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For Immediate Release - PEIFA Defends Owner Operator Policies

The Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association (PEIFA) represents over 1250 independent businesses on Prince Edward Island.

The association is and continues to be a fierce advocate for policies, regulations and laws that support independent owner operators.

The cornerstone of these policies is that the person that owns a core fishing license and receives the "beneficial interest" of the license, directly receives those benefits, and is in the boat fishing the license.

There are limited provisions for a Captain to appoint a sub operator as noted in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Commercial Fisheries Licensing Policy for the Gulf Region.

1.1 As provided under Section 23 of the Fishery (General) Regulations, where, because of circumstances beyond their control, the holder of a licence is unable to engage in the activity authorized by the licence, a fishery officer who is employed by DFO or any employee of DFO engaged in the issuance of licences may, on the request of the holder or the holder's agent, authorize in writing another person to carry out the activity under the licence.

1.2. The substitute operator provision is an exception to the owner/operator policy and the requirement for fish harvesters to personally fish the licences they hold. The intent of the provision is to provide for the use of a substitute operator in exceptional circumstances. The use of substitute operators is not intended to permit fish harvesters to consistently absent themselves from fishing activity for an entire fishery and/or season.

It is troubling that recently appointed Provincial Minister of Housing and Communities, Sidney MacEwen seeks a specific exemption to these policies in terms of license retention and not actively being in the boat.

Also troubling is that Premier Rob Lantz has seen fit to take this request to the “highest levels of government” to have this policy changed without any outreach, dialogue or support from the PEIFA.

In many cases, one exemption leads to another until we don't have a policy at all.

It is important to note there have been past MLAs from the Conservative and Liberal parties that have complied with this structure without issue.

Mr. MacEwen clearly knew the policies 11 years ago when he entered provincial politics.

The PEIFA does not support these policy exemption requests and suggests that the Premier of Prince Edward Island act on behalf of all independent owner operators and not just one member in his caucus and cabinet.

For more information, please contact Executive Director Ian MacPherson at (902) 566-4050 extension 7.

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