



Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture
Office of the Minister

COR/2023/00783-04

MAR 28 2023

Ms. Sandra Barnes
Clerk of the House of Assembly
House of Assembly
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Ms. Barnes:

In accordance with section 16 of the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I wish to issue a statement concerning the 2023-2025 Activity Plan for the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board.

The Activity Plan was not tabled by the legislated date. I am pleased now to present the plan.

Sincerely,

HON. DERRICK BRAGG, MHA
Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture
District of Fogo Island – Cape Freels



2023-2025

Activity Plan

**The Professional Fish Harvesters
Certification Board**

A handwritten signature in blue ink is located at the bottom center of the page. The signature is stylized and appears to be a name, possibly "A. King", written in a cursive script.

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board (the PFHCB), I am pleased to present this three-year Activity Plan for 2023-2025. My signature below is indicative of our accountability for the preparation of this plan and for achieving our stated objectives. The strategic directions of Government related to the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture (FFA) have been considered during the preparation of this plan.

Since 1997, the PFHCB has been serving the professional fish harvesters of Newfoundland and Labrador through the establishment and implementation of Canada's first professional certification program for commercial fish harvesters. The Board of Directors and staff of the PFHCB take great pride in our accomplishments to date and commit our continued support for realizing our vision and objectives, as outlined in this plan.

The PFHCB remains committed to its objectives as outlined in the **Professional Fish Harvesters Act** (the Act) and will contribute in every way possible to improving the professional status of commercial fish harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador. To that end, I accept accountability for ensuring that all efforts are made to attain the objectives specified in this plan.

Finally, this Activity Plan meets the requirements of the **Transparency and Accountability Act** for a category three entity and the PFHCB will continue to fulfill its obligations under this Act on an ongoing basis by preparing three-year activity plans supplemented by annual progress reports.

Sincerely,



William Broderick
Chairperson, PFHCB

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1.0 Overview

The PFHCB became operational in 1997 following proclamation of the Act by the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly. This legislation, the first of its kind in Canada, recognizes fish harvesting as a professional occupation. The PFHCB is mandated to register and certify commercial fish harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The concept of professionalization originated and was first discussed with fish harvesters in 1990. Subsequently, a Federal/Provincial working group was formed and a model for the certification of fish harvesters was developed. Spearheaded by the Fish Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW-Unifor) and supported by Fisheries Co-operatives, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), FFA and other government agencies and educational institutions, the concept of professionalism in the commercial inshore fishery was the subject of a number of community consultations. Consultations with fish harvesters at the community level were held in 1991 and 1994 to further refine the professionalization program and criteria. There was over 90 per cent acceptance of professionalization by fish harvesters at these sessions.

When the PFHCB became functional in 1997, the DFO registration system and its categories of full-time and part-time fisherperson were replaced with a new certification system, which included three levels of professional certification: Apprentice Fish Harvester; Professional Fish Harvester Level I; and Professional Fish Harvester Level II. The certification criteria included a combination of education requirements and experience/dependence on the commercial fishery. Existing fish harvesters were "grandfathered" into the new certification system in 1997-1998, with those harvesters having at least seven years of fishing experience receiving the highest certification level (Level II). New entrants to the commercial fishery enter as apprentices and are eligible to upgrade to Level I and Level II upon completion of a minimum number of education credits and full-time fishing years. Amendments to the aforementioned certification criteria were subsequently approved by the Minister of FFA in 2004, 2018 and 2022.

The PFHCB is a non-profit self-supporting organization, created by the authority granted under the Act and operating for the benefit of all commercial fish harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador. The core operating revenue of the PFHCB is generated from annual certification fees paid by harvesters with additional revenue generated from training and other service fees. Board revenue is utilized to carry out its annual activities as outlined in this plan and covers such expenses as staff wages, office and administration costs, training and skills development initiatives, communications and awareness campaigns and an appeals process. Details of the PFHCB's revenue and expenditures can be found in the its audited financial statements that are submitted annually to the Minister of FFA in support of its **Transparency and Accountability Act** reporting obligations.

In accordance with the Act, the PFHCB operates under the direction of a 15-member board of directors, which meets a minimum of two times per year. The PFHCB currently registers and certifies approximately 10,000 fish harvesters from across the province. The Board reports annually to the Minister of FFA as the minister responsible for the Act.

The PFHCB's primary revenue is generated from annual fees paid by certified fish harvesters. Additionally, the PFHCB generates revenue from the delivery of Basic Safety Training, PLAR and Commercial Sealer Workshops. The estimated budget for year one (fiscal year 2023) of this planning cycle is \$1,000,000. A full external audit is conducted annually and audited financial statements are submitted to the Minister of FFA.

