

# CANADA'S NORTHERN COD FISHERY MORATORIUM

## Do not lift the 1992 northern cod fishery moratorium

- Stock levels are well below what would be needed to sustain a large-scale commercial fishery
- Reopening the cod fishery will result in another stock collapse

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*For over 500 years the Atlantic northwest cod fishery had been one of the richest in the world. This fishery shaped the lives and communities of Canada's east coast. In 1992 the cod stock was almost completely eliminated due to overfishing and mismanagement, falling down to 1% of its previous biomass. The 1992 moratorium on the northern cod fishery ended the region's 500 year run with the northern cod, costing over 40,000 people their jobs. In recent years of cod stock increases it seems there are signs of stock recovery, however the biomass is still incredibly low compared to what it was during the commercial heyday of the fishery. Lifting the moratorium on the northern cod fishery will result in further stock collapse.*

Prepared for:

**The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc**

Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1A 0A6

[Dominic.LebLANC@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Dominic.LebLANC@parl.gc.ca)

Presented by:

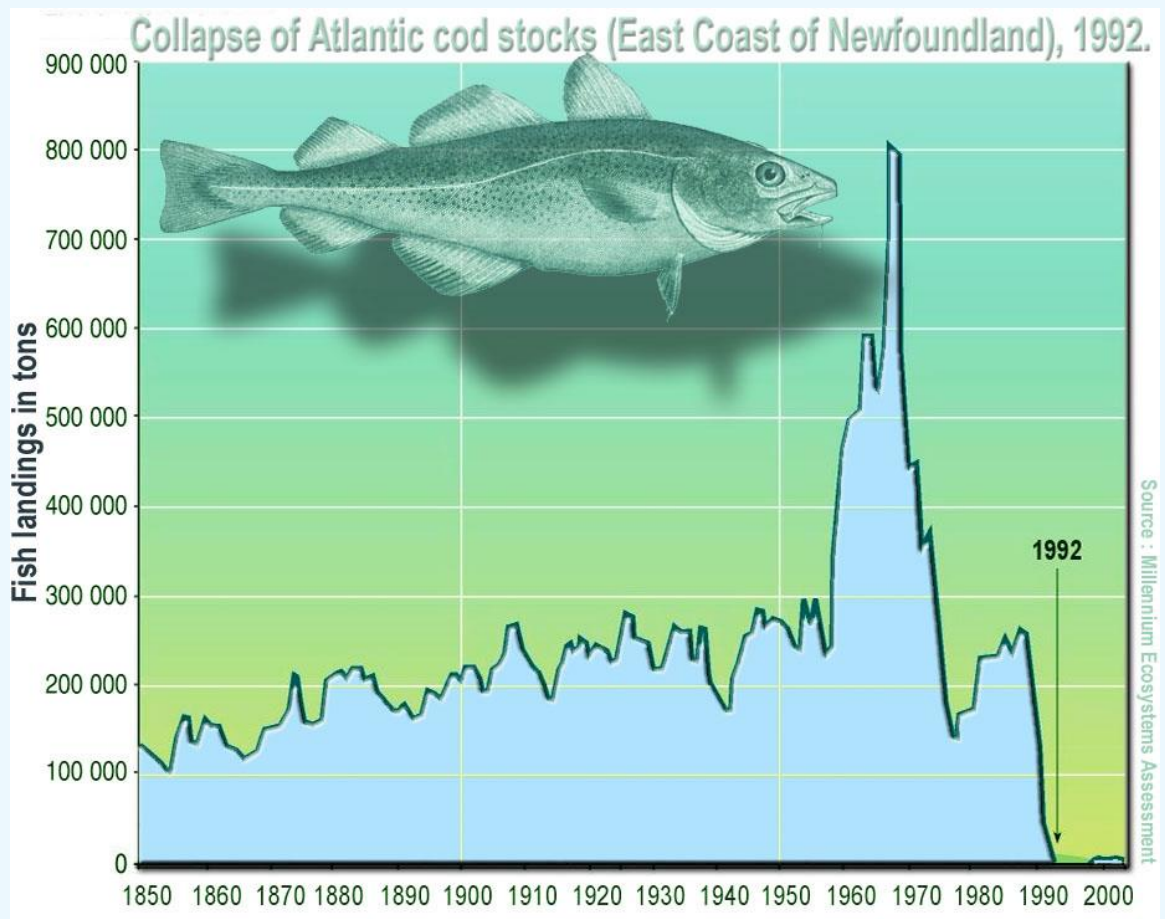
Brittany Ng

[NgBrittany@gmail.com](mailto:NgBrittany@gmail.com)

@Brittany\_Ng5

Historically, cod were in such high abundance that a fisherman simply had to lower a bucket into the ocean and it would be filled with cod. In the late 50's, 250,000 tons was caught on an annual basis. Large factory ships arriving from other countries compromised the balanced renewable cod fishery. Cod began to be heavily fished by large foreign fishing fleets coming from all around the world. The annual catch in 1968 was over 800,000 tons. At this high intensity of fishing, cod were unable to replenish their populations. In 1975 cod catch declined to 300,000 tons. In response to the declined catches, Canada and the US extended their marine jurisdiction 200 nautical miles to restrict foreign factory ships from prime fishing grounds.

The catches continued to decline, with an annual catch of 139,000 tons in 1978. At this point no fishery management policy was put into place and Canadian factory ships simply replaced the banished foreign ones. By 1984, 250,000 tons of cod were caught, preventing cod populations from any possible recovery. Much of the cod that was caught were spawning, further disrupting their ability to replenish stocks.



The Atlantic cod fishery collapsed in 1992 due to overfishing and poor management.

It wasn't until 1986 that scientists recommended cod catches to be reduced to half the total allowable amount. Government failed to act until 1992 when Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, John Crosbie, declared a moratorium on the northern cod fishery. The cod fishery had *completely collapsed* and by 1995 the entire cod biomass had declined to 1700 tons from an annual catch of 250,000 tons in the 50's. Over 42,000 people in the fishing industry lost their jobs almost immediately.

The devastating collapse of the cod fishery could have been prevented if the Canadian Government took immediate conservation action as soon as declines in catches began. By not taking any action, the collapse of the cod fishery caused an incredibly valuable fishery to disappear as well as cost the jobs of tens of thousands of people. Department of Fisheries estimated that even if the stock began to rebuild immediately with no fishing pressure, it would take at least 15 years before any fishing could begin again. Today, 25 years later, the moratorium is still in place.

**DO NOT LIFT THE NORTHERN COD FISHERY MORATORIUM.** There have been claims of cod stock increases in recent years. The total biomass was up 7% from 2015 to 2016, but these numbers are still incomparable to historic numbers. Maintaining low removal of cod has been essential in its recovery in the past two decades and continued protection from excess fishing remains crucial to ever achieving a full recovery of the cod stock. Stocks are still well below what would be needed to sustain large-scale fishing. The potential for the cod stock to return to historic levels will be completely eradicated with the premature lifting of Canada's cod fishery moratorium.

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