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**PROGRESS REPORT**

**ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF**

**A FISHERIES RENEWAL FRAMEWORK**

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**FOLLOW-UP TO THE NB FISHERIES SUMMIT**

**August 2007**

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# **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FISHERIES RENEWAL FRAMEWORK FOR NEW BRUNSWICK**

## **Introduction**

Commercial fishing makes a significant contribution to the provincial economy. With a value of products and shipments of \$1.1 billion, New Brunswick is the fourth largest exporter of fish and seafood products in Canada, exporting nearly 100,000 tonnes of fish and seafood in 2006. The seafood harvesting and processing activities are the backbone of more than 150 coastal communities in New Brunswick where they support in excess of 12,000 jobs.

The New Brunswick fishery is at a crossroads and changes are required. What is clear is that the industry faces big challenges: decreasing catches, rising overhead costs, aging fleets, aging fishermen, and customers demanding better quality and a more stable supply. As well, fluctuations in exchange rates have presented very specific challenges to the export-dependant New Brunswick seafood industry.

Over the last few years, it became very clear that these issues were slowly but surely eroding the viability of the industry and that remedial action was necessary. It was also evident that the status quo was not acceptable and would not work, and that all involved in the industry needed to work together on a clear plan for the future.

## **Consultation**

In October of last year, Rick Doucet was appointed Minister of the new standalone Department of Fisheries. He wasted no time in travelling the province and consulting with the various stakeholders on the challenges facing New Brunswick's seafood industry.

That led to the organization, by the Department of Fisheries, of the first-ever New Brunswick Fisheries Summit, which was held in February, in Moncton.

Realizing that too often and for far too long, the different partners who make up the fishery sector had been working in isolation, and to drive home the message of the importance of greater collaboration, the theme "*Common Vision-Common Future*" was chosen for the Summit.

The Summit brought together over 150 stakeholders of the fishing and seafood processing industry, as well as officials of provincial and federal departments and agencies. This was the first time in New Brunswick that such a wide and diverse cross-section of stakeholders representing the various sectors of the fishery were meeting under one roof to talk about the state of their industry.

Co-chaired by Minister Doucet, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada Minister Loyola Hearn, the Summit was successful in unanimously recognizing the need to develop a blueprint for the renewal of the province's fishery. It also served as a positive reminder that a collective approach is crucial in mapping out a renewal strategy.

At the conclusion of the two-day event, Minister Doucet committed to the creation of five stakeholder action groups and of a permanent fisheries round table as immediate first steps in the process of developing a renewal framework for the fishing industry of the province.

## **Action**

Since the Summit, important progress has been made in bringing together industry stakeholders and in seeking their input in the development of a comprehensive plan for improving the long-term viability and sustainability of the province's fishery.

First, in March, an **Action Plan** for the development of a *Fisheries Renewal Framework*, was developed by the Department of Fisheries and released to industry stakeholders. That document laid out the actions that the Department was proposing in order to move the renewal process forward.

In early May, Minister Doucet announced the appointment of members to **Stakeholder Action Groups** to begin the task of addressing priorities identified by industry stakeholders during the Summit. The groups address the following sectors of the fishery: harvesting, marketing, processing and governance.

For the past two months, members of the groups have been working with staff in the Department of Fisheries, as well as with officials with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, to identify options that might be pursued in response to industry challenges.

This team of individuals, representing a balanced cross-section of the New Brunswick fishing industry, have participated in more than 25 separate meetings and dedicated countless hours focused on this important undertaking.

Early feedback from the meetings is positive. The participants continue to recognize that it will take a collective approach from all stakeholders to develop a plan for improving the long-term viability of the fishery. Their commitment to the task at hand is reflected in the fact that they are taking time during what for many is the busiest time of the year to contribute to this important process.

In late June, members of the groups were brought together for a two-day workshop. The event presented an opportunity for each group to both receive and provide feedback on each other's preliminary findings and recommendations for action.

Draft reports from each of the Stakeholder Action Groups are now being prepared. Each group will take into consideration feedback received at the workshop and also elaborate on the cost and delivery implications of any suggested action or recommendation.

The final reports from each Stakeholder Action Groups are expected to be delivered to the Department of Fisheries by the end of September. The reports will be made publicly available to industry for feedback.

A draft of the *Fisheries Renewal Framework* is expected to be ready by the end of the year.

In mid-July, Minister Doucet announced the appointment of 25 members of the **Minister's Round Table on Fisheries**. Its members will offer ongoing advice to the minister on issues related to improving the fisheries and seafood industry in New Brunswick.

The initial task of the Round Table members will be to provide advice to the minister on the formulation of the *Fisheries Renewal Framework*. They will assist the minister in analyzing the final reports of the Stakeholder Action Groups, which he created as part of the post-Summit initiative to engage industry in the fisheries renewal process.

## **Towards renewal**

The *Fisheries Renewal Framework* will set a new course for the province in ensuring that the fishing and seafood processing industry remains a strong economic contributor to the coastal communities of New Brunswick.

A strong and sustainable fishery will help ensure our coastal communities, many of which rely on the industry, play an important role in the New Brunswick government's agenda for achieving self-sufficiency by 2026.