

For immediate release

***Commercial fishers worried about fishing out of season - Majority of members have little trust in the government to make good policy decisions for the commercial fishery.***

**Shediac, NB – June 11, 2024** – A new survey of over 1,000 commercial fishers led by the Coalition of Atlantic and Quebec Fishing Organizations in cooperation with the Unified Fisheries Conservation Alliance suggests significant concern about government actions on the commercial fishery.

This is the second wave of research conducted among commercial fishers in coastal communities across the region. What is striking is that over the past years the proportion of commercial fishers who see DFO management of the fisheries as a threat has increased a full nine percentage points. There has also been an increase in views that the expansion of the indigenous fishery is a threat (up five percentage points).

Very few commercial fishers trust the Government of Canada to make good policy decision (one percent trust, another six percent somewhat trust, 16 percent somewhat not trust, and 76 percent do not trust).

When it comes to solutions the top pieces of unprompted advice from commercial fishers to the Government of Canada is to have one set of rules for everyone (37 percent) and to have more consultations for with fishermen (24 percent). They also want their own local fishing associations to focus on illegal fishing (28 percent) and on Indigenous fishing issues/Reconciliation (26 percent).

Another important finding is that a significant proportion of commercial fishers report that they are likely (38 percent) or somewhat likely (24 percent) to vote in favour of a candidate or party they trusted to manage the commercial fishery even if it was not their usual vote choice.

“What’s clear from the survey is that trust in the Government of Canada and confidence in DFO is not strong when it comes to the commercial fishery,” said Rejean Comeau from the MFU. “Our members want the government to have one set of rules and to truly and substantially consult with commercial fishers without hiding information pertaining to First Nation fishing activity and access.”

The political implications of mismanaging the fisheries will be significant.

“The management of the commercial fishery is a key vote driver for a majority of members. Considering the concentration of commercial fishers in coastal communities and their importance for the local cultural and socio-economic vitality across the region, it will have a major impact on the upcoming federal election,” said O’Neil Cloutier from the RPPSG. “Candidates from all parties should be ready with answers and thoughtful policies on how to make the commercial fishery sustainable for Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous commercial fishers.

The organizations behind the membership survey are taking guidance from the grass roots.

“We hear loud and clear that the priority for all the associations should be a focus on illegal fishing and working to navigate changes to proportionate access and management to the commercial fishery by

Indigenous Peoples,” said Bobby Jenkins from the PEIFA. “Our focus will be on making sure there are clear, transparent, science-based rules for the fishery, enforced by DFO and to the benefit of everyone.”

“Our focus is on a commercial fishery that is sustainable and creates local jobs. said Colin Sproul from the UFCA. “Our membership wants to see Indigenous licenses fished by Indigenous crews fishing within scientifically determined seasons set and enforced by DFO.”

## **ABOUT THE SURVEY**

Nanos Research conducted an online member survey between December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. A total of 1,035 members from the participating organization completed the survey resulting in a response rate of 32 percent. The results were weighted to the true proportion of members from the participating organizations to be representative of commercial fishers as whole.

The project was conducted by the Coalition of Atlantic and Quebec Fishing Organizations in cooperation with the Unified Fisheries Conservation Alliance.

## **ABOUT THE COALITION OF ATLANTIC AND QUÉBEC FISHING ORGANIZATIONS and THE UNITED FISHERIES CONSERVATION ALLIANCE**

*We are a movement of fishermen committed to a sustainable, healthy fishery and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.*

- *Gulf Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board (GNSFPB)*
- *Maritime Fishermen’s Union (MFU)*
- *PEI Fishermen’s Association (PEIFA)*
- *Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie (RPPSG)*
- *United Fisheries Conservation Alliance (UFCA)*

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