



NEWS RELEASE

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4R shrimp harvesters shut fishery, reject highest prices in years

(St. John's, NL) – The Association of Seafood Producers says shrimp harvesters in 4R on the province's west coast have shut the fishery, bringing chaos and instability in a year when raw material prices at their highest in 10 years or more, and 45% higher than last year.

Derek Butler, Executive Director of ASP, says the 4R fleet has been holding the tnuere undustry over a barrel, pressuring producers for higher prices for several weeks now, and has culminated in a shut down in 4R this week.

"Our members have received phone calls from a number of harvesters, harvesters had phone calls and meetings, and they have decided to tie on, and to tell others to tie on," alleges Butler. "It's same old-same old, stemming from a broken collective bargaining model."

Butler said the privilege of harvesters to have access to the resource has commensurate responsibilities to fish the resource when it is available and economical, as the FFAW has often argued vis-à-vis producers.

"This is not an economic necessity argument, this is simply the same old tactics, when a group of individuals decide to violate the terms of the collective agreement in place. It's one thing to be economically unviable and reject a price arbitration. Both sides have been in that position before and have had to take steps to have it corrected, but that is not the case in this stoppage."

But Butler says this year is different: "This year, harvesters in 4R have stopped fishing for a price, a price they won, that is the highest in 10 years, 45% more than last year, and a price that the harvesters in the rest of the province have accepted. They are putting rural communities, plant workers, processing plants, and customers at risk again, and for what? Because they dictate and control the resource."

Butler says producers will be seeking any and all recourses to get the fishery going, including the Standing Fish Price Setting Panel, but he cautions that time is short. "Every day is valuable in this fishery, every day for plant workers, suppliers, and our markets. We need a resolution on this in quick order. If we can't see our way to a solution in the coming days, plants will likely move to start laying off plant workers."

Butler is calling on government to once again create an independent Industrial Inquiry under the Labour Relations Act into the fishery and its practices.

"We're not going to get to the bottom of all that is wrong here until we have a full-fledged inquiry into how the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery is structured. The province was prepared for that in one case, and it is urgently needed in the fishery. That is the start toward a long-term solution."