



## **Independent fish harvesters call for end to corporate and foreign control of Canada's ocean fisheries**

**Woodstock, PEI (July 27, 2022)** – Canada's fish harvesters wrapped up their summer board meeting on Prince Edward Island today with a clear message to those who would stand by and allow corporate and foreign interests to control access to our oceans and prevent Canadian families from participating in Canadian fisheries.

"By allowing foreign corporations to take control of this critically important resource, we are willing accomplices to the hollowing out of our industry, as they deprive Canadians of the cultural and economic benefit and the food that is rightfully ours," said Melanie Sonnenberg, president of the Canadian Independent Fish Harvester's Federation (CIFHF).

The fishing industry brings great value to coastal communities throughout Canada, and this value extends far beyond solely their economic impact. Fisheries connect Canadians to our ocean and define the economic, social, and cultural fabric of the country's coastal communities.

"As the stewards of Canada's coastal communities, our members have profound concerns about the corporatization of the fishery, particularly by vertically integrated and multi-national corporations, and even by some foreign countries," said Jim McIsaac, CIFHF vice-president.

The loss of independent, local ownership and operation of the fishery has multiple far-reaching, long-term consequences. It jeopardizes the future of independent locally-owned factories, puts at risk our collective food security, increases prices to the end local consumer, takes corporate profits out of local communities and puts them into the hands of corporate shareholders, which can prevent indigenous and non-indigenous independent fish harvesters (owner-operators) from negotiating a fair landing price, and, finally, it undermines the principle of owner-operator, which is the backbone of our coastal communities' economies.

The Federation supports a competitive market environment, but we must ensure that the control of these precious public resources that is to be managed for the good of all Canadians remains in Canadian hands for generations to come. We need to ensure fair and equitable opportunities for our future generation of fish harvesters. We are advocating for the development of clear regulations to limit foreign ownership and corporate control of our fisheries.

The CIFHF had the opportunity to welcome Fisheries and Oceans Minister Joyce Murray to this week's gathering in PEI. The Federation was pleased to hear of the Minister's commitment to furthering engagement with the industry and working together.

"We have had several productive discussions with the Minister, and are grateful she made the time to join us this week to address this critical issue. We look forward to continuing these

conversations with her and her government colleagues,” Sonnenberg said.

The CIFHF is calling on the government to deliver on legislation’s promise to protect independent fish harvesters and their coastal communities, by doing the following:

1. Allocate sufficient financial and staff resources to enforce owner-operator regulations in the Atlantic fisheries, and as proposed by the House of Commons all-party Fisheries and Oceans Committee, to develop similar approach and regulations for the Pacific region;
2. Develop clear regulations to limit foreign ownership and corporate control of Canada’s fisheries, and freeze license transfers to entities other than independent fish harvesters in the meantime;
3. Ensure independent fish harvesters have seats on stakeholder advisory boards to engage local voices in ocean planning and fisheries management decisions; and,
4. Communicate in a transparent manner the government’s plan changes to fisheries policy and additional access, including license transfers, as part of its Indigenous reconciliation activities.

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**More information:**

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**About the Canadian Independent Fish Harvester’s Federation**

The CIFHF is comprised of 34 member organizations who represent more than 14,000 independent, owner-operator enterprises that harvest most of Canada’s lobster, crab, wild salmon, shrimp, and groundfish. With 43,000 crew workers across Canada, independent owner-operator fleets make us the single largest private employer in most Canadian coastal communities. Combined, our harvesters spend more than 20 million hours on the water per year. Together, we produce over five billion meals, \$3 billion in landed value, generating over \$7 billion through the value chain.