



Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel

Annual Report
2025-2026

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REFERENCE PERIOD

This report covers the fiscal period of April 1, 2025, through to
March 31, 2026.

Message from the Chair

I am pleased to provide the Annual Report of the Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel (the Panel) for April 1, 2025, through to March 31, 2026, under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the **Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act**, in effect since 1971, regulates collective bargaining between fish harvesters and processors. In 2006, amendments to the legislation were passed, resulting in the creation of the Panel whose main functions include: establishing the parameters for negotiations in the fishing industry; facilitating collective bargaining; acting as an arbitration panel in the setting of fish prices and conditions of sale; and ultimately setting fish prices when the parties to negotiations are unable to agree.

The Panel is committed to facilitating and encouraging successful collective bargaining and, where necessary, setting fish prices and conditions of sale through a well-managed, unbiased, timely, and transparent process. As Chair, I am grateful for the dedication, professionalism, and commitment of all Panel members in ensuring Panel decisions are evidence-based and apolitical.

The Panel holds final offer selection arbitration hearings when the parties are unable to negotiate price and conditions of sale that are mutually agreeable. On behalf of the Panel, I wish to acknowledge the hard work, dedication, and professionalism of our support team, including but not limited to those who provide us with timely industry research and data for our deliberations, those who provide facilitation and mediation services to the parties throughout the process, and those who provide us with administrative and ongoing support. We also appreciate and thank the parties themselves for their thorough submissions and participation in the process and their move towards a more evidence-based arbitration hearing process.

The Panel is fully accountable for the preparation of this report and the achievement of the objectives and results contained within. During 2025-2026, the Panel was successful in meeting all its objectives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sheilagh M. Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sheilagh" being more prominent than the last name "Murphy".

Sheilagh M. Murphy, K.C.

Chair, Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel

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Overview

The legislative authority establishing the Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel's role and responsibilities is contained in Sections 19.1 to 19.17 of the **Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act** and associated Regulations. The Panel is classified as a Category Three entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**.

This was the Panel's twentieth year of operation. Panel members for fiscal year 2025-2026 were:

- **Sheilagh M. Murphy** (Chair)
- **Ron McCabe** (Alternate Chair)
- **John Whelan** (Alternate Chair)
- **Earle McCurdy** (Member)
- **Will Reid** (Alternate Member)
- **Brian Vallis** (Member)
- **Art Dodd** (Alternate Member)

The Labour Relations Division of the Department of Government Services provided facilitation and mediation support for the Panel's activities and stakeholders' work in establishing fish prices. Administrative and secretarial support services during the fiscal year were also provided by the Labour Relations Division. Market intelligence information was provided by staff at the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Current funding for the Panel is contained in budget estimates under the Department of Government Services (see Financial Information on page 11 for more details).

The Panel encourages an optimal collective bargaining climate between fish harvesters and processors in the province to ensure binding collective agreements are in place for the timely commencement of the fisheries on an annual basis. The mandate of the Panel is to annually identify, following consultation with the stakeholders, fish species for which prices and conditions for sale will be collectively bargained, and that these prices and conditions are in place by the date established by the Minister of Fisheries and

Aquaculture. The Panel establishes parameters to facilitate collective bargaining, acts as a final offer selection arbitration panel where the parties to negotiations fail to agree, and has the authority to set prices and conditions of sale when negotiations do not take place. Additional information regarding the Panel, including its schedule of hearings and pricing decisions, can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/gs/labour/fishpanel/>

Lines of Business

Establishing a Schedule of Hearings

On an annual basis, the Panel consults with parties prior to negotiations to determine which fish species will be subject to collective bargaining for the coming season. The Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture sets dates by which prices and conditions of sale must be in effect for each species each season. The Panel provides written notice to industry stakeholders detailing fish species to be bargained, the date by which collective agreements must be in effect, and dates and location for potential final offer selection arbitration hearings. The Panel receives final offer submissions from the parties when collective agreements have not been reached.

Providing Support for Collective Bargaining

Rules and Procedures

The Panel, in consultation with the major parties to negotiations, has established its rules and procedures, as provided under Section 19.4 of the **Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act**, for the purpose of carrying out its duties. The intent of the rules and procedures is to provide direction to the stakeholders through the various stages of collective bargaining including the arbitration hearing stage if necessary.

Facilitation and Mediation

The Department of Government Services provides facilitation and mediation services through its Labour Relations Division to the parties engaged in collective bargaining for all fish species identified in the schedule of hearings. A facilitator provides support to the parties by helping to identify outstanding issues and mediating the collective bargaining process to assist parties in reaching binding collective agreements. The

facilitator/mediator also coordinates activities between the Panel, the parties to negotiations, and relevant provincial government departments.

