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# News Release

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For immediate release

## Fish plant workers left with little work: MP Byrne

(September 24, 2009) -- Ottawa, ON – Liberal MP and fisheries critic, Gerry Byrne, is calling for immediate aid for thousands of fish plant workers who did not get enough hours to qualify for Employment Insurance this year. He said that with the majority of fishing seasons now closed for the year, it is clear that there will that number of plantworkers who will have no income this winter unless something is done.

“Because of the shrimp industry shutdown this past summer, there just has not been enough work in the plants to round out a good season”, Byrne said.

“Plant workers need some sort of program to bridge the gap. At the federal level, that won’t likely happen as long as Stephen Harper is in charge and Stephen Harper will be able to stay in charge as long as Layton and the New Democrats keep propping them up. It is going to be a difficult year.”

Byrne noted that earlier in the summer, the provincial government did announce that they would introduce a program specifically for shrimp plant workers that did not qualify for EI benefits by year end.

Byrne also commented on what he called the federal government’s ‘supposed’ lobster industry support program.

“We said from the start that \$15 million to be spread across every lobster license holder in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador would not help anybody”, Byrne said. “And we were right.”

“The eligibility criteria have been designed to keep people from the program. It appears that is only available for the actual lobster license holders, leaving their sharemen out in the cold. It will be available to only to those who had at least 50% of their income exclusively from lobster this year and last. It will not be available to anyone who grossed over \$50,000 and will only apply to fishermen who lost 25% of their income from lobsters this year over last. Of the 3000 lobster license holders in this province, only about 20% or 600 will likely qualify. This program is as big a disaster as the lobster fishery was itself.”

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For information, contact: Gerry Byrne, MP 709-637-4540