



Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board

November 25, 2016

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Canada
Email: Fopo@parl.gc.ca

Re: Entrenchment of the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy into the Fisheries Act

Dear Standing Committee Members,

The Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board (GNSFPB), representing more than 500 Core Licence Holders, wishes to submit this letter in support of the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy and its entrenchment in Canadian law through the Fisheries Act.

The GNSFPB was created in 1997 and currently represents five accredited multi-species harvester organizations in the Gulf of Nova Scotia, including the Gulf Bonafide Fishermen's Organization, Gulf Nova Scotia Fishermen's Coalition, Inverness South Fishermen's Association, MFU Local 4, and Northumberland Fishermen's Association. These organizations represent over 500 Core Licence Holders. The GNSFPB is also a proud member of the Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters' Federation. Since its creation, the GNSFPB has been very active and the organization has benefitted its members.

The GNSFPB has reviewed the evolution of fisheries policies over time and some key milestones were recognized:

- In the 1960s, limited-entry licencing was established in the Maritimes, effectively controlling the number of vessels allowed to fish (at the time licences were attached to the vessel, not the harvester).



- The Moonlighter Policy in the 1970s established categories of licence-holders for the lobster fishery and had restrictions on certain categories, favouring those who depended solely on the fishery for income.
- **The Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy in the 1970s brought protection to the inshore fleet from corporate interests.**
- The Bonafide Licencing Policy in the 1980s, developed in Antigonish, NS, put the licence on the person, froze the number of Bonafide licences, and prevented DFO from taking back a licence if it was not fished in a year; this formed the basis for the Core Licencing Policy in the 1990s which required that the licence holder be head of an enterprise, hold key licences, have an attachment to the fishery, and be dependent on the fishery.
- The Independent Core Licencing Policy in the 2000s worked to preserve the independence of the inshore fleet and created a new category of licence, the Independent Core Licence.

Some other decisions along the way have helped improve the fisheries and make the fisheries work for harvesters. For example, buyback programs have helped to reduce effort in the fishery; creation of the DFO Gulf Region helped tailor management to this region; under Section 10 of the Fisheries Act, DFO now can allocate fish or fishing gear for financing science or fisheries management programs; and programs like the community-based groundfish quota allocation system in place in southwestern Nova Scotia allow for Community Management Boards to take on a decision-making role for the fishery. The GNSFPB recognizes that continuous evolution of fisheries policies to create benefits for harvesters is an integral part of fisheries management.

It is also useful to reflect on the first Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Romeo LeBlanc (1976), who was from rural New Brunswick. He understood the community-based attachment to the fisheries and worked to ensure that inshore harvesters were independent and protected from corporate interests. Romeo LeBlanc led the charge on developing the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy in the late 1970s. Since then, the policy has worked for harvesters and they hold this policy highly. DFO moved away from working with corporations and moved toward working with harvester organizations, which gave a strong and united voice to the harvesters. Due to its importance as a keystone policy for the fisheries, the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy and its entrenchment in the Fisheries Act is supported by the GNSFPB.

The GNSFPB has always held and defended the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy as the primary pillar to protect inshore independent core harvesters which supports coastal communities.

Within the context of policy evolution and flexibility, the Board of Directors agrees that there should continue to be some flexibility in the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy to allow



an Association representing Core Licence Holders, such as the GNSFPB, to hold resource allocations. The GNSFPB currently holds a shrimp allocation and a groundfish ITQ (acquired through the TAGS program). These allocations allow the GNSFPB to provide benefits to members, conduct fisheries science and research, and participate in industry groups (see attachment for a list of some key programs and activities undertaken by the GNSFPB).

Continuing to provide flexibility within policies, particularly the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy would respect the Honourable Romeo LeBlanc's legacy, as he permitted a squid allocation to be given to the Eastern Fisherman's Federation (1979). He understood the need to have strong and independently financed associations.

The GNSFPB wishes to support and advise the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to continue the current policy of allowing Associations of Core Licence Holders to have the privilege to hold species' licences to benefit their membership.

To summarize, the GNSFPB fully supports the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy and its entrenchment in the Fisheries Act. We also support and advise that there should be flexibility within the Owner Operator/Fleet Separation Policy for Associations representing Core Licence Holders to have the privilege to hold allocations to benefit their membership. This will allow for the continuation of associations, like the GNSFPB, to strongly support and represent their members and participate in fisheries management activities.

Sincerely,

Leonard LeBlanc, on behalf of the Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board

CC: Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Dominic LeBlanc
Provincial Minister of Fisheries, Keith Colwell
Cape Breton – Canso MP, Roger Cuzner
Central Nova MP, Sean Fraser
Cumberland Colchester MP, Bill Casey



Board of Directors:

Ronnie Heighton, Northumberland Fishermen's Association

Dennis McGee, Northumberland Fishermen's Association

Leonard LeBlanc, Gulf Nova Scotia Fishermen's Coalition

Wally Allen, Gulf Nova Scotia Fishermen's Coalition

Brendan Doyle, Gulf Nova Scotia Bonfide Fishermen's Organization

Dan MacDougall, Gulf Nova Scotia Bonfide Fishermen's Organization

Jordan MacDougall, Inverness South Fishermen's Association

Jessica Hinkley, Inverness South Fishermen's Association

Gordon Beaton, MFU Local 4

Dustin MacInnis, MFU Local 4



GNSFPB Programs and Activities

- Groundfish licence buyback program (TAGS program)
- Reducing the costs to inshore harvesters
 - Paying Transport Canada required safety training fees for members – this has been ongoing for many years (approximately \$1600 per harvester)
 - Reducing stability requirements for inshore harvesters
- PFD program in Spring 2016. Two PFDs were given to all harvesters belonging to the membership and First Nations lobster harvesters, as part of a safety initiative undertaken by the Fleet Planning Board. The following is a breakdown of the PFD dispersal.
 - Members: 1100
 - Nova Scotia Native Council: 4
 - Afton First Nation: 8
 - Paq'tnkek First Nation: 10
 - Wagmatcook First Nation: 4
 - Pictou Landing First Nation: 44
- Sponsored national fisheries conferences
- Science projects funded in 2016
 - Index program in collaboration with DFO
 - Blood protein and moult cycle program
 - Lobster Node project with participating universities, expanding on industry-academia collaboration
- Cost-shared science projects with member organizations
- Hiring a full-time employee

Additionally, the Fleet Planning Board is a member organization of the Lobster Council of Canada, Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters, the Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters' Federation, the Nova Scotia New Brunswick Lobster Eco-Certification Society (MSC), and the Nova Scotia Fishing Safety Association, etc.