2.0 Board of Directors

The current board members of the PFHCB are:

Bill Broderick	FFAW-Unifor
George Feltham	FFAW-Unifor
Carl Hedderson	FFAW-Unifor
David Jarvis	FFAW-Unifor
Mildred Skinner	FFAW-Unifor
Mike Noonan	FFAW-Unifor
Dwan Street	FFAW-Unifor
Shawn Normore	Newfoundland and Labrador Fisheries Cooperatives
Vanessa Byrne	Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture
Frank Corbett	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Amy Kavanagh-Penney	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Jennifer Meadus	Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills
Kevin Anderson	Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University
Lisa Matchim	Representative appointed to represent Indigenous fish harvesters
Marcel O'Brien	Representative-at-Large

3.0 Staff and Executive Committee

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

- Mark Dolomount – Executive Director
- Jennifer McCarthy – Certification Coordinator
- Velma Pike – 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:

- Bill Broderick – Chairperson
- George Feltham – Vice-Chairperson
- Mildred Skinner – Secretary
- Frank Corbett – Member-at-Large

4.0 Mandate

The objectives of the PFHCB are 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.

5.0 Primary Lines of Business

1. 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. The entire application and certification process is conducted in accordance with the **Professional Fish Harvesters Act**, the PFHCB certification criteria and the PFHCB's by-laws.

Collection of annual registration fees is the PFHCB's primary source of operating revenue. Approximately 9,000-10,000 fish harvesters were registered with the PFHCB annually during the last reporting period of 2021-2022.

2. 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 been delivering a five-day Basic Safety Training course to Apprentice Fish Harvesters and new entrants to the fishing industry.

The PFHCB's five-day 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 the Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University (MI) will be exempt, but the course must be completed prior to commencing their second fishing season.

This course also meets the Federal Transport Canada mandatory MED requirement for harvesters on vessels fishing inside 25 miles (less than 150 gross registered tonnage). As a result of Transport Canada's mandatory MED requirement under the **Marine Personnel Regulations**, Level I and Level II fish harvesters can also take advantage of this course in order to fulfill this Federal requirement.

3. 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.

The PLAR program provides an opportunity, on an annual basis, for experienced Apprentice and Level I harvesters to obtain credit from prior learned fishing skills and earn a higher certification level. Harvesters who avail of the PLAR program must be able to successfully demonstrate their prior learned skills through a standardized assessment by a trained Level II professional fish harvester assessor. Up to 85 education credits can be attained if an individual successfully challenges and passes the 11 skill sets available.

4. Public Relations and Advocacy Initiatives

Under the direction of the Executive Committee and in partnership with other key industry groups such as the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters (CCPFH), 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, including raising awareness about the skill requirements, technological advancements and economic value of the industry, is central to the PFHCB's stated objectives. This is achieved through ongoing public relations initiatives utilizing a variety of sources. During this planning cycle, these public relations initiatives focus mainly on addressing the strategic issue of recruitment and retention of labour.

Additionally, the PFHCB plays an advisory role to the Federal and Provincial governments in an effort to achieve public policy that is consistent with the overall good of fish harvesters and their

industry. Key areas that the PFHCB is currently working in are safety, fish harvester recruitment and skills development.

6.0 Primary Clients

The primary clients of the PFHCB are the more than 10,000 professional fish harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador who are 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 Council of Professional Fish Harvesters
- Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters Federation
- Canadian Red Cross
- Canada Revenue Agency
- Canadian Sealers Association
- Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture
- Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills
- FFAW-Unifor
- Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Fisheries Cooperatives
- Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Newfoundland and Labrador Fish Harvesting Safety Association (NL-FHSA)
- Transport Canada

7.0 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 meeting the human resources needs of their industry, from which they can maintain their livelihood with respect and dignity.

8.0 Objectives

The two issues identified in this Activity Plan reflect the PFHCB's ongoing commitment to providing quality service and the necessary support to Newfoundland and Labrador fish harvesters pursuing professional certification and certification upgrading. These issues may initially appear unconnected, but both contribute to addressing the ongoing labour supply challenges that continue to face the harvesting sector of our province's commercial fishery. In addressing these two issues, the focus of the PFHCB will be placed primarily on meeting the long-term certification and skilled labour supply needs of the industry and upgrading the PFHCB's internal systems to support that work. For this 2023-2025 planning period, the PFHCB

has identified the following two issues and associated objectives by which it intends to address each issue. Each objective is accompanied by indicators to assist in monitoring and evaluating 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: Upgrading and Improving the Database of Newfoundland and Labrador Certified Fish Harvesters

Prior to the PFHCB's opening in January 1997, a third-party contractor developed a basic fish harvester database using a Microsoft Access for Windows 7.0 application. Since that time, new components were added to the PFHCB database to accommodate such activities as Canada Revenue Agency income assessment and storage, an appeals process, basic safety training delivery, prior learning assessment and recognition delivery, education data transfer from MI, industry consultation questionnaires/responses, DFO licencing data and all fish harvester renewals and new entrant payments for the past 26 years.

