

September 11, 2009

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Building
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing with respect to an urgent issue for Atlantic Canada, Quebec and Nunavut in relation to the sustainability of our fisheries resources; and also within the much broader context of this great country, an issue that threatens our very sovereignty as a nation. Arctic waters, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the coastal waters off Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, PEI, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are all left vulnerable and exposed to this issue.

Proposed amendments at the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) threaten not only to further erode the health and sustainability of fish stocks, but also serve to institutionalize the ability of other nations to impose their management over stocks inside of Canada's sovereign 200-mile limit. History has shown the tragic ecological results of mismanagement of stocks by foreigners outside of our 200-mile limit, and we must ensure this never happens within our own borders.

Our province and many experts, including former Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) executives with extensive NAFO experience, are extremely concerned with the clause in the amended NAFO Convention which in certain circumstances allows NAFO to apply their own measures in the waters under our national jurisdiction. The new wording could very easily and clearly lead to increased influence of NAFO inside the Canadian 200-mile zone. This amendment, which has already been tabled in the House of Commons by your government, was in fact drafted by European Union (EU) officials and gives for the first time ever the opportunity for NAFO to influence decisions within our own sovereign territory as a country. There should never be any circumstance whatsoever that allows for even the possibility of such action to exist. I am at a loss as to how the Government of Canada can accept from EU officials a proposal that very clearly opens the door to infringing upon our sovereign rights.

Particularly in these times when Arctic sovereignty issues abound, Canada must demonstrate with clarity and certainty that we will not accept such measures in any jurisdiction of this great country. DFO have argued that we need not worry because the proposed amendment would only put this option into the NAFO Convention and Canadian politicians would never allow it to happen in practice. With all due respect, no

one can predict how any future minister or government will act; and it is therefore critical that the option not exist in any manner, shape or form as its acknowledgement alone weakens Canada's sovereign position. It opens the possibility of foreign management and enforcement in Canadian waters.

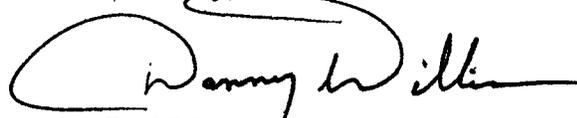
One of the primary objectives stated by the Federal Government heading into NAFO reform was to prevent the possibility of the abuse of the Objection Procedure. The EU has historically used this clause to grossly overfish stocks off our coast during the 1980s and early 1990s with the blessing of NAFO. The agreed upon NAFO Objection Review Procedure in the new Convention continues to be inadequate. While it puts a process in place, nothing within this process is binding on a contracting party or prevents unilateral action which could seriously jeopardize conservation. Nations can continue to use the Objection Procedure, and while this can be challenged by others at NAFO, unilaterally decided quotas will continue to be fished further eroding the precious and often vulnerable resources off of our shores. In addition, the new 2/3rd voting majority in the proposed amendment restricts Canada's ability to affect stock conservation in our own jurisdiction.

While your ministers and officials argue that NAFO has become a more effective management organization, we continue to see overfishing of the turbot quota by the EU objections and a unilateral quota set by Denmark, on behalf of the Faroe Islands, in relation to 3L shrimp and continued misreporting and directed fishing on moratoria species. The amendments now before Parliament achieves none of the objectives identified, do not solve the existing problems, and create new unacceptable problems.

Despite an earlier request from our Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture to tighten components of the amendment, new information has assured the province that the only course of action that is acceptable is to refuse ratification of the amendment.

Given this I ask that you immediately reconsider the Federal Government's approach to NAFO. I implore your government to immediately withdraw these proposed amendments to the NAFO Convention from the House of Commons and instruct your officials to refuse ratification of the draft NAFO Convention and launch a formal objection. Our fisheries resources and fish harvesters in Quebec and Atlantic Canada deserve our best and most diligent efforts to protect them, and our very sovereignty as a nation deserves likewise.

Sincerely,



DANNY WILLIAMS, Q.C.

Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador

c Premier Jean Charest
Premier Shawn Graham

Premier Robert Ghiz
Premier Darrell Dexter
Premier Eva Aariak
Newfoundland and Labrador Members of Parliament
Newfoundland and Labrador Senators
Honourable Gail Shea, P.C., M.P.
Honourable Peter MacKay, P.C., M.P.
Mr. Michael Ignatieff, federal Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
Honourable Jack Layton, federal Leader of the New Democratic Party
Mr. Gilles Duceppe, federal Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Honourable Yvonne Jones, provincial Leader of the Liberal Party, NL
Ms. Lorraine Michael, provincial Leader of the New Democratic Party, NL