



June 12, 2003

Committee Recommends End to Separate Aboriginal Fisheries

OTTAWA— “Today the Fisheries Committee recommended to Parliament that DFO immediately end the separate aboriginal commercial fishery,” said John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-South Richmond).

The Committee recommended:

“That DFO return to a single commercial fishery for all Canadians in which all participants in a particular fishery would be subject to the same rules and regulations. Consequently DFO should bring to an end the pilot sales projects....”

The Committee noted that the separate aboriginal commercial fishery was an experiment that had failed:

“The pilot sales program was an experiment intended to bring order with respect to illegal fishing and sales by Aboriginal people.... This decade-old trial has failed.... It has not brought order to Aboriginal fisheries; rather it has provided further opportunities for illegal fishing and sales. It has not protected the stability and profitability of the commercial fisheries; instead, it has added another layer of complexity to the fishery making it almost unmanageable. As a consequence, the livelihoods of Canadians involved in the commercial salmon fishery have been threatened despite the availability of a substantial resource that could have been harvested in a more equitable way.

“On the Fraser River, where there is at present no constitutionally protected Aboriginal right to engage in commercial fisheries, there is less justification for establishing separate Aboriginal commercial fisheries. The Committee strongly supports the active participation of First Nations in commercial fisheries but it believes that an integrated commercial fishery best serves the interests of conservation, the commercial fishing sector and First Nations themselves.”

Yesterday the Minister of Fisheries presented to Parliament amendments to the *Fisheries Act* that would provide him with the authority to allow for separate aboriginal commercial fisheries the very thing that the Committee today wants ended.

“It is hoped that when the Minister has the opportunity to read the Committee’s recommendations and evidence, he will immediately withdraw his amendments to the *Fisheries Act* and end the separate aboriginal fisheries as requested by the Fisheries Committee,” concluded Cummins.

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