As each version of the Microsoft application has reached end-of-life status, necessary software upgrades were made to ensure that the database was maintained in a stable and secure manner. However, with more than 37,000 individual fish harvesters added, approximately 500,000 individual payment transactions, and several million data entries, the "data creep" of the current database has exceeded the capabilities of the programming code in which it was originally written. Additionally, there are functions that the current database is no longer capable of performing, functions that are no longer necessary and new functions that are required. For example, in the past planning cycle from 2020-2022, the age and functional limitations of the database made extraction of relevant demographic and time-trend data extremely challenging.

In addition to the age and functionality challenges of the database, in recent years, fish harvesters have been requesting the ability to make online payments for annual certification renewal and to access other individual certification information online. The current database will not support online payments and its age prevents integration with available online payment software. Online payments via secure individual fish harvester portal login access will be an integral part of any PFHCB database upgrade.

Finally, considering global efforts to address carbon emissions, including the reduction of paper consumption/waste and subsequent corporate carbon footprints, the PFHCB's long-term plan is to move away from paper filing, eventually eliminating paper files and utilizing an online file management system.

In summary, this issue will be addressed through the integration of an updated fish harvester database, an online fish harvester registration/payment portal and an electronic file storage and management system. The stated objective will be carried out over the planning cycle.

Objective: By December 31, 2023, the PFHCB will have progressed towards implementing a new fish harvester database.

Indicators:

- Explored options to either purchase an “off-the-shelf” database product capable of meeting all the PFHCB’s identified needs, or have one custom designed and built specifically for the PFHCB. Considerations will include availability, affordability, security, implementation time-lines and future support.
- Entered into a contract, including a detailed statement of work, to provide and/or build a database that meets the PFHCB’s identified needs.
- Worked closely with the contractor on the development of a new PFHCB database to ensure that deliverables are completed satisfactorily and in accordance with established timelines.

Issue 2 – Recruitment and Retention of a Skilled Fisheries Labour Force

Recruitment and retention of skilled labour in the harvesting sector of the provincial fishery remains a priority for the PFHCB during the 2023-2025 planning period. This is an issue of critical importance for two key reasons. First, the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador requires an adequate number of professional fish harvesters to crew the more than 3,000 remaining fishing enterprises in the province. Second, 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.

Significant progress was made on this issue during the most recent 2020-2022 planning cycle and there are many positive indicators. For example, over the three-year period covered by the last planning cycle, the industry had the largest influx of new entrants (2,433) since 2007-2009. During that period, 485 young harvesters (average age of approximately 35) upgraded their certification level. Subsequently, in 2022 the PFHCB had its first year-over-year increase in the total number of Level II certified fish harvesters since 2003.

However, despite these positive indicators, more than 50 per cent of all Federal core species licence holders in the Newfoundland and Labrador commercial fishery remain over the age of 55 and approximately 60 per cent of all certified fish harvesters are over the age of 50. The industry currently has adequate numbers of fish harvesters to operate and crew the more than 3,000 remaining enterprises, but there is clearly a looming aging labour force issue that needs to be addressed. If the issue of recruitment and retention of skilled labour is not adequately addressed, a skilled labour shortage will likely develop over the coming decade.

For these reasons, 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 for this planning cycle.

Objective: By December 31, 2023, the PFHCB will have recruited, identified and supported fish harvesters to attain PFHCB certification and to have pursued Level I and Level II professional certification upgrading or reinstatement.

Indicators:

- Promoted fish harvesting as a viable career option and/or employment opportunity, including the benefits of Level I and Level II certification.
- Identified and tracked fish harvesters in the PFHCB’s database, as well as those who contacted the PFHCB office (by email, telephone or in person) who would be candidates for certification upgrading or reinstatement.
- Maintained support mechanisms to assist fish harvesters interested in pursuing certification upgrading or reinstatement.

9.0 Contact Information

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

Mark Dolomount, Executive Director
Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board
368 Hamilton Avenue
P.O. Box 8541
St. John’s, NL A1B 3P2
709-722-8170 (phone)
709-722-8201 (fax)
mdolomount@pfhcb.com
www.pfhcb.com