The Panel believes its work with industry stakeholders helps achieve optimum economic value from the fishing industry and helps contribute to economic growth, competitiveness, and prosperity for the provincial economy. The Panel achieves this by encouraging an optimal collective bargaining climate between fish harvesters and processors to ensure that collective agreements are in place for the timely commencement of the fisheries on an annual basis.

The Panel's mandate ensures that labour relations supports conducive to positive workplace relationships are provided to industry stakeholders. The Panel works with the parties to identify fish species subject to collective bargaining and ensures that prices and conditions of sale are in place prior to dates established by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture on an annual basis. In the absence of such binding agreements, the Panel will establish arbitration hearing dates, receive final offer submissions from industry stakeholders, and conduct hearings to establish prices and conditions of sale to enable timely openings of the relevant fisheries. The intended results include successfully negotiated prices and conditions of sale for the majority of fish species, timely decisions on prices and conditions of sale for the normal opening dates for most fisheries, and certainty over prices and conditions of sale for all stakeholders in the industry.

Highlights and Partnerships

Collective Bargaining Facilitation, Mediation and Arbitration Results

On March 21, 2025, the Panel notified the parties to collective bargaining of the 2025-2026 deadlines by which renewed collective agreements were to be in place for halibut, snow crab, lobster, shrimp, whelk, lump roe, cod, sea cucumber, turbot, capelin, herring, squid and mackerel. The Panel also advised of the dates on which arbitration hearings would be held for the individual species, should a binding agreement not be reached.

During fiscal year 2025-2026, the Panel conducted a total of five arbitration hearings related to prices and conditions of sale. The five hearings were for snow crab, lobster, sea cucumber, turbot and capelin. The Fish Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW) and the Association of Seafood Producers (ASP) participated in all hearings. Of the five resulting decisions, the Panel selected the final offer position of FFAW on three occasions and the final offer position of ASP on two occasions.

The parties to collective bargaining were able to successfully negotiate an agreement on the following species: halibut, shrimp, whelk, lump roe, cod, sea cucumber, turbot, capelin, herring, and squid; there was no mackerel fishery permitted in 2025-2026. (See Appendix A - Summary of Results of Fish Species Negotiations during the 2025-2026 Fishing Season)

Report on Performance

In its 2023-2026 Activity Plan, the Panel identified two strategic issues aimed at ensuring that fish prices and conditions of sale were in place for species under consideration between the parties to collective bargaining in the fishing industry: (1) Ensure binding collective agreements are established annually for particular species; and (2) Recommend legislative or regulatory amendments that provide a realistic mechanism for price setting. The following sections provide a summary of the Panel's objectives and its success in achieving those objectives. As stated in the 2023-2026 Activity Plan, the objectives and indicators identified by the Panel apply to the 2023-2024, 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 fiscal years.

Issue 1: Ensure binding collective agreements are established annually for particular species.

Objective

By March 31, 2026, the Panel will have ensured collective agreements were in place and prices and conditions of sale for fish species were established prior to the date established by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Indicators for 2025-2026	Performance for 2025-2026
Industry stakeholders responsible for collective bargaining of fish species are notified of the dates by which binding collective agreements are to be in effect.	The Panel consulted with industry stakeholders prior to the start of the 2025-2026 fishing season and advised by way of a letter to all stakeholders on March 21, 2025, the dates which binding collective agreements were to be in place for lobster, snow crab, shrimp, sea cucumber, turbot, whelk, lump roe, cod, capelin, squid, halibut, mackerel, and herring. The notice to stakeholders was also revised June 5, 2025.
Requisite facilitation and mediation services are made available to the parties to collective bargaining through the Labour Relations Division, to assist the parties in achieving a collective agreement.	The Labour Relations Division provided facilitators who worked with the parties throughout the fishing season to help achieve binding collective agreements on fish prices and conditions of sale. The facilitators supported collective bargaining by addressing inquiries, mediating discussions, arranging negotiations and Panel meetings, and facilitating communication and administrative functions.
Industry stakeholders responsible for collective bargaining of fish species are notified of arbitration hearing dates, where the parties did not achieve a collective agreement.	The Panel advised industry stakeholders on March 21, 2025, of the dates on which hearings would be held for all species, should they be necessary. The notice to stakeholders was revised once on June 5, 2025.
Where collective agreements are not achieved in bargaining, arbitration hearings are conducted to provide the parties to collective bargaining with an opportunity to represent their respective positions to the panel.	The Panel conducted a total of five hearings in 2025-2026, allowing the parties an opportunity to represent their respective positions by presenting their final offers to the Panel members. Appendix A provides for a summary of the 2025-2026 fishing season activity.

Following a hearing, the panel will make and inform industry stakeholders of timely decisions establishing prices and conditions of sale for the particular fish species.	The Panel made timely decisions prior to the start of the fishery for the species under consideration. When a hearing was required, the Panel notified the parties to collective bargaining (and other affected stakeholders) of its decision at least three days prior to the start of the fishery. Written copies of the Panel decisions were sent to impacted stakeholders and placed on the department's website for public viewing. Five notifications related to decisions were distributed and posted on the website in 2025-2026.
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At the end of 2025-2026, the Panel had ensured that collective agreements were in place and prices and conditions of sale were established in accordance with deadlines established by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, for all species subject to collective bargaining.

