



Canadian Independent
Fish Harvester's Federation

NEWS RELEASE

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Canada's largest commercial fish harvesters' organization sounds alarm on effect appeal could have on coastal communities.

Canadian Independent Fish Harvester's Federation says independent owner-operator fleet needs to be protected

HALIFAX – The Canadian Independent Fish Harvester's Federation (CIFHF) says that the appeal of last month's *Elson* decision is an attempt to wipe out protections for independent owner-operator fish harvesters. The CIFHF, the largest harvesters' organization in Canada, asserts that a successful appeal would have devastating consequences for the independence of fish harvesters and our coastal communities across the country. The Federation is anxiously awaiting reaffirmation of the original decision.

Last month, in *Kirby Elson and Canada (Attorney General)*, the Federal Court stated that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans had the authority to both establish and enforce the Owner-Operator and Fleet Separation Policies, as well as PIIFCAF - three policies that are essential for maintaining strong coastal communities.

The challenge to the Minister's authority is supported by a large group of fish processing companies and trade associations, who have supported Mr. Elson's challenge of PIIFCAF in an attempt to challenge the independence of small scale, independent fish harvesters. This group sought to bar the federal government from regulating "controlling agreements", whereby processing companies establish control of a fishing license held in the name of a harvester. These agreements violate fleet separation and owner-operator policies.

The Federation commends the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, as well as the Department of Justice, for their work defending this challenge. In the interim, the Federation calls on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to ensure PIIFCAF is enforced and to take measures to protect our fleets.

"We will be watching this appeal very closely," said Melanie Sonnenberg, President of the Federation. "The independent owner operator fleet is the driver of our coastal economy. The future of our communities, and our way of life, are at stake."

The Canadian Independent Fish Harvester's Federation was established in 2012 to protect the interests of independent fish harvesters and coastal communities. It is the largest fish harvesters' organization in Canada with 31 member organizations representing over 10,000 independent fish harvesters from five coastal provinces across Canada.

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