

***From Herb Dhaliwal to the Chief at Burnt Church
Sept 21, 2000***

Chief Wilbur Dedam & Councilors
BURNT CHURCH FIRST NATION
R. R. 2
Burnt Church, NB
E0C 1K0

Dear Chief Dedam & Councilors:

I have received your news release of September 20, 2000 stating your position.

I realize that discussions have been difficult for all parties involved, and that there are major philosophical differences that must be bridged. The movement that your community has made, namely agreeing to a joint trap count, a removal of all untagged traps, a willingness to open dialogue with the Maritime Fishermens' Union, and a closing date for the fishery of October 7 is important. I also acknowledge the indications that some of your fishers plan to voluntarily remove traps by October 1.

All parties have worked very hard towards a positive outcome and have shown flexibility and openness to discussions. The Government of Canada, for its part, has exercised restraint and patience during the mediation process in order to create the environment needed for a successful outcome.

However, in your statement you have provided no assurance that fishing effort will be substantially reduced. Specifically, there is no guarantee that the removal of untagged traps will lead to a substantial reduction in fishing effort to address conservation concerns. In fact, there is evidence today that your community's fishers are increasing the number of traps in the water.

The federal government provided a food fishery of 40,000 lbs. to be fished with 40 traps. Your community has ignored the trap limit and has fished well beyond the 40,000 lbs. This situation makes successful discussions increasingly difficult. The Regional Director General, Gulf Fisheries Management Region wrote to you earlier today to express my serious concerns that the Esgenoôpetitj fishing plan is not sustainable, and in fact, the fishing activity to date is detrimental to conservation.

I am responsible for the conservation of the resource and the orderly management of the fishery, and I must carry out those responsibilities, taking into account the state of the stocks and the interests of other users of the resource. I have consistently held the position that fishing effort must be limited in Miramichi Bay.

The current situation cannot continue if conservation and an orderly fishery are to be ensured. Therefore, an arrangement that does not include a specific and substantially decreased number of traps is not acceptable.

As I have said many times, it is my hope that, through dialogue and co-operation, we can achieve a mutually acceptable resolution to this situation.

Yours sincerely,

The Honourable Herb Dhaliwal, P.C.,
M.P.