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New initiative to connect Islanders with seafood employment opportunities

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island – Islanders seeking work can now more easily find employment opportunities in the seafood industry through the Opportunities in PEI Seafood Initiative, a new labour initiative developed by the Province of Prince Edward Island in consultation with the PEI Seafood Processors Association.

Unemployed Islanders and students who are interested in working in a seafood processing plant should register with WorkPEI at www.workpei.ca/opsi and be connected with seafood processing businesses who have registered their job openings.

“These are challenging times for all of us, and we are looking at every avenue to support Islanders and industries as we navigate the challenges of COVID-19. It is important that Islanders experiencing lay-offs are provided with opportunities to work and support their families,” said Fisheries and Communities Minister Jamie Fox. “Hopefully some of these unemployed individuals will find work in the seafood sector as lobster processors need workers right now so they can process as much lobster as possible and supply their customers with PEI’s quality lobster products.”

Lobster processing plants across PEI are experiencing unprecedented work shortages and are asking unemployed Islanders and students to seriously consider employment opportunities in lobster processing.

“Every plant is short of workers and without an adequate workforce we can’t process all the lobsters being caught in PEI waters. Processors are concerned that they will not be able to process enough lobsters to meet market demands as the world starts to recover from Covid-19,” said Jerry Gavin, Executive Director of the PEI Seafood Processors Association.

Through the Team Seafood Program, students returning to post-secondary studies in the fall of 2020 will receive a \$2,000 bursary and students returning to high school will receive a \$1,000 bursary. The bursary amounts were doubled over last year to encourage more students work in the seafood sector.

These employment initiatives build on provincial supports announced in recent weeks in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minister Fox also recognized the leadership and efforts of fishers, processors and buyers who worked hard to address the many issues facing the seafood sector because of the Covid-19 crises. These stakeholders are doing their part to protect the health and well-being of Islanders by working with the Chief Public Health Office to put guidelines and measures in place, including personal protective equipment, to protect workers and their communities from COVID-19.

“People working in seafood industries are supporting the food system and PEI’s economy; seafood harvesting and processing are essential services that are vital to the well-being of Islanders and our province,” said Minister Fox. “Our seafood community continues to be resilient in the face of a challenging situation. We will do what we can to support them.”

To register to be connected through the seafood processing initiative, job seekers and seafood industry employers are encouraged to visit www.workpei.ca/opsi.

For more information on the provincial government’s response to COVID-19, including resources, program applications and important public health information, visit: www.princeedwardisland.ca/COVID19.

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