

New Democrats Call on Conservatives to Protect Independent Fishers

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OTTAWA - Today, Canada's New Democrats called on the Conservative government to protect east coast fishers, fish processors, and their way of life. Coastal communities depend on the valuable inshore fishery but the federal government seems intent on eliminating the fleet separation and owner/operator policies.

“Independent fishermen are outraged that the Minister is moving ahead with plans to eliminate the fleet separation and owner/operator policies,” said Fin Donnelly, NDP Fisheries & Oceans Critic. “The Conservatives are determined to sell our fishery to the highest bidder.”

Philip Toone, NDP Deputy Fisheries Critic said, "The DFO is not consulting fishers about these changes, which are critical to the survival of coastal communities. Once again, it appears the Minister is abandoning Canadian fishers in favour of big corporations."

“The fleet separation and owner operator policy protects many jobs and prevents the concentration of corporate power, allowing coastal communities to make a living from the fishery,” said New Democrat MP Yvon Godin (Acadie Bathurst).

Peter Stoffer (Sackville-Eastern Shore) and former NDP fisheries critic believes that eliminating the owner fleet separation policy would be a “critical error, which could lead to the eventuality of foreign control of our inshore fisheries.”

“Independent fishermen have been the backbone of the Newfoundland inshore fishery for years,” said New Democrat MP Jack Harris (St. John’s East). “Any move to eliminate this longstanding policy will only hurt fishermen and the communities that depend on the inshore fishery.”