

Lobster lingering in warehouses

Fishery suffering because of economic downturn: Liberals

By Dave Bartlett
THE TELEGRAM

Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones told the House of Assembly Wednesday some lobster caught this spring by the province's fishermen has yet to be sold.

"There's lobster warehoused in this province that have not found a marketplace," said Jones.

She said if the lobster doesn't sell before next year's season, it will contribute to already rapidly falling prices for the high-end seafood.

Jones asked Fisheries Minister Tom Hedderson if the province has a contingency plan in place to help fishermen and processors of all species when the fishing seasons begin this spring.

Hedderson said the province currently has programs such as the Loan Guarantee Program and he's gathering information from the Fish, Food and Allied Workers and the processing sector on what else the province may be able to do.

"We know the fishing industry is not immune from the forces with regards to the economics outside of this province," he said.

"It's not only going to be a credit crunch but it is going to be a bit of a market meltdown," said

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Fisheries Minister Tom Hedderson

Hedderson of the inventory of lobster.

He said because lobster is such a high-end product with a specific market, the economic downturn has been hard on the industry.

Outside the House, Jones said other provinces are concerned about credit for operations and are doing things about it.

She said fishermen in Quebec can get working capital and lines of credit from the province.

"Many processors, in particular some of the smaller processors in this province, and some of the big ones as well, are going to feel that cash crunch," said Jones.

"My fear is that we could actually see some of these fish processors closing up if the proper supports are not put in place."

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Tom Hedderson



Yvonne Jones

2008 FISHERIES AT A GLANCE

The annual value of the provincial fishery will exceed \$1 billion again this year. The day after the Liberals asked questions of Fisheries Minister Tom Hedderson about how the global economic downturn will affect the industry, his department released the numbers for 2008.

Here are some of the highlights for the year:

- Total annual value: More than \$1 billion, on par with 2007
- Landed value of seafood: \$540 million, 12.8 per cent increase from 2007
- Total number of employees in fishery: 23,200, down four per cent from 2007
- Shellfish landings: 197,000 tonnes up substantially from 2007
- Groundfish landings: 50,000 tonnes, up 23 per cent over 2007
- Pelagic landings: down 15 per cent from 2007
- Seal landings: on par with 2007, but pelts prices down 36 per cent

Source: Provincial Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture