

Aboriginal Treaty Negotiations – Fisheries Component

Canadians want to see progress on treaties. Negotiations between Canada, provinces/ territories and Aboriginal groups are currently underway. Virtually all of these negotiations include provisions for fisheries.

Yet this one of the thorniest components with widespread opposition to harvest agreements and treaty protected sale of fish that result in special and separate commercial fisheries specific to each treaty group.

Despite this opposition, the commercial fishing sector understands and accepts that there will be increased access to fisheries by Aboriginal groups both through the treaty process and outside it. The challenge is to move forward in an equitable way, assuring a level playing field so that no one group of commercial participants has a competitive advantage over another with fair compensation to the existing commercial sector for the cost of settling treaties through increased access to fish.

Recommendations

That the federal government work with the provinces/territories to:

1. Implement the following changes to guide both fisheries management and ensure that all fisheries components of treaties include:
 - An integrated commercial fishery with all participants fishing under the same rules and priority;
 - A more responsive management regime for all participants;
 - Greater co-management and accountability for both stakeholders and managers;
 - Enhanced security of access for all participants;
 - Enhanced certainty of harvest share through defined allocations;
 - Continued arrangements to accelerate Aboriginal groups' access to commercial fisheries through voluntary, market-based arrangements (i.e., willing buyer/willing seller); and
 - Actions to depoliticize decision-making.
2. Formally declare that they will fairly compensate established harvesters for the transfer of allocation to Aboriginal groups to ensure that the costs of treaty settlements are borne equitably by all Canadians.

Submitted by the Cranbrook Chamber of Commerce

The Special Issues Committee supports this resolution.