
News Release

For immediate release

Liberals call for debate on NAFO

(September 17, 2009) – Ottawa, ON – The Liberal fisheries critic and Commons member for Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte, Gerry Byrne, and Opposition House leader, Ralph Goodale, have put forward a request to begin the debate the contentious North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) convention beginning as early as tonight in the House of Commons.

The government tabled the revised convention on June 12, 2009 just days before the end of the spring session. Under the government's policy on dealing with treaties and conventions in the House, opposition members have 21 sitting days to bring the matter forward. The government had already indicated that it would not push for any kind of formal debate leaving it up instead to the opposition.

“That brings us to October 19, 2009 to have this debated before the Conservatives sign Canada's ratification documents and send them off to NAFO”, Byrne said. “This is a debate that can't wait and this is a treaty that shouldn't be allowed to see the light of day.”

Byrne noted that he and his party have serious concerns about the proposal to give NAFO the opportunity to enforce fisheries policy outside the 200 mile limit but inside as well.

“Its written clear language within the draft text of the Convention that the area NAFO regulates as international waters can include the area that is described as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Canada otherwise known as inside our 200 mile limit”, Byrne said.

“This is a sellout of Canadian sovereignty, it's is a sell out of Canadian fisheries and it shows the contempt this government has for anything to do with eastern Canada. This is no longer just a Newfoundland and Labrador issue, this is a Canadian issue. European patrol boats could be the ones enforcing fisheries policy off of Gaspe, Quebec, Shelburne, Nova Scotia, Shippigan, New Brunswick, Montague, Prince Edward Island and Iqaluit in Nunavut. That is what the new Convention could allow.”

“It must not go forward as it currently stands. We can do better.”

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