

**Emille Giddings**

938 Section A Block X Great Diamond  
East Bank Demerara  
(592) 647-5005

2021-10-07

**The Editor****Guyana Chronicle**

Lama Avenue,  
Bel Air Park,  
Georgetown, Guyana

Dear Editor,

Protect human health and safety. Protect the environment. Those two principles alone grant us the license to regulate oil operations with the fine-tooth comb that keeps our shores and mangroves safe, our bodies intact and some of our more interesting futures possible.

Oil operations are complex and difficult to integrate with as regulators. To regulate the drilling activity alone, for example, requires specialized knowledge par excellence and on par with drilling technology providers. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico awakened us to the need for regulating technology deployment in drilling activities. Geopressures in this part of the world make drilling activities tricky and dangerous. Things can go wrong, and catastrophically so if we make the wrong technology choices.

Editor, we have an operator in our young field already in production mode and already plotting its Bayesian march across the field, more recently with success. Maybe they are just that good, or maybe miracles were involved in the successes that they have seen so far. Who knows? Were we working hand-in-hand with them throughout these activities, ensuring that they were selecting the right technologies to meet the requirements of our regulatory principles?

Editor, more oil operators are on their way over. Are we getting ready to regulate future drilling activities in our field? Do we plan to take over our own fields? Would there be time or scope for that at our current rate of regulation? Do we see specialized regulation as a means to creating an advantageous position for ourselves? Do we have time to create 'institutions' and 'build capacity'? If so, what capacities would we begin to build today? It seems that we have committed to providing a favorable cost environment for our first oil partner so that they can become profitable. We have been generous (an understatement?). Can we leverage that position, in spite of its underlying history, to strengthen our regulatory environment and create a direction of travel toward oil autonomy and strong negotiation in the sector?

In the case of "no new legislation", should we enhance our existing agencies and equip them to effect the regulatory principles more rigorously, thereby facing the reality of dangerous oil operations near our shores? Should we have been doing that all along? Were we working toward specialized regulation all those decades ago as oil companies came sniffing about our shores, giving us time to get ready? Countless times, we have spoken of legislation to protect our long term strategies across political administrations but is this form of legislative action really the only answer we can give? Do we not have agencies with sufficient mandate to effect these duties to our people and our planet? Could they not be equipped to furnish an evolved regulatory strategy?

Editor, my feeling is that knowing what moves to make is tough and perhaps we already made a few false steps at the beginning, but does this mean that we have lost our footing altogether? Could technology planning be a stepping stone toward the giant leap of mastery over our oil field? When it comes to oil, are we having the right conversations these days? Should we be talking about local content so intensely or should we be working to evolve as regulators? Given our current position, is our next move going to be the best move?

Sincerely,  
Emille Giddings