



**2026-2028
Activity Plan**

for

**The Professional Fish
Harvesters Certification Board**

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board (PFHCB), I am pleased to present this three-year Activity Plan for 2026–2028. My signature below reflects our responsibility for the preparation of this plan and our commitment to achieving the objectives outlined within it. In developing this plan, consideration has been given to the Government’s strategic directions related to the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Since 1997, the PFHCB has supported the professional fish harvesters of the province through the development and delivery of Canada’s first professional certification program for commercial fish harvesters. The Board of Directors and staff of the PFHCB take great pride in the progress and accomplishments achieved to date and remain committed to realizing our vision and objectives as detailed in this plan.

The PFHCB continues to uphold its mandate as set out in the **Professional Fish Harvesters Act** and will contribute wherever possible to advancing the professional status of commercial fish harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador. Accordingly, I accept accountability for ensuring that all reasonable efforts are made to achieve the objectives identified in this plan.

Finally, this three-year Activity Plan is developed in accordance with the requirements of the **Transparency and Accountability Act** for a category three entity. The PFHCB will continue to meet its obligations under this Act by preparing annual progress reports.

Sincerely,



George Feltham
Chairperson, PFHCB

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1.0 Overview

The Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board (PFHCB) became operational in 1997 following the proclamation of the **Professional Fish Harvesters Act** (the Act). This legislation—the first of its kind in Canada—formally recognizes fish harvesting as a professional occupation. Under the Act, the PFHCB is mandated to register and certify commercial fish harvesters throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The concept of professionalization was first introduced to fish harvesters in 1990. Following these initial discussions, a Federal–Provincial working group was established to develop a certification model for fish harvesters. Led by the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW/Unifor) and supported by Fisheries Co-operatives, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, along with other government agencies and educational institutions, the professionalization of the commercial inshore fishery was advanced through extensive community consultation. Meetings were held at the community level in 1991 and again in 1994 to further refine the program framework and certification criteria. These consultations resulted in more than 90 per cent support for professionalization among fish harvesters.

When the PFHCB became fully operational in 1997, the existing DFO registration system—based on full-time and part-time classifications—was replaced with a new certification framework. This framework introduced three levels of professional certification: Apprentice Fish Harvester, Professional Fish Harvester Level I, and Professional Fish Harvester Level II. Certification requirements were based on a combination of education, fishing experience, and dependence on the commercial fishery. At the time of implementation, existing fish harvesters were “grandfathered” into the new system, with those having a minimum of seven years of fishing experience granted the highest certification level (Level II). New entrants to the industry enter as Apprentices and may advance to Level I and Level II upon meeting the required education credits and years of full-time fishing experience. Amendments to the certification criteria were subsequently approved by the Minister of FA (the Minister) in 2004, 2018 and 2022.

The PFHCB is a non-profit, self-supporting organization established under the authority of the Act and operates in the interest of all commercial fish harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador. Its primary source of operating revenue is derived from annual certification fees paid by harvesters, supplemented by revenues from training and other service-related fees. These revenues support the PFHCB’s annual activities as outlined in this plan, including staff salaries, office and administrative costs, training and skills development initiatives, communications and outreach activities and the administration of

an appeal process. Detailed financial information is contained in the PFHCB's audited financial statements, which are submitted annually to the Minister in fulfillment of the Board's obligations under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**.

In accordance with the Act, the PFHCB is governed by a 15-member board of directors that meets at least twice annually. The PFHCB currently registers and certifies approximately 10,000 commercial fish harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador. The PFHCB reports annually to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture who is responsible for the Act.

2.0 Mandate

The objectives of the PFHCB are clearly defined in section 4 of the Act. All activities of the PFHCB are related, either directly or indirectly, to these objectives. These objectives are:

- a) to promote the interest of fish harvesters as a professional group;
- b) to be responsible for defining the standards for professionalization;
- c) to provide an advisory role to the federal and provincial governments in the formation of fisheries policies consistent with the common good of fish harvesters, namely in the areas of resource conservation, fish quality improvements, a reasonable return to participants, optimizing product value, and the safety of fish harvesters and the public;
- d) to operate and maintain a fish harvester registration system;
- e) to develop, evaluate and recommend courses under the professionalization program;
- f) to issue certificates of accreditation to qualifying fish harvesters; and
- g) to develop, maintain and monitor compliance of a Code of Ethics for fish harvesters.

3.0 Vision

The PFHCB's vision is a viable Newfoundland and Labrador commercial fishery, sustained by independent professional fish harvesters committed to demonstrating appropriate knowledge, skills and commitment to safely and successfully meet the human resources needs of their industry, from which they can maintain their livelihood with respect and dignity.

