

## 2.5 Processing Facilities in the Western Region

The FFMC was established in 1969 by *The Freshwater Fish Marketing Act*, a federal statute which gave it the exclusive right to process and market the freshwater fish harvested from the Western Region in the domestic and export trade. The purpose of this mandate was to: a) market fish in an orderly manner, i.e. process according to market specifications b) maximize returns to fishermen and c) increase domestic and export trade in freshwater fish. At the same time, provincial legislation was passed in all participating provinces giving the FFMC a monopoly on the intra-provincial markets.

With the creation of the FFMC, many of the existing processing facilities in the Western region became redundant. The number of packing stations was reduced from over 200 to about 100. A modern, mechanized, highly efficient processing plant was installed in Transcona, Winnipeg, to process the bulk of the harvest of the whole region. This facility replaced the capacity of 5-6 other plants which were taken over by the Corporation and subsequently closed.

The Transcona plant is a modern fish plant subject to on-going mechanization in the interests of efficiency and, ultimately, to realize cost reductions and improvements in quality. The plant has a through-put capacity of 16 thousand tonnes (35.3 million lb.) per year, and a maximum weekly through-put of approximately 900 tonnes (2 million lb.). The Transcona plant can dress, fillet, freeze, grind and store great volumes of fish of numerous species. Of its total production, approximately 85% is shipped from the plant to export markets, the remaining 15% being marketed in Canada.

## 2.6 Processing Facilities, Producer and Processor Relationships in the Ontario Region

In contrast to the highly centralized processing effort in the Western Region, it is particularly in processing that the Ontario Region displays its fragmented characteristics. Some 79 processing facilities, employing up to 1,500 people on a seasonal basis, process 93% of the Ontario catch of freshwater fish. Approximately 85% of this is exported to the neighbouring U.S. market, or to other overseas destinations. Species which are processed in significant quantities include yellow perch, smelt, pickerel, whitefish and bass.

One of the characteristics of the industry in the Ontario Region is the presence of integrated fishing enterprises. According to figures obtained from the Ontario Department of Natural Resources, some 18 of these firms out of a total of 79 hold commercial fishing licences. Except for one, which is located in the region of the northern inland waters of Ontario, all these operations are on the Canadian portion of the Great Lakes. The 14 firms located on Lakes Erie, Huron and Superior, and one located in northern Ontario, together represent 14% of the quotas on these lakes. Based on the recent (1984) harvest figures available for these lakes, this represents a harvesting capacity of nearly 3 thousand tonnes (6.6 million lb.). This is approximately 13% of total quantities of fish landed in the Ontario Region. There is not enough information to assess the harvesting capacity of the three processing firms holding fishing licences on Lake Ontario but it is possible to conclude that most of the 931 authorized commercial fishing licences in Ontario are issued to independent fishermen who account for well over 70% of landings in the Ontario Region.