



Conservative government abandons struggling lobster fisherman

(December 4, 2009) HALIFAX, N.S. – The crisis in the lobster fishery is deepening because of Conservative government neglect and mismanagement, Liberal MP Geoff Regan said Thursday.

“While the number of lobster fishermen facing the threat of bank foreclosure is escalating, the Conservative government is nowhere to be seen,” the Halifax West MP said.

“To make matters worse, thousands of struggling fishermen are now receiving formal notification that they will not get any financial support from the mean-spirited Harper government.”

Mr. Regan said it is a shame that the Conservatives are wasting millions of tax-payers dollars on self-congratulatory stimulus signs, but offer virtually nothing to help fishing families get through this rough patch in the lobster industry.

Fisheries Minister Gail Shea comes from P.E.I. so she should know how important the lobster fishery is to thousands of families in our region.

Instead of providing real help for a \$1 billion industry, Minister Shea doled out \$15 million this spring for a program that is spread out among 10,000 lobster harvesters.

“And now that the actual eligibility criteria for this underfunded program has been made public, it seems that only one in five fishermen are even eligible,” Mr. Regan noted. “Why would you design a program that eliminates 80 per cent of the fishermen and bases compensation on 2008 landings of other species?”

The level of compensation should be based on a fisherman’s 2009 lobster losses on the wharf, not some irrelevant criteria the minister’s staff dreamed up during their morning Starbucks coffee break in Ottawa.

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“There is a crisis in the lobster fishery in 2009. Why does this minister think assistance should be based on how much a fisherman earned from cod or tuna in 2008?” Mr. Regan asked.

“This Conservative government needs to change this program immediately and treat our lobster fishermen fairly.”

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