4.0 Board of Directors

The PFHCB operates under the direction of a 15-member board of directors, in accordance with the Act. Members are appointed by the Minister upon recommendation from the respective organizations identified in section 5 of the Act. These organizations include but are not limited to: FFAW; DFO; FA; the Department of Education and Childhood Learning (EDU); and the Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MI). The current members of the PFHCB are:

George Feltham (Chairperson)	FFAW
Sherry Glynn (Vice-Chair)	FFAW
Glen Winslow	FFAW
David Jarvis	FFAW
Mildred Skinner	FFAW
Mike Noonan	FFAW
Dwan Street	FFAW
Glen Best	Fishing Cooperatives
Angela Burridge	Provincial Government (FA)
Paul Glavine	Federal Government (DFO)
Amy Kavanagh-Penney	Federal Government (DFO)
Regan Power	Provincial Government (EDU)
Ed Durnford	Post-Secondary Institution (MI)
Lisa Matchim	Indigenous fish harvesters
Marcel O'Brien	Member at-Large

5.0 Staff and Executive Committee

Staff – The PFHCB has a staff of four full-time permanent employees, as follows:

- Mark Dolomount – Executive Director
- Jessica Gillingham – Certification Coordinator
- Jennifer McCarthy – Finance Coordinator
- Joanne Gulliver – Registration Administrator

Executive Committee – In accordance with the Act and by-laws, the Executive Committee oversees and implements the policies of the Board, as required, between meetings of the Board. The current Executive Committee members are:

- George Feltham – Chairperson
- Sherry Glynn – Vice-Chairperson
- Mildred Skinner – Secretary

- Amy Kavanagh-Penney – Member-at-Large
- Mark Dolomount – Ex-Officio

6.0 Primary Lines of Business

I. Registration and Certification of Newfoundland and Labrador Commercial Fish Harvesters

The PFHCB has been responsible for registering and certifying all commercial fish harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador since 1997. Professional Fish Harvesters are required to submit a certification renewal application form annually and pay an annual registration fee of \$75. New entrants are required to file a new entrant application form and pay the annual registration fee of \$75. Upon approval of their application for certification, fish harvesters are issued a certification card inscribed with their name, a professional fish harvester identification number and certification level. Collection of annual registration fees is the PFHCB's primary source of operating revenue. Approximately 9,500 fish harvesters were registered with the PFHCB in each of the past three years, 2023-2025.

II. Delivery of Basic Safety Training

Apprentice fish harvesters are required by PFHCB criteria to complete a Basic Safety Training course prior to commencing their second fishing season. Since 2002, the PFHCB has delivered a five-day Basic Safety Training course to Apprentice Fish Harvesters and new entrants to the industry. This basic safety course includes two days of General Seamanship and Stability, one day of Transport Canada Small Domestic Vessel Basic Safety (SDV-BS) and two days of Canadian Red Cross Marine Basic First Aid. Harvesters preferring to complete an equivalent Transport Canada recognized Marine Emergency Duties (MED) course at MI or other authorized delivery agent are exempt.

III. Assisting Fish Harvesters with Certification Upgrading and Skills Development

Fish harvesters who wish to upgrade their certification level from Apprentice to Level I, or from Level I to Level II, must complete a minimum number of education credits and full-time fishing years as per PFHCB criteria. Fish harvesters pursuing certification upgrading and skills development receive a range of information, guidance and advice from PFHCB staff. While the vast majority of fisheries training courses are delivered by MI, the PFHCB does deliver a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program, which enables fish harvesters to acquire credits toward their certification upgrading.

IV. Public Relations and Advocacy Initiatives

Under the direction of the Executive Committee and in partnership with other key industry groups such as the Fish Harvesting Safety Association, MI and FFAW-Unifor, the PFHCB is continually engaged in a variety of activities related to public relations and advocacy on behalf of the professional fish harvesters of Newfoundland and Labrador. Promoting commercial fish harvesting as a professional occupation is central to the PFHCB's stated objectives. This is achieved through ongoing public relations and advocacy initiatives utilizing a variety of sources.

7.0 Primary Clients

The primary clients of the PFHCB are the professional fish harvesters, both owners and crew members, certified annually. The PFHCB's objectives and activities are focused directly on certified commercial fish harvesters and their industry. Additionally, in carrying out its activities and meeting its objectives, the PFHCB consults and partners with various key industry groups and agencies, including:

- Canadian Coast Guard
- Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters Federation
- Canadian Red Cross
- Canada Revenue Agency
- Canadian Sealers Association
- Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development
- Fish Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW/Unifor)
- Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Fisheries Cooperatives
- Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Newfoundland and Labrador Fish Harvesting Safety Association (NL-FHSA)
- Transport Canada

8.0 Objectives

The two issues outlined in this Activity Plan demonstrate the PFHCB's continued commitment to delivering essential support to Newfoundland and Labrador fish harvesters seeking professional certification and certification upgrades. These issues are intended to help address the ongoing labour supply challenges facing the province's commercial harvesting sector. In responding to these matters, the PFHCB will place its

primary emphasis on meeting the industry's long-term certification requirements and skilled labour needs.

