



Notice to Fish Harvesters

NEW MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE CATEGORIES FOR SUBSTITUTE OPERATOR IN EASTERN CANADA.

Gulf Region – December 12, 2024

In Atlantic Canada and Quebec, inshore and coastal licence holders must personally fish the licence issued in their name. Under the regulations, however, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) can authorize an exception to the owner-operator requirement to personally fish, allowing the Department to authorize substitute operators in certain circumstances. These circumstances include when a commercial licence holder cannot fish due to medical reasons or other “circumstances beyond their control”. The Commercial Fisheries Licensing Policy for Eastern Canada limits substitute operators for medical reasons to a maximum of five years.

On December 5, 2024, the Minister announced new Maternity and Parental leave categories for substitute operator in Eastern Canada. These new categories respond to feedback collected from stakeholder engagements and aim to incentivize the next generation of harvesters to join the fishing industry and provide more flexibility to those with new families.

The new Maternity and Parental leave categories for substitute operator will allow a pregnant eligible coastal or inshore licence holder, or an eligible coastal or inshore licence holder who became a new parent by birth or adoption, to designate a substitute operator to operate a licence or licences on their behalf while they care for the child.

Other important information:

- Eligible licence holders have access to Maternity or Parental leave without limit on the number of occurrences. Supporting documentation is required with each request.
- Maternity leave is available up to a maximum of 119 calendar days (17 weeks) after the date of birth or the anticipated due date.
- For safety reasons, a pregnant licence holder may request a substitute operator for Maternity leave at any time during the pregnancy once they have been confirmed to be pregnant. The use of Maternity leave prior to the birth of a child due to safety reasons will not be deducted from the 17 weeks that is available following the birth of a child.
- Parental leave is available up to a maximum of 245 calendar days (35 weeks) from the date of birth or adoption.
- A licence holder who makes use of maternity leave may be eligible for parental leave.
- While licence holders have a maximum of five years of medical substitute operator authorizations over their career, the Maternity and Parental categories in substitute operator will not be counted towards the five-year maximum.
- Unlike employment insurance, the Maternity and Parental leave within the substitute operator policy do not provide financial benefits based on insurable employment or include benefit sharing requirements

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Requests will be accepted starting January 1, 2025, using the same regional process they use when requesting a substitute operator.

For more details, you can contact your local DFO office or go to DFO's website.