

Advertisement

X

Quinlan family to retain stake in Canadian processor after Royal Greenland sale

By Jason Huffman

Nov. 9, 2020 18:05 GMT



📷 Bay de Verde, in Newfoundland and Labrador. Image from the Quinlan Brothers Ltd. website.

Advertisement

X

Robin Quinlan, president of the large Canadian processing company named for his grandfather and great uncle who founded it, will maintain a top position and a percentage of the operation after it is otherwise acquired by Royal Greenland, the company is stressing in a statement shared with *Undercurrent News*.

Royal Greenland, a large international harvester and processor based in Nuuk, Greenland, declared in March its intentions to buy Quinlan Bros., based in Bay de Verde, on the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). The announcement

has been met with considerable resistance from the Fish Food & Allied Workers Union (FFAW), which represents harvesters in the area.

FFAW has argued that the merger will leave three large companies with control over about 75% of all fish processing and close to 85% of the lucrative shellfish processing in the province. The group expresses concerns that Royal Greenland is a Crown company and the Greenlandic fishery is a direct competitor with NL, targeting many of the same species and selling into the same markets.

Royal Greenland CEO Mikael Thinghuus has responded by defending his company as a "good neighbor" in Canada, noting how it has handled its operation of NL-based Quin-Seas Fisheries since it was acquired in 2016.

"We've followed the law, we followed procedures, as we do everywhere," Thinghuus told *Undercurrent* in October. "I think if you look at the facts, in 2016 we made promises to the province and to the employees of Quin-Sea Fisheries, and we delivered on those."

Based on multiple media reports, Royal Greenland's deal for Quinlan Brothers has received the okay needed from Elvis Loveless, the province's new fisheries minister, though neither company has yet to confirm the approval.

FFAW, in a recent column published by *The Telegram*, an NL newspaper, suggested it believes the approval was likely granted in early October. However, in a comment emailed to *Undercurrent*, the union group said it also is awaiting details.



Keith Sullivan, president of the Fish Food and Allied Workers, in Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada.

"The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have many questions regarding the impact of the Royal Greenland acquisition of Quinlan Brothers, Keith Sullivan, FFAW's president, wrote. "To date, confusion remains because the NL government refuses to give details, or have a public debate, on the important public policy concerns of harmful corporate concentration levels in the fish processing industry, illegal control of local fishing licenses, and foreign ownership. No further details regarding progress of the deal or ownership structure have been forthcoming."

Quinlan Brothers, in its recent statement, said only that the companies "have complied with all the regulatory requirements to obtain government approval".

However, in its statement, the company said it seeks to correct erroneous reports by local media about the deal that suggests the family that started the business will fade entirely from the scene.

"Robin Quinlan, company president, has decided to remain an owner and invest further by facilitating the retirement of his father, Wayne," the company said in its undated statement, though it has yet to specify what percentage of the company he will retain.

The statement described the Quinlan Brothers' need for a "renewing of the guard", noting how co-founder and long-time leader Patrick Quinlan passed away in Dec. 2017. His partners, Wayne and Donald Quinlan, have "progressed well into their retirement years," it said.

"In response to this challenge, our initial thought was to sell the company outright," the statement said. "This is the perception in the public today that we seek to correct."

"Our partner, Royal Greenland, is investing with Robin Quinlan to build a new partnership in Quinlan Brothers Limited," the statement said. "Both, collectively, share a vision of joint ownership and control that will secure a strong future and growth that will enhance the commitment of Quinlan Brothers Limited to its employees, suppliers, and communities.



📷 Snow crabs. Credit: norikko/Shutterstock.com

Quinlan Brothers was started in 1954 by Pat and his brother Maurice when they acquired JF O'Neill's Grocery and Dry-Goods from the widow of the previous owner, who loaned them the money needed to get off the ground, according to the company website.

Today the company employs nearly 500 seasonal and full-time workers and manages an 80,000 square foot HACCP-certified shellfish processing plant where

80% of the local fleet is able to offload its catch directly. Another nearby plant processes more than 10 different species of seafood, including pelagic and groundfish.

"Quinlan Brothers Ltd. will remain true to its legacy," the statement said. "...Royal Greenland has demonstrated its long-term commitment in NL through its investment in and growth of Quin-Sea Fisheries. ... Our commitment remains unchanged. Quinlan Brothers will continue to serve its interest as a productive local business with strong local roots in [NL]. We will continue to secure local employment. And we will continue to develop and maintain the relationships that have served our business for decades, with people on the sea and the people on the land that have long supported us. Our passion and dedication to our industry is not going to change."

Contact the author jason.huffman@undercurrentnews.com

**© 2020 Undercurrent News.
All rights reserved.**