



Canadian Independent  
Fish Harvester's Federation

## **Canada's largest commercial fishermen's organization praises passage of historic Bill C -68 in House and Senate**

The Canadian Independent Fish Harvester Federation, Canada's largest commercial fishermen's organization today praised this week's passage of the historic Bill C-68 in the House of Commons and Senate, calling it critical to the future of the country's independent fishermen.

CIFHF President Melanie Sonnenberg says passage of the Bill is a tribute to the late former federal fisheries minister Romeo LeBlanc, who put policies in place in the late 1970s that have now become law.

"Romeo LeBlanc was a visionary who had a keen understanding that in order to have sustainable and vibrant rural fishing communities, you had to protect the independent owner-operator fishermen that are the socio-economic cornerstones of these communities," Sonnenberg said. "Then and now, owner-operators are in danger of being absorbed by large corporations for which company interests are more important than that of coastal communities."

Sonnenberg says a critical part of the Bill is the entrenchment of Owner Operator and Fleet Separation polices into law.

In Romeo Leblanc's own words, in a 1974 speech he gave in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia: "I suggest that in the future we separate the fishing fleets from the processing plants (...) Fishermen should own their own boats and be able to sell their fish wherever they want. (...) The creation of a truly independent fishing fleet should improve the efficiency of the operation of vessels (...), increase the price of fish and the income of fishermen, increase their bargaining power, create a healthier balance of power in the industry, and stimulate the fishermen's expansion of the fishing fleet."

Bill C-68 ensures the ownership of inshore fishing fleets is controlled by individual license holders. Sonnenberg said. In addition, the new legislation makes it illegal for licenses to be controlled by companies that are not individual or single shareholder entities.

The Bill will also provide new hope for British Columbia fishermen that with the strong commitment to Owner Operator, coupled with the recent report of the Parliamentary Fisheries

Committee, Canada will begin to put the resource back in the hands of fishermen in that province.

Sonnenberg said the Federation wants to recognize the dedication and efforts of Christian Brun who passed away in 2016; Christian was the founding President of the Federation. His dedication to protecting Owner Operator and ensuring the fishery was available for future generations was paramount to laying the foundation for the Federation's work. His dream of protecting and enshrining Owner Operator in legislation is now realized.

The CIFHF also thanks former federal Fisheries Minister Dominic LeBlanc for initiating this legacy legislation, which enshrines these policies into law for generations to come, Sonnenberg added.

In addition, the Federation would like to acknowledge the efforts of current Fisheries Minister Johnathan Wilkinson, Parliamentary Secretary Sean Casey, numerous MPs and Senators particularly Senators Christmas, Duffy, Francis and Manning. All parties are on the right side of history to make this legislation happen.

The CIFHF also acknowledges the unprecedented co-operation among fishing organisations in Canada who have invested countless hours to ensure Bill C-68 is relevant, comprehensive and enforceable.

The Federation represents over 10,000 owner-operator fishermen across Canada, who make significant economic contributions to rural communities in Canada.

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