

NEWS RELEASE

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FFAW/CAW being deliberately misleading, says Producers

(St. John's, NL) – The FFAW/CAW press release on collective bargaining today accusing the Association of Seafood Producers of declaring war on collective bargaining and union-busting is deliberately misleading and a needless escalation of a rather simple issue, says the head of the leading Association representing seafood producers in the province.

“Either the FFAW/CAW did not read our letter to government, which they received, or choose to ignore what it says,” says Derek Butler, Executive Director of ASP.

The FFAW/CAW says the Association's position on government's Standing Fish Price Setting Panel is an attack on collective bargaining and the Union, but Butler says that doesn't make sense.

“I guess that would be true,” said Butler, “if one were to assume the Panel is in the Union's camp. I didn't think the two were synonymous, but the FFAW/CAW response makes me wonder.”

Instead, Butler says Producers are asking for changes to collective bargaining, not its elimination. He says Producers have written to government to request that government's Standing Fish Price Setting Panel set up in 2006 be replaced with a return to a professional single arbitrator who would make decision based on Final Offer Selection (FOS), in keeping with what existed prior to 2003.

“So clearly,” confirmed Butler, “we accept collective bargaining in principle, we accept the Union's right to exist. This is not about union busting or anything of the sort. It is about the government's chosen mechanism for arbitration in collective bargaining, and we want a return to what existed before. We've asked for a meeting to discuss this whole issue with Government, and I assume one is coming.”

Butler says he is also surprised that the FFAW/CAW is saying that participation in the MOU process is now in peril, and that this latest development reveals some 'agenda' on the part of producers.

“We asked to have the MOU cover this last July, but we were rebuffed when the FFAW/CAW said no. That doesn't mean we ceded the right to hold a view and express a position that we have held for 4 years,” said Butler, “even as we try to address the other matters in the MOU.”

The Association head says the bigger question may be the contradiction in the Union's reaction now in light of the resolutions at its fall convention in Gander when harvesters said they will not fish for less than \$1.50 for crab or \$0.60 for shrimp.

“How can they say that Producers are attacking collective bargaining when FFAW/CAW members have already committed to tying on their boats unless they get prices above last year's – 50%-plus in shrimp - after the market and currency deterioration we have seen?” Butler questioned. “They drew the line in the sand sometime ago. Clearly something needs to be done to address this whole issue and how collective bargaining works, and the first step is addressing concerns related to the Panel.”