



November 21, 2024

The Office of the Premier
Confederation Building, East Block
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6 | premier@gov.nl.ca

Dear Premier Furey,

I am writing to call on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to withdraw from the Memorandum Of Understanding Respecting An Assessment For The Feasibility Of Establishing A National Marine Conservation Area In The South Coast Fjords Area.

The establishment of a National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) for the South Coast Fjords area is federal expropriation of approximately 911,000 hectares (9,110 square kilometers) of provincial inshore waters and will eliminate fisheries and aquatic seafood harvesting, processing, and supply services in the entire South Coast region. This has been the case in other areas in Canada where the federal government has taken regulatory control away from provincial governments for NMCAs or Marine Protected Areas. The proposed South Coast Fjords NMCA ocean area is five times the size of Gros Morne National Park which has a land area of 180,500 hectares (1,805 square kilometers).

This initiative, spearheaded by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Parks Canada and the Department of Fisheries & Oceans, represents an alarming overreach of federal jurisdiction into waters currently under the jurisdiction of the province and will have severe consequences for local rural coastal communities and economy. If the provincial government agrees to this massive NMCA, you are allowing Ottawa to empower ECCC, DFO, Transport Canada and Parks Canada to fully control these NL waters – provincial regulations will no longer matter. NMCAs close off and restrict commercial and recreational fishing and commercial aquaculture through federal marine zoning.

As a seafood company with local and global fishing and aquaculture interests, it is clear that shifts in the distribution of fish stocks and changing marine conditions, including severe weather events, mean that the most responsible way to have a sustainable seafood industry is to provide harvesters and aquaculture producers with flexibility to conduct their work in multiple areas with conservation objectives and regulatory oversight guiding operations. Closing off a massive NL ocean area now to fishing and aquaculture within an exclusion zone such as an NMCA will have devastating long-term negative socioeconomic impacts because it eliminates the flexibility the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and seafood industry needs.

The livelihoods of countless families depend on seafood harvesting and production, and the NMCA will directly threaten the jobs that sustain them. Rural coastal jobs are already under pressure; this federal intervention will only exacerbate the situation, leading to greater economic hardship for NL outpost communities.



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For two decades my family company and our local NL service supply company partners have made major financial investments in the South Coast region with the commitment from the provincial government that salmon farming aquaculture was a top economic and social development priority to support families by creating full-time year-round jobs stabilizing working waterfronts.

The NMCA contradicts the provincial government's "Way Forward" plan, which aims to promote sustainable finfish growth west of Hermitage. The introduction of an NMCA will eliminate any potential for growth in this sector, hampering both current operations and future investments. Additionally, the NMCA will prohibit our ability to establish a wild Atlantic salmon marine conservation farm in partnership with local First Nations. This facility is crucial to aid the recovery of river stocks, and the NMCA will eliminate any opportunity to collaborate.

Marine aquaculture farming is one of the healthiest and most efficient ways to feed the population with minimal environmental impact, the lowest freshwater use and the lowest carbon footprint of any animal protein. We've been operating sustainably for over 40 years in Atlantic Canada. Our NL Atlantic salmon farms are routinely inspected by provincial regulators, are subject to regular monitoring reports and are also routinely audited and certified by third-party sustainability organizations. These activities and more are designed to protect NL waters, wild salmon, and traditional fisheries.

In June of 2021, former Newfoundland and Labrador Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture Minister Derrick Bragg signed a new memorandum of understanding with the other ministers responsible for aquaculture in the Atlantic provinces to continue collaborating on the responsible development and growth of the sector. Minister Bragg stated that, "Sustainable aquaculture development has created economic opportunities that have revitalized rural communities within Newfoundland and Labrador."

The ministers signed the memorandum with the intent of helping to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of the aquaculture sector in Atlantic Canada and of the many rural, coastal and Indigenous communities the industry supports. Co-operation between the Atlantic provinces and the aquaculture industry has led to improvements in pest management, more environmentally sustainable aquaculture practices, improved aquatic animal health, and enhanced policies to support the use of marine and freshwater resources.

The provincial ministers agreed on the importance of using science-based evidence to make management decisions in the aquaculture sector, thereby increasing public and investor confidence in the Atlantic Canadian aquaculture industry.

It is disgraceful that Ottawa is now ignoring the Atlantic ministers and trying to close off a huge area of the ocean to marine aquaculture farming, completely ignoring provincial jurisdiction of aquaculture regulation, when clearly Newfoundland residents are working in the most sustainable and responsible form of animal protein farming.

I join many others calling on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to withdraw from the Memorandum Of Understanding Respecting An Assessment For The Feasibility Of Establishing A National Marine Conservation Area In The South Coast Fjords Area.

We are not opposed to a National Park being established near Burgeo – perhaps to replace the existing Sandbanks Provincial Park and including a smaller scale marine conservation area like Fathom Five National Marine Park adjacent to Bruce Peninsula National Park on Lake Huron in Ontario.

However, we urge you and cabinet to withdraw from the proposed federal NMCA and ensure the economic and social well-being of south coast communities and the sustainability of provincial fisheries and aquaculture operations continues to be prioritized. Your government must protect local industries and the families that rely on them rather than impose restrictive measures that will lead to their demise.

Please contact me anytime to discuss this further at (506) 694-4900. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glenn Cooke', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Glenn Cooke
CEO, Cooke Inc.

Cc: Hon. Gerry Byrne, Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture
Hon. Elvis Loveless, Minister of Minister of Digital Government and Service NL
Hon. Lisa Dempster, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Hon. Fred Hutton, Minister of Rural Economic Development
Hon. Andrew Parsons, Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology
Hon. Dr. Scott Reid, Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation
Sheldon George, President – Board of Directors, NAIA
All service suppliers to the NL fisheries and aquaculture sector