NDP Caucus News

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NDP Calls for Stronger Lobbyist Registration Act and Creation of Ethics Commissioner

Today in the House of Assembly, NL NDP Leader Jim Dinn (St. John's Centre) is calling on government to establish an independent Ethics Commissioner for the House of Assembly and strengthen the Lobbyist Registration Act, following revelations that the Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture accepted gifts from an aquaculture company he is responsible for regulating.

Media reports revealed that Fisheries and Agriculture Minister Loyola O'Driscoll accepted a tour of aquaculture sites, including a stay at luxury accommodations paid for entirely by Mowi Scotland, an aquaculture company operating in the province. Dinn says that regardless of the gift being approved by the Commissioner of Legislative Standards, the minister's decision to accept this hospitality raises serious questions about conflicts of interest and the appearance of influence.

"I ask the Premier, is it not a conflict of interest the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture to accept a tour of Mowi aquaculture sites in Norway, including a stay in a luxury castle, paid for by Mowi, the company doing business in this province and hoping to expand the industry in our province and will depend on the Minister's decision to do so?"

"The Minister is responsible for issuing aquaculture licences and overseeing the regulation of companies like Mowi. Given the Minister's direct role in making decisions that impact these companies, there are serious questions about the potential for a conflict of interest," said Dinn. "I ask the Premier, does he really believe there is no appearance of a conflict of interest in this situation, and how does he expect the public to have confidence in the process?"

"The Deputy Premier when in opposition accused a former Liberal Premier of spending days in a luxury cabin owned by a billionaire donor who was leading a wind development project in the province. The Deputy Premier called for the establishment of an Ethics Commissioner to examine potential conflicts of interest involving members of the House of Assembly. I ask the Deputy Premier, in the spirit of transparency and accountability, when will he begin work on establishing this position and will he review the Lobbyist Registration Act?"

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