



CIFHF calls on the Federal Government to step up its support for fisheries Emergency meeting of the Fisheries Committee required if Harvesters are to weather this season

April 28, 2020 - The Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters' Federation (CIFHF) is calling on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (FOPO) to reconvene for an emergency session to limit the damage COVID-19 will cause the industry and coastal communities.

"We need the Federal Government to step up and support the critical fisheries sector now," said Melanie Sonnenberg, President of the Canadian Independent Fish Harvester's Federation. "I am sure the Minister knows this, but Mother Nature will not wait for government to make decisions to help our industry. Members of the Fisheries Committee must make this a priority to meet to advance support for fish harvesters now."

The seasonal nature of the Canada's fisheries sector has left it exceptionally hard hit by COVID-19, with critical decisions forthcoming about the ability of harvesters to launch their vessels. Canada's fish harvesters may very well have to forgo critical fishing seasons due to a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) for the industry and social isolation all but impossible on a 40-foot vessel.

On April 25, 2020 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a limited \$62.5 million support package for fish processors. While fish processors are a key part of the fisheries supply-chain, direct support for the harvesters devastated by the pandemic is still required.

CIFHF has written to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Bernadette Jordan, calling on the government to address the impact of COVID-19 on the sector by addressing the following policies:

- Extend Employment Insurance (E.I.) benefits for a 12-month period for all fisheries workers, independent harvesters, crews and plant workers and include all salmon workers who qualified for E.I. based on the 2018 fishing season.
- Adapt the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) programs to meet the needs of the fisheries sector.
- Waive or reimburse all 2020 federal fees related to the commercial fishery including, but not limited to: licensing fees, vessel registration fees, IQ fees, wharf fees etc.
- Introduce a program similar to the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) for fish harvesters.
- Review other program elements of the COVID-19 Canada Emergency Response Plan such as the Farm Credit Canada and Business Credit Availability Programs and, where necessary, modify these programs to meet the unique challenges facing independent fish harvesters.
- Deferral of payments and freezing of interest on existing bank and provincial loan board loans related to fishing activity for a minimum of 12 months.

"Decisions need to be made now – so harvesters can get out on the water and get seafood on to Canadian plates," said Jim McIsaac, of the B.C. Commercial Fishing Caucus. "Along the coastal

communities in British Columbia, we have families and whole communities that depend on this industry.”

“We are running out of time with our spring lobster fishing season beginning in the next few weeks in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, we can no longer wait on policy from Ottawa, we need action now,” added Martin Mallet, Executive Director of the Maritime Fishermen’s Union

About the Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters’ Federation

The Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters’ Federation (CIFHF) is the national advocacy voice for the people who harvest most of Canada’s plentiful and valuable seafood.

We are the people who produce most of Canada’s lobster, crab, wild salmon, shrimp, and groundfish. Our seafood landings put Canada among the top fishing nations in the world and make us the single largest private sector employer in most coastal communities.

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