

# **Toward Prosperity Fisheries Sector Consultation**

June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2000

## **Discussion**

### **Business Climate**

- The existing infrastructure works well - need a single window to organize access to it.
- Fisheries is the largest exporter in Nova Scotia, but are always at the bottom of the list for any support.
- There are around 2000 independent business-people in the fishing industry.
- There are different rules for fish plants and for fishers - makes it difficult to be competitive.
- Banks won't give loans to anything related to the fisheries.
- Boatbuilders are now building yachts as well.
- It is a challenge to advertise the facts about the industry, is not as bad as the perception.
- The problem with trade associations is that they are often set up in order to lobby the Federal government, not for economic development.
- One of the benefits in the boat-building industry is that it is organized.
- What sells to a tourist is different from what is attractive to businesses - need to coordinate marketing strategies.
- Nova Scotia Fisheries Sector Council works well, should take advantage of it.
- Must add fisheries to the list of important industries along with gas and oil and IT.
- Royal Bank won't do loans in fish industry - partly due to bad press in Globe & Mail.

### **Government Role:**

- Government is not doing enough to promote the fisheries.
- The Loan Boards won't give money to fishers, but the West Nova Scotia Fishermen's Coalition does and has no problem in collecting. There is a role for the provincial government to help in this area.
- Any government lending/business assistance program must be done in a timely manner in line with the industry time line.
- There is great benefit in having a single contact person who will act as a channel for all contact between industry and government. "Single window shopping."
- Need for the Regional Development Authorities (RDA) to take stock of all of their regional resources and then market their regions.
- Government's role is to create a proper business climate through five steps:
  1. Fair and consistent (simplified) corporate tax base. (Better than everyone else's)
  2. Create an improved infrastructure: roads, wharves (fishers shouldn't have to maintain these themselves), airports, rail...
  3. Don't want to see any government money in business.
    - ruins the business climate
    - need to take a critical look at whether government should be in the loan

business - if so then must ensure to get a good deal

4. Solve the jurisdictional/overlap problems
    - governments must come to some agreement
  5. Create a skilled workforce.
- Nova Scotia is last in terms of emphasis paid to the fisheries by the provincial government. Ex: amalgamation of fisheries and agriculture into one department.
  - When government gets involved in industries - creates an uneven playing field.
    - Like the idea of setting up an independent, arm's length office.
  - Business will follow government's lead (operate in a highly political climate or no politics involved.)
  - Shouldn't distort the climate through government interventions - without that business will decide what makes good business sense.
  - Government has a role in telling the world about the fish industries - update public perception - be more proactive - more work on PR.
  - The province has to play the federal game. The Federal government influences where the money is spent.
  - "Maybe being broke is the best thing that could have happened to Nova Scotia" will force us to end some of our bad practices.

### **Education:**

- Government often gets carried away with post-secondary education. We need more emphasis on training for tradespeople.
  - Ex: Canso shrimp processing plant - doesn't have the skilled tradespeople needed to operate the equipment.
- There are a lot of programs for IT and nuts and bolts work but lack training for those in between eg. technicians.
- One of the reasons Germany has had successful industrialization is their emphasis on good training for their tradespeople.
- Lack of skilled people - not B.Sc.'s but people with business and science knowledge...
- Need to change the education to meet our needs.
- The business people using the product should be determining priorities.
- Nova Scotia Community College has gone and asked industries what competencies are needed.
- Don't have unskilled labour force, have a highly skilled force must create credibility for them - certification.
- Should be doing more in early schooling to educate kids about fish industries.

### **Strategy:**

- Must be careful in how phrase, "support communities." Should be the other way around. Usually the economic activity is the focus and communities are built around that.

### **Native Involvement in the Fisheries:**

- Must have the same rules for everybody.

- Shouldn't have fish plants being bought for them.
- Shouldn't get processing access at no cost.