For the 2026–2028 planning period, the PFHCB has identified two key issues and the corresponding objectives through which it plans to address each one. Each objective is supported by indicators designed to support the monitoring and evaluation of progress and success. During the three-year reporting period covered by this plan, the PFHCB intends to develop and present indicators each year through its annual performance reports.

Issue #1 – Recruitment and Retention of a Skilled Fisheries Labour Force

Recruitment and retention of skilled labour in the harvesting sector of the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery remains a priority for the PFHCB through the 2026-2028 planning period. This is an issue of critical importance for two key reasons. Firstly, the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador requires an adequate number of professional fish harvesters to crew the more than 2,900 fishing enterprises in the province. Secondly, the industry requires an adequate number of professional Level I and Level II harvesters to operate those vessels – both as owner operators and designated operators. Therefore, without recruitment and retention of adequate numbers of professional fish harvesters, the province's fishing industry cannot operate successfully.

Despite progress made on this issue, more than 65 per cent of all federal Core species licence holders in the provincial commercial fishery remain over the age of 55, and approximately 63 per cent of all certified fish harvesters are over the age of 50 (an overall average age of 53). The industry is currently experiencing challenges finding adequate numbers of fish harvesters to operate and crew the remaining enterprises. There is clearly a looming aging labour force issue that requires addressing.

In an effort to maintain an adequate skilled labour force to meet the future industry demands (including adequate numbers of Level II fish harvesters to receive the intergenerational transfer of licences from retiring enterprise owners), the PFHCB has set the following objective.

Objective: By December 31, 2026, the PFHCB will have recruited, identified and supported fish harvesters to attain PFHCB certification and to pursue Level I and Level II professional certification upgrading or reinstatement.

Indicators:

1. Promoted fish harvesting as a viable career option and/or employment opportunity, including the benefits of Level I and Level II certification.

2. Identified and tracked fish harvesters in the PFHCB's database, as well as those who contact the PFHCB office and would be candidates for certification upgrading or reinstatement.
3. Maintained support mechanisms to assist fish harvesters interested in pursuing certification upgrading or reinstatement.

Issue #2 – Leveraging the PFHCB Database to Support Labour Force Renewal

The PFHCB's database of certified professional fish harvesters represents a critical tool for supporting labour force renewal in Newfoundland and Labrador's fishing industry. By maintaining detailed information on enterprise owners and crew members—including age, gender, region, education level, certification status and annual income—the PFHCB is well positioned to assess the current composition of the fish harvesting workforce and identify emerging challenges.

During the last planning cycle, the PFHCB upgraded its database, strengthening its ability to analyze demographic trends such as an aging workforce, regional labour shortages and gaps in certification or education levels. These insights support evidence-based planning and enable the PFHCB to anticipate future labour supply pressures before they affect industry operations and sustainability. The data also helps identify underrepresented groups and potential barriers to entry, informing targeted recruitment, training and certification initiatives aimed at attracting new entrants and retaining experienced certified harvesters.

Understanding labour force demographics also assists the PFHCB in ensuring that its certification criteria remain relevant and effective. By examining how certification levels align with age profiles, education, experience and income, the PFHCB can assess whether current requirements appropriately reflect industry realities, workforce capabilities, and evolving certification needs. This allows for informed adjustments to certification standards and upgrading pathways, ensuring they continue to support professional development, safety, and the long-term sustainability of the harvesting sector. Overall, leveraging the database capacity enables the PFHCB to move from reactive to proactive labour force planning, strengthen certification oversight, and support the renewal of Newfoundland's fishing industry.

In an effort to leverage the potential of the PFHCB database, and to support the first issue identified above, the PFHCB has set the following objective.

Objective: By December 31, 2026, the PFHCB will have analyzed demographic data on certified fish harvesters and applied these insights to support labour force renewal

through targeted recruitment, training, and certification initiatives, and through the ongoing assessment of certification criteria to ensure alignment with the current and future needs of Newfoundland and Labrador's fishing industry.

Indicators:

1. Analyzed data in the PFHCB database and created comprehensive reports detailing workforce trends such as age distribution, gender, regional representation and certification status.
2. Consulted with industry partners for consideration and possible utilization in labour force renewal initiatives (e.g., DFO, Fisheries and Aquaculture, FFAW/Unifor, MI.)
3. Implemented at least two targeted actions based on demographic analysis (e.g., targeted communication strategies, tailored training/certification support, or programs to support New Entrants.).

9.0 Contact Information

To inquire or comment on the contents of this Activity Plan or for additional information about the PFHCB, please contact:

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