

House of Assembly
15 October 2009

ROCK LOBSTER FISHERIES

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Considering the substantial reduction to the total allowable catch for the rock lobster fisheries, will the government reduce or consider reducing the licence fee for commercial fishermen to ease the cost burden on this important export industry?

The Hon. P. CAICA (Colton—Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Forests, Minister for Regional Development) (15:08): I thank the honourable member for his question, and I can provide a brief response. The compliance and the costs involved with respect to that fishery will remain the same whether or not the total allowable catch has been reduced. The answer with respect to the fishery is no. However, what we are looking at—at the preliminary stage at this stage, in discussions with the northern zone—is some matters that might be able to be put in place that do not necessarily have a reduction in the fees that are being paid, but another component of that, that may offer some relief. That is very preliminary. I have made no commitment to that at this stage, but, certainly, what we did this year—and quite rightly so, on the scientific evidence that was provided to me—was to make a very difficult decision with respect to the total allowable catch and what level it will be set at.

The responsibility of this government and me as fisheries minister is to make sure that we have a sustainable future with respect to lobster fishing in this state. That is the reason the decision was made. I hope that the claims of the southern zone people that the science is wrong will be, in a way, proven right. I hope that they catch lobster hand over fist this year and that they reach their quota in a short period of time, but, certainly, based on the evidence that I have been provided with, I do not think that is going to be the case.