NunatuKavut
our ancient land

STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS MAKING A MOCKERY OF PRIME MINISTER'S COMMITMENTS

HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, LABRADOR, May 4, 2020 – The NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) today issued the following statement on fisheries quota decisions recently made by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans:

"We are outraged about the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) latest management decisions around shrimp, crab and turbot, some of the most lucrative fisheries taking place off the shores of NunatuKavut. We anticipate that the decision around the cod fishery in a few weeks won't be much different. Once again, the Inuit of NunatuKavut are bearing the brunt of deep quota cuts and diminished allocations of the fish resources in our own waters.

Our people are deeply connected to the land, sea and ice that make up NunatuKavut. Our presence in the fishery is vitally important to the livelihood and sustainability of our people and communities. NCC has been honourable in our dealings with DFO and has been consistent with our fisheries approach and strategy, our values and ways of being. For decades, however, our participation in the fishery has been marginalized and our fishers have been shut out from accessing some quotas at all.

These latest round of quota cuts offers no recognition, no opportunity and a dwindling hope for the NunatuKavut fishery and communities whose culture and history are entwined with the marine environment and fishing off the Labrador coast. This is further compounded by uncertainties and fears related to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it will impact the 2020 fishery. During a time when the Government of Canada is working to protect those most vulnerable, DFO is making decisions that disproportionately hurt those who have the least, adding to our people's sense of trepidation and insecurity during this medical emergency.

NCC continues to be confounded by an unjust resource allocation policy that keeps NunatuKavut Inuit from equitably accessing the rich resources in its own waters while allowing other groups to significantly benefit from these resources. For years, we have been calling on DFO to take a fair and principled approach to allocations that provides for the incorporation of adjacency, Indigenous rights and cultural attachment. They are not doing the hard work necessary to make it happen. DFO's actions serve only to contradict and make a mockery of the Prime Minister's very clear commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada.

DFO's most recent and past decisions, coupled with NCC's latest interaction with departmental officials on the inequity in Labrador, confirms that we confront a bureaucracy that considers NCC and our NAFO Division 2J-based fishers not worthy of a significant share of the rich resources in our undisputed adjacent traditional marine use area. Choosing not to address the inequalities in the fishery is not just unfair to our people, it is a disservice to everyone connected to the fishery. The Government of Canada has a long way to go in improving the management of Indigenous fisheries in this country."

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