

Aquaculture Industry Growing by Leaps and Bounds on Province's South Coast

The province's aquaculture industry is growing in leaps and bounds on the south coast of the island. That's what the Honourable Tom Hedderson, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, found when he visited Harbour Breton, Belleoram, St. Alban's and Pooles Cove this week. The minister spent two days touring aquaculture sites and facilities, and meeting with local industry representatives in the area.

"Our provincial aquaculture industry has been growing at an unprecedented rate in response to investments by the Williams Government," said Minister Hedderson. "We have been providing the infrastructure, human resources and regulatory framework necessary to ensure that the industry is developed in a sustainable manner. It has been challenging but we will continue to do what is necessary to grow this industry that is so important to rural communities in the province. The signs of this investment can be seen throughout communities on the island's south coast."

While in the area the minister completed a tour of the Northern Harvest aquaculture site in Harbour Breton. He also toured the Harbour Breton fish plant which is now used by Cooke Aquaculture to process its farmed salmon. He visited Cooke's main operations at Belleoram and the new wharf at Pooles Cove. The minister met with mayors from the Coast of Bays region and representatives of the Newfoundland Aquaculture Industry Association (NAIA). He also met with representatives from Newfoundland Aqua Services and toured the Barry Group salmon processing facility at St. Alban's.

The value of the province's aquaculture industry has increased from \$33.5 million in 2005 to \$40 million in 2007. Provincial funding for aquaculture development has tripled since 2005. This includes funding that has been allocated for a new aquatic veterinary facility in St. Alban's. Another \$1.9 million was invested in waste-water treatment equipment for processing facilities on the south coast of the island.

"When I visited some of our province's aquaculture sites, I was impressed to find that our provincial biosecurity protocols are very advanced and indeed they are among the best in the world when it comes to protecting both the consumer and the environment," said the minister. "As well, the new aquatic veterinary facility that my department is building in St. Alban's is going to help improve on these protocols even further by enabling more timely testing and results."

As a result of investments in aquaculture by the Williams Government, approximately 350 direct jobs have been created and more indirect jobs and benefits are expected to occur as the industry continues to mature and develop in this province.

"Aquaculture development provides a tremendous opportunity for employment generation in rural areas of the province," said Minister Hedderson. "In visiting the south coast I can certainly see the impact that aquaculture development has had on this area of the province. I look forward to seeing more growth as our government continues to invest in aquaculture development into the future."

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