

July 10, 2024

SENT VIA EMAIL

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
pm@pm.gc.ca

The Honourable Diane Lebouthillier, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Lebouthillier,

Re: Northern Cod

We write today on a serious matter needing your attention.

On behalf of 320,000 workers across the country, including more than 14,000 members of the Fish, Food and Allied Workers (FFAW) Union in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are calling on you to reverse a recent decision with respect to the northern cod moratorium.

The decision to end the moratorium and grant access to corporate offshore interests flies in the face of what was committed by your government and decades of past fisheries management practice.

We also are concerned with the impact this will have on a fishery that is still recovering.

Your government must uphold its 2015 commitment to allocate the first 115,000 tonnes of northern cod quota to inshore harvesters and Indigenous groups and immediately reinstate the Northern cod stewardship fishery under the same conditions as 2023.

This has been a well understood commitment and was reiterated in the [2021 northern cod stewardship management approach](#) which stated: "The 2021 Management approach also includes a decision to allocate the first 115,000 tonnes of Northern cod to the inshore sector and Indigenous groups. When a total allowable catch (TAC) for Northern (2J3KL) cod is established, the first 115,000 tonnes of directed Canadian access will be allocated to the inshore sector and Indigenous groups in Newfoundland and Labrador. At a TAC level less than or equal to 115,000 tonnes, directed fishing activity will be limited

to inshore harvesters and Indigenous groups in Newfoundland and Labrador. All other fleets, where no quota is allocated, will be limited to bycatch only.”

As mentioned, the announcement on June 26 to end the moratorium and permit access to Canadian and international offshore interests disregards a longstanding commitment that the first 115,000 tonnes of the Northern cod quota would be allocated to inshore harvesters and their coastal communities. This commitment predates the northern cod moratorium and was instituted in 1982 by Romeo Leblanc, ensuring that only inshore, owner-operated harvesters and Indigenous groups would benefit from northern cod stocks until the 115,000-tonne threshold was met.

Prime Minister, this was a commitment that you maintained in a letter to the FFAW in 2015, stating, “*a Trudeau-led government will re-affirm the federal commitment to allocate the first 115,000 tonnes of Northern cod quota to the inshore harvesters so that, as the resource rebounds, the benefits of a future cod fishery flow to inshore harvesters and coastal communities.*” Since then, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has repeatedly upheld the principle of prioritizing the first 115,000 tonnes of 2J3KL cod stock for the inshore sector.

Not only does the decision to end the moratorium violate clear commitments made to local harvesters and communities, it has no basis in science. Cod populations remain firmly in the cautious zone according to the DFO’s most recent assessment and cannot withstand the increased fishing pressure of offshore vessels. Continuing to rebuild this socio-economically vital resource for the province will require ongoing stewardship and policies that are firmly committed to sustainable oceans management.

With a significant proportion of this year’s increase in the total allowable catch (TAC) to 19,000 tonnes open to offshore access, the cod fishery will once again be subjected to the same commercial draggers and reckless fishing practices that nearly destroyed northern cod stocks more than 30 years ago. Cod stocks would likely return to the critical zone in the next few years and the knock-on effects will ultimately devastate the prospects of rebuilding coastal communities, which have already suffered enough from decades of political and economic mismanagement.

We strongly urge you to change course and revise this decision immediately. The workers of Newfoundland and Labrador should not be subjected to reckless policymaking that will undo the difficult sacrifices they have made since the moratorium was introduced.

We call on the government to reinstate the northern cod stewardship fishery with the same conditions as 2023 and reaffirm your commitment to the 115,000-tonne allocation to inshore harvesters and Indigenous groups.

Only once this threshold has been met should there be consultations with stakeholders on Canadian and international offshore allocations. Anything less will put the future economic interests of coastal communities and harvesters at risk.

We request a meeting with your office Prime Minister to discuss this very important matter to Unifor members employed in the fishing industry.

Sincerely,



Lana Payne
National President



Jennifer Murray
Atlantic Regional Director

cc. Gudie Hutchings (gudie.hutchings@parl.gc.ca), Seamus O'Regan (seamus.oregan@parl.gc.ca), Joanne Thompson (joanne.thompson@parl.gc.ca), Yvonne Jones (yvonne.jones@parl.gc.ca), Churence Rogers (churence.rogers@parl.gc.ca), Ken McDonald (ken.mcdonald@parl.gc.ca), Clifford Small (clifford.small@parl.gc.ca)

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