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NATIONAL CHIEF SUPPORTS ATLANTIC CHIEFS AND COMMUNITIES IN FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS

The National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Matthew Coon Come, fully supports the position taken by the Chiefs and communities throughout the Atlantic Region in negotiations with the federal government on access to fisheries. It has been widely reported that the Chiefs are united in their refusal to sign agreements that could undermine their Treaty and Aboriginal Rights. The Chiefs are offering their own wording for such agreements that would ensure that they are protected.

"The Chiefs are making a very important stand on their Treaty rights and they should be commended for setting such a fine example for all First Nations. It makes no sense to put recognized treaty rights at risk for short-term arrangements that may jeopardize those rights in the long term. Their position is one that has the long term benefits of their peoples at heart", stated National Chief Coon Come.

The government is using pressure tactics to coerce the communities to sign on to agreements before the upcoming fishing season opens. The leadership is under great duress as they have many people who need the employment that fisheries provide, but have clear legal advice that the wording proposed by the government could unreasonably limit their treaty rights.

"Basically, the government is only looking after its own interests and the interests of the non-Aboriginal community. The Government of Canada has a legal obligation not to derogate from constitutionally recognized Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. It is improper for federal officials and the Minister to insist that First Nations sign instruments that could undermine those rights. The Chiefs are united in their resistance to this immoral approach and I commend them for this", concluded the National Chief.

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