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NEWS: Nunavut July 02, 2009 - 3:45 pm

## Senate report backs Nunavut fisheries demands Ottawa failing to help territory's fishery develop, committee says

CHRIS WINDEYER

Another senate study is backing Nunavut's demand that the federal government build small craft harbours in the territory and give Nunavut fishing interests the first crack at buying turbot quota in waters off Baffin Island when it becomes available.

The Senate's standing committee on fisheries and oceans makes eight recommendations in *Nunavut Marine Fisheries: Quotas and Harbours*, including the implementation of the 2005 Nunavut Small Craft Harbours report, which asks Ottawa to pay for the construction of wharves in seven communities.

"With respect to harbour infrastructure, Nunavummiut expressed deep frustration about what they viewed as a lack of federal commitment to the region," the report states.

"The development of community docks and port facilities was singled out at our meetings as essential if the potential benefits of community-based inshore fisheries are to be realized."

**A federally funded, \$25-million wharf is under construction in Pangnirtung.** The senate report says Nunavut needs more projects like that to build a thriving inshore fishery.

"With improved harbour infrastructure, vessels could safely offload their catch at local fish plants for further processing, storage and/or for transshipment by reefer ship to southern markets, which could evolve into a two-way trade: fish heading south and supplies coming North."

The report also urges the federal government give Nunavut fishing interests the right of first refusal to buy turbot quota in area 0B off southeast Baffin Island, and boost DFO funding for test fisheries in Nunavut waters. Two-thirds of the turbot quota in that region is controlled by outside interests.

The issue flared last spring when Baffin Fisheries Coalition torched a boat to protest the sale of 1,900 tonnes of 0B turbot quota from Newfoundland-based Seafreez Foods to fishing companies based in Nova Scotia and Labrador. The GN and BFC have both argued that Nunavut should get the right of first refusal to buy 0B quota when it comes up for sale and the senate report backs that opinion.

The report also calls for the construction of a deepwater port in Iqaluit to cut shipping costs, reduce the amount of damaged sealift cargo and reduce the risk of fuel spills by oil tankers using Iqaluit's floating oil

boom to unload fuel. Such a port could also allow Nunavut fishing boats to change crews locally, instead of in Nuuk or St. John's.

"Fishing companies operating in nearby waters would have a less costly alternative to having to return to southern ports to obtain supplies, offload product, carry out crew changes and perform repairs and maintenance on their vessels," the report states.

Other recommendations in the report call for Ottawa to study the impact of torrents of freshwater entering eastern Hudson Bay from Quebec's massive Eastmain 1A and Rupert hydroelectric project, and to "substantially" increase funding for exploratory fisheries off Nunavut to see if species like crab, scallops and clams could be fished commercially.

The report comes as music to the ears of Nunavut's minister responsible for the fishery, environment minister Daniel Shewchuk.

“My department is pleased with the committee’s support for the Nunavut fishing industry and its future development, and supports the eight major recommendations outlined in the committee’s report,” Shewchuk said in a statement in the legislature June 15.

The report, issued June 4, is the second to come from a series of public hearings held last summer in Iqaluit and Pangnirtung by members of the senate committee. The first, *Rising to the Arctic Challenge*, released this past May, urged the expansion of the Canadian Coast Guard's presence in the Arctic.

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