



BACKGROUNDER: Tu Cho Fishers Cooperative and GNWT to Advance Revitalization of GSL Fishery

Commercial fishing on Great Slave Lake has been a mainstay of the South Slave economy since the 1950s when the fishery was developed to supply export markets.

And, while the NWT's commercial fishery has declined, the natural wealth of fish in the lake remains; offering an opportunity to restore an industry that remains important and vital to the NWT economy.

A thriving fishery will mean a renewed livelihood for fishers all around the lake.

Guided by its Strategy for Revitalizing the Great Slave Lake Commercial Fishery, the Government of the Northwest Territories is working with a variety of partners to rejuvenate the Great Slave Lake Fishing sector and to restore its contributions to the NWT economy - and the town of Hay River.

The GNWT's plan proposes to transform the existing fishery; and expand its scope to supply domestic, commercial and export markets with - not only whole fish - but value-added fish products and related by-products in a variety of forms.

The business case for revitalizing the NWT's commercial fishing sector was first identified in the NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy and formalized in a business plan set out by the Northwest Territories Fishermen's Federation.

It supports GNWT mandate commitments to diversify the NWT economy, create local jobs, and contribute to the availability of healthier and more-affordable food choices for residents across the NWT.

The GNWT's strategy will see the current business model on the lake change. NWT producers, though a cooperative, will see the benefits of having a direct say - and even ownership in their industry.

Longstanding NWT fishers will be offered the resources and capital requirements they need to update their operations.

Training programs, aimed at increasing the number of northerners on the lake, will focus on young fishers; while incentives will be considered to attract new fishers, from outside the NWT, to relocate their operations to Great Slave Lake.



Investments will be made to expand the NWT market for Great Slave Lake fish and improve food security in the North. New sales and distribution agreements will also be sought for Great Slave Lake fish in provincial and international markets.

Increased collection points will ensure producers can access the full potential of the lake – and a renewed winter fishery will help meet increased demand and the need for year-round supply.

Central to this plan is the establishment of a new state-of-the-art processing facility in Hay River. In coming months, the Government of the Northwest Territories will be seeking a design-build tender for a revised (smaller footprint) fish plant capable of processing and packaging up to 1.5 million pounds of fish a year; to be the foundation of this revitalization plan.