

Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board
P.O. Box 312
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February 28, 2012

The Honourable Keith Ashfield, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
200 Kent Street, 15th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0E6

Dear Minister Ashfield,

I am writing on behalf of the executive of the Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board and its member organizations in response to your Department's recent invitation to comment on a series of policy initiatives dealing with fisheries modernization that were presented last month in Moncton, New Brunswick.

The Board's report, appended to this letter, also includes a separate report on the outcomes of a Board-sponsored workshop held in December 2011 on ways and means to strengthen conservation, promote stewardship, and improve economic viability in relation to the Gulf's regional commercial licensing policy.

As a Board whose members represent hundreds of inshore multi-species commercial fish harvesters in Gulf Nova Scotia, we have taken a very active role over the past several years in proposing changes to the management of the commercial inshore fisheries of the southern Gulf, and in undertaking many projects with DFO and other institutions in the areas of fisheries management, fleet rationalization and lobster science. We intend to remain actively engaged in these and other endeavours well into the future.

I must say, however, that we were very disappointed with DFO's specific presentation on the proposed approach to fisheries modernization. We were expecting to receive, at a minimum, some concrete information on how DFO proposed to implement the outstanding priorities and commitments associated with Phase I of the AFPR. Instead, we were provided with a document that, for all intents and purposes, rehashed much of what we have already heard and know in regards to the challenges which lie ahead.

We also took special note of your Department's interest in simplifying the rules and adopting a more consistent approach to the application of policies. Mr. Minister, simplifying rules and promoting greater policy consistency are not what the inshore fish harvesters we represent see as the priorities of your Department in moving forward. In fact, we are more concerned by what we did not hear than by what we heard. Rather than set out on some new course for which we have only the vaguest understanding of what it is you wish to accomplish, may be suggest that you first commit to the following four priorities:

- Endorse and implement the advice provided by the IPAC Panel with respect to access and allocation decisions, and how ministerial decisions should be made;
- Instruct your officials to engage industry stakeholders in laying the foundation for implementation of Phase II AFPR initiatives based on the commitments noted therein;
- Commit to respecting the objectives and intent of the PIIFCAF framework specifically as it pertains to the Owner-Operator and Fleet Separation policies; and
- Introduce a new *Fisheries Act* in Parliament in 2012 following appropriate consultations with all legitimate stakeholders.

We do hope that our observations and comments in the attached report will assist in providing the Department with a clearer sense of where we feel our collective efforts should be focussed in modernizing the commercial fisheries in the short to medium term.

We hope to hear from you or your officials in the coming weeks, and we thank you for the opportunity to express our views and provide feedback.

Yours truly,

(original signed by)

Ronald Heighton
President

Attachment