monitoring, **opportunities** for further research include:

0   approaches to monitoring **"soft"** social impacts **(social** impact monitoring programs tend to be strong **methodologically** in addressing economic, **fiscal,** land use and facility/service impacts but weak in addressing **cultural**, socio-psychological and socio-political impacts)

0   approaches to involving affected/interested publics in monitoring impact management programs, including **the** design and implementation phases.

With respect to institutional arrangements, **opportunities** for further research include :

0   the effect of **intervenor** funding/support on the impact assessment and review process (various experiments with intcrvenor funding and other forms **of** support *for* community groups have been initiated in the past five years and these warrant evaluation)

0   the **impacts of** the impact assessment and public review process and ways' in which these can be prevented or minimized.

With respect to environmental negotiations, opportunities for **further** research include :

0   the current role **of** negotiations within the EIA process (negotiation is taking on more **of** a role within **EIA** practice but there is not much documentation **of** this)

0   the substantive component of negotiation processes *(**most** of* the research emphasis to **date has been** on the process, i.e., how **the**

negotiations proceeded, rather than on the product, **i.e., what** was **negotiated)**

0   operational difficulties associated with applying alternative dispute resolution procetaes in **EIA** and **ways of dealing with these**

0   **the** interrelationship of consultation and negotiation in impact assessment processes.

4.2 **SIA Prospectus** Revisited

The 1985 **SIA** Prospectus identified five **potential research** areas, only two **of** which were acted upon by Council. The areas not addressed **were: orientat ion to** SIA (technical vs. socio-political **approaches**); boundaries of the field (scoping of **social** impact *concerns);* and the question of significance (approaches **to** evaluating social impacts). Each **of** these still represent significant areas of concern in the **SIA** field. In terms of Council's possible **research agenda,** the SIA Committee suggests that the orientation to SIA and the question **of** significance represent the more **critical** concerns. The scoping of social **impact concerns has** received considerable attention and is less of a n issue than the other two.

Section 3 of the attached "Report on SIA Activities" makes the point that in each **of** the SIA research **projects undertaken by Council the orientation to SIA emerged as a** fundamental **issue.** It **also makes** the point that **there are** some important research issues in **this** *regard* that warrant attention. These include **:**

- dealing with equity concerns in **impact** assessment (compensation for inequitable distribution *of* impacts **and** risks **has** become especially important concern in the context **of facility** siting, the development of impact **management** policies and **programs,** and the promotion **of sustainable** development)

- ensuring the **"fairness"** of planning **and** decision-making processes in terms **of** opportunities *for* and **support** provided to affected *interests* who want to be involved in the assessment process.

With respect **to** the evaluation *of* social impacts, the main opportunities **for** research include:

- methods *for* assessing the **significance of social** impacts, especially socio-cultural, socio-psychological and socio-political

- approaches to integrating social impact evaluations with other components **of EIA.**

4.3 New Topics

The SIA field has not remained static **since** the publishing *of* the 1985 **SIA Research** Prospectus and **new** issues have emerged which represent possible area3 **of** research that Council could address, For example, *two* prominent opportunities for research are:

- dealing with **risk** perception in impact assessment and management

0   socially-oriented concepts of facility **siting** (e.g., the invitational approach to **siting used by** Alberta or the **negotiations of** *facility* development **agreements)** and their implicationa for impact assessment practice.

4.4 Recommended Research **Priorities**

The SIA field is rich in research opportunities.   The thirteen topics **listed** above certainly **provide** only an **indication** of **possible** directions,

For Council to determine **which of these** topics should **be** given priority in its *research* agenda **as** well as **how these** should be addressed, it will have **t o** consider these **topics** in the context of its full **research** agenda (i.e., a r e they discrete topics? **can** they be **linked** with other research initiatives? e t c .), committee arrangement (who should **assume** responsibility for which research **agenda items?), and budget (how much** emphasis should be put *on* social **impact** research?).

In setting SIA **research** priorities, Council should also take into **account** t h e **views** of the SIA community (i.e., what do they perceive to be priorities? **what** approaches would they consider to be most effective? etc.). **This can be best** done **by organizing another** roundtable **discussion** similar to the one that **was** held a6 **a means** *of* developing the 1985 Prospectus.

The SIA Committee would strongly recommend that Council endeavour to encourage research **in each** of the three broad **categories** *of* topics discussed in this

memo. **In** other **words,** effort should be **directed towards building on p a s t initiatives,** following through **on** research **issues** identified **as** relevant in the SIA Research **Prospectus since** they **are** still *in* "**good currency,**" and **tackling leading** edge issues. **More** specifically, emphasis should be **given** to promoting and supporting research *on:*

- o   <u>**the role of** negotiations, within the **EIA** process</u>:   this could **involve documentation and case** study analysis **of** Canadian experience;

- 0   <u>the impacts of the impact assessment and public **review** process</u>:   this **could** involve **case** study **analysis, interview** surveys and a workshop bringing together residents who actively participated in an EIA to identify and assess the "process **impacts"** which were experienced; and

- 0   <u>methods for **assessing** the significance **of social impacts a n d approaches** to integrating SIA with **other EIA** components</u>:   this could **involve** a roundtable "debriefing" session of SIA **professionals** who have **carried** out social **impact studies in** the past **three** years i n **Canada.**

APPENDIX 1:   CEARC SPONSORED WORKSHOPS

To be completed.

APPENDIX 2:   GRADUATE **STUDENT** RESEARCH

The **following is a** breakdown   of the topics *covered in the* graduate   student research   initiatives sponsored by CEARC between 1985 and 1988.

A.	Native Concerns in BIA	3
B.	Monitoring	4
C.	Public Participation in EIA/EARP	3
D.	**Administration** of **EIAs/EARP**	6
E.	**EIA/Measurement**	18
F.	Mitigation/Compensation	2
G.	Other	1

Out **of** the total of 37 graduate student research contracts, the majority deal with the measurement of bio-physical impacts. **Relatively** few deal with monitoring and social impacts.