



**John Cummins**  
Official Opposition Critic  
Fisheries and Oceans

## News Release

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### MINISTER'S ACTIONS THREATEN CRAB FISHERY

**OTTAWA**— “The Fisheries Minister treats the Total Allowable Catch for crab as a bargaining chip with fishermen,” said John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-South Richmond). “The problems in the New Brunswick crab fishery were created by the Minister’s own ill-informed political decisions. The real needs of crab fishermen for guaranteed access to the fishery have been ignored”.

Cummins challenged the Fisheries Minister Robert Thibault’s management of the New Brunswick crab fishery in the House of Commons yesterday:

**Cummins:** Mr. Speaker, just a month ago a New Brunswick crab fisherman advised the minister that adding permanent licences when crab stocks were in decline threatened the fishery and would cause havoc in the industry. The minister chose to ignore fisherman. Now vessels and a fish plant have been burned in retaliation; hardly a vote of confidence in the Minister.

What is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans going to do to re-establish his credibility and the credibility of his department?

**Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, for nearly a year now I have been consulting with the fishing industry, indicating to them, to the permanent fleet, that it was in the best interests of all to give the temporary fishermen a permanent basis to address the perennial requests for additional quota that we get every spring. Every fishery in the gulf that was in difficulty would want a larger and larger share of a very good industry, the gulf crab industry. We wanted to stabilize that. We announced a permanent share at the lower end of the scale. They have had up to 23%. We announced 12.5% of the allocation to them and invited the traditional industry to negotiate the co-management agreement whereby we could increase their allocations by 2,000 to 4,000 tonnes.

**Cummins:** Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about stabilizing access and certainly that is important, but at a time when crab stocks in area 12 and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence are in decline, the minister, in addition to increasing the number of permanent licences in area 12, transferred fishermen from area 18 in Nova Scotia into area 12.

Why, when stocks were in decline did he transfer fishermen from another area into area 12? Why now? Was he trying to provoke confrontation?

**Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, the Member gives the false impression that the stocks are in poor condition. The stocks are in very good condition. They are in their normal cycles. They go up and down. We have the possibility of increasing the yield with a good co-management agreement. There was a heavy concentration of white, soft shell crab in Area 18. It was in the best interest of everybody concerned that the harvest be done in areas where the crab is in better condition and let the white shell crab grow. We did not increase the effort on the total population. We kept it stable.

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**Copies of the Crab Stock Status Report are available upon request.**