Issue 2: Recommend legislative or regulatory amendments that provide a realistic mechanism for price setting.

Objective

By March 31, 2024, 2025, and 2026, the Panel, where in its opinion it was warranted, may make recommendations to the Minister responsible, with respect to an amendment to, or modification of, the **Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act** and associated Regulations.

Indicators for 2025-2026	Performance for 2025-2026
The collective bargaining process is monitored.	Throughout the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the Panel continuously monitored, with the assistance of the Labour Relations Division, the collective bargaining process. This ensured that if the services of the Panel were required to assist in the setting of fish prices, all parties were engaged and provided with support to ensure the timely commencement of the fishery.

Recommendations for changes to the legislation are proposed, as warranted.	The Panel, as warranted, makes recommendations to the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture on possible amendments to the legislation related to the collective bargaining framework. The Panel did not recommend any changes to the legislation during the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
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Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

The 2025–2026 fishing season presented a range of operational and environmental challenges, consistent with the dynamic nature of the fishing industry. Despite these difficulties, the season was notable for its continued development and the emergence of new opportunities within the industry.

The snow crab fishery remains a cornerstone of the rural Newfoundland economy, contributing significantly to both direct employment and broader economic activity through associated industries and services. As the first major commercial fishery of the calendar year, the timely commencement of the snow crab harvest is critical to ensure the smooth progression of subsequent fisheries.

In the previous two years, the crab industry faced significant setbacks due to volatile world markets and the impact of tariffs resulting in a six-week delay during 2023-2024 and a one-week delay during 2024-2025, when processors remained idle and harvesters were docked. The province amended the **Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act** in 2024-2025 to mandate the use of a pricing formula for crab. The adoption of the formula allowed harvesters to benefit from price increases, fostering greater transparency and responsiveness to market conditions. This development continued to be an achievement during the 2025–2026 season because the parties committed to again utilize a formula-based pricing model for crab.

This reporting year was successful in terms of labour relations, with only five species (snow crab, lobster, sea cucumber, turbot and capelin) requiring arbitration. Looking ahead, the fishing industry faces several global uncertainties, including fluctuating costs, market demand, inventory levels, tariffs, and geopolitical influences. Diversifying export markets remains a top priority for the industry to reduce reliance on any single region.

Looking forward, the development of pricing formulas for additional species may further stabilize the industry and enhance collective bargaining outcomes, however, further input, discussion and collaboration from relevant stakeholders will be required. Ongoing progressive dialogue and consultation will contribute to ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of the provincial fishing sector.

Financial Information

The following table is a summary of Panel expenditures for 2025-2026. Expenditures included in this document are unaudited and based on public information provided in the Estimates of the Program Expenditure and Revenues of the consolidated Revenue Fund for the Year Ended March 31, 2026. The Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel is not required to provide a separate audited financial statement.

Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel Summary of Expenditures For the Year Ended March 31, 2026

Summary of Expenditures For the Year Ended March 31, 2026			
Activity – 4.1.04	Actual Expenditure	Amended Budget	Original Budget
Salaries	\$114,592	\$114,600	\$112,800
Transportation and Communication	\$3,080	\$15,400	\$17,200
Supplies	\$253	\$200	\$200
Professional Services	\$49,000	\$77,400	\$77,400
Purchased Services	\$0	\$3,500	\$3,500
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	\$0	\$100	\$100
Total	\$166,924	\$211,200	\$211,200

Appendix A

Summary of Results of Fish Species Negotiations during the 2025-2026 Fishing Season

Species	Parties to Bargaining	Agreement Reached	Hearing Held	Panel Decision
Halibut	ASP & FFAW	Yes	No	n/a
Snow Crab	ASP & FFAW	No	Yes	FFAW
Lobster	ASP & FFAW	No	Yes	ASP
Spring, Summer & Fall Shrimp	ASP & FFAW	Yes	No	n/a
Whelk	ASP & FFAW	Yes	No	n/a
Lump roe	TBD & FFAW	Yes	No	n/a
Cod	ASP & FFAW	Yes	No	n/a
Sea Cucumber	ASP & FFAW	No	Yes	FFAW
Turbot	ASP & FFAW	No	Yes	FFAW
Capelin	ASP & FFAW	No	Yes	ASP
Herring	ASP & FFAW	Yes	No	n/a
Squid	ASP & FFAW	Yes	No	n/a
Mackerel	ASP & FFAW	No Fishery	n/a	n/a

Abbreviations:

ASP: Association of Seafood Producers

FFAW: Fish, Food and Allied Workers' Union

