

Fleet separation policy- Harper govt dropped plans to kill it

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Update: On Friday, September 21st, three days after the publication of this post, Fisheries Minister Keith Ashfield announced that the fleet separation and owner-operator policies would be retained. Kudos to the Atlantic fishermen and NDP and Liberal MPs who shamed the bullies into discarding their intention to repeal these policies. This shows that the Harper bully can be thwarted.

Despite intensive lobbying by Atlantic fish processors, it appears that the Harper govt is dropping its plans to kill the fleet separation policy that has been in effect for decades, the legacy of former Fisheries Minister Romeo LeBlanc. Though the Harperites are not noted for paying attention to criticism of their proposals, widespread opposition from fishermen and fishermen's organizations has prevailed. The policy effectively prevents large companies from buying up fishing licences and leasing them back to local fishermen.

Conservative MPs are now admitting that fishermen are widely opposed to changing the fleet separation policy. Atlantic fish processors who thought they would get their way and end fleet separation are angry at the apparent about-face by the Conservatives. Derek Butler, executive director of the NL Association of Seafood Producers, said that the Govt's failure to change the policy is "terrible news." Butler's members favour a system where a handful of parties could control a much larger share of the fishery. Let's hope that the stories are true and that they will not get their way.

Thanks to the many opposition members who took up the fishermen's cause.

TAGS: sustainable, fisheries, Atlantic Canada, fleet separation, policy