

Pretty over his head; FFAW leader unaware inshore fishery excluded from federal Competition Act

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Thursday, May 18th, 2023** — Seaward Enterprises Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (SEA-NL) accuses the president of the FFAW-Unifor of being in over his head in calling for the Competition Bureau of Canada to investigate the inshore fishery when much of it is excluded from the federal act.

“It’s shocking that Greg Pretty doesn’t know that the only industry in Canada that’s pretty much excluded from the federal Competition Act is our inshore fishery,” says Ryan Cleary, SEA-NL’s Executive Director. “It’s no wonder the six-week tie-up has been such a circus with nothing to show for it.”

During an FFAW-Unifor news conference this week on the crab tie-up, Pretty said the Competition Bureau should investigate the lack of competition in the inshore fishery.

Owner-operators in this province often complain they cannot move freely between buyers/processors, and processing companies have been accused of working together as a cartel to keep fish prices down.

Only fish pricing in this province is excluded from the federal Competition Act, Section 4.

SEA-NL wrote Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in May 2022 (letter below) to request that then-proposed amendments to the Competition Act (which were to tackle anti-competitive conspiracies between competitors that hurt workers) include fish pricing.

The prime minister did not reply to the letter.

In Newfoundland and Labrador processors can import snow crab from the Maritimes, Quebec, and other countries for processing at local plants, while those same companies can order the inshore fleet (which can’t access outside buyers, or truck out their catches) tied to the wharf on trip limits.

Strikes are also outlawed, and final prices are binding, meaning harvesters do not vote on them.

SEA-NL wrote Premier Andrew Furey earlier this month to request his government call a second, sweeping investigation of the broken final-offer selection system after last year’s three-month review failed to do the job.