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## **Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, May 1, 2019**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Ken McDonald**



## Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everyone.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will continue our study of the migration of lobster and snow crab in Atlantic Canada and the impact of changes to the lobster carapace size.

We have two witnesses here in person today. From the Fisheries Council of Canada, we have Mr. Paul Lansbergen, president.

Joining us today by video conference is Mr. Richard Wahle, research professor, School of Marine Sciences at the University of Maine.

We will start off with seven-minute presentations from witnesses.

Mr. Wahle, if you're ready, you can go first for seven minutes or less.

**Dr. Richard Wahle (Research Professor, School of Marine Sciences, University of Maine, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to be a witness on the question of lobster and snow crab migration.

My name is Richard Wahle. I'm a research professor at the University of Maine's School of Marine Sciences. I also recently became director of the university's Lobster Institute. I have conducted research on crustacean fisheries and ecology for the past 35 years, and much of my research has focused on lobster.

The Lobster Institute serves to maximize the engagement of the University of Maine with stakeholders in the lobster fisheries in both the U.S. and Canada. I will therefore say up front that my experience really lies more with lobster than snow crab fisheries.

Without being redundant regarding previous testimony given before this committee, in this statement I would like to start by emphasizing some basic distinctions in the biology and ecology of the two species, especially with regard to their movements and size at maturity. Second, I will take the opportunity to clarify some apparent confusion between the term "migration" and "geographic range shifts" in the context of climate change. Finally, I'll close by underscoring the need for more cross-border collaboration and monitoring of the living marine resources we share. I will give you an example of one such effort I lead for the American lobster.

The centre of the American lobster abundance is currently the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence and the northeast Gulf of Maine. It ranges northward into Labrador and Newfoundland and extends into the deep waters off the U.S. mid-Atlantic states. There is scientific consensus that the upper physiological limit in temperature is around 20°C and the lower limit is around 12°C, which is the minimum temperature for larval development.

The depth distribution is largely determined by those limits. Lobsters in the Gulf of St. Lawrence are mostly limited to depths shallower than 50 metres. Those further south extend considerably deeper, into offshore banks and shelf waters.

Growth and the onset of maturity are also temperature-dependent. In warmer regimes, lobsters grow faster but mature at a smaller size. These differences in maturation size are the basis for different minimum legal size limits along the species range.

Further, the reported downward trends in the size at maturity over the past few decades have been linked to a warming climate. The optimal thermal envelope for lobsters has been shifting northward in a warming ocean. What has been described as a northward migration in response to climate change is more accurately depicted as a demographic shift in the balance of birth and death rates. I'll add that the depletion of predatory groundfish in the Gulf of Maine and the Gulf of St. Lawrence has also likely contributed to the population surge and the northward shift in the centre of lobster abundance.

The snow crab is a subarctic species distributed around the north Atlantic and Pacific. In Atlantic Canada, it is largely segregated by depth from the lobster population because of its differing thermal preference, despite some overlap in their latitudinal range. The northwest Atlantic population is centred in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and extends north along coastal Labrador and south along the Scotian Shelf.

Snow crabs prefer cold temperatures of between  $-1^{\circ}\text{C}$  and about  $11^{\circ}\text{C}$  and therefore tend to be restricted to greater depths and more northern latitudes than where lobsters range off Atlantic Canada. Unlike lobster, they also tend to prefer soft mud or sand instead of the shallower, rocky habitats preferred by lobster. Furthermore, while lobster continue to grow after maturity, snow crabs reach a terminal molt and stop growing. The snow crab fishery targets only the large, reproductively mature males.

• (1535)

As for movements and migrations, both lobsters and snow crabs have two opportunities for movement during their lifetime. One is during the water-borne larval stages, spanning the first weeks to months after hatching, when they may be passively transported many kilometres from their point of origin. The other is by movements along the bottom, mostly as larger juveniles and adults. The smallest lobsters are cryptic and restricted to rocky habitat. Larger ones engage in seasonal inshore and offshore movements and are most prevalent coastally during the summer. Larger lobsters can move tens to hundreds of kilometres over the course of a year, which has been used by U.S. lobster stock assessment scientists as a justification for combining the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank stocks into one.

In contrast, snow crabs settle in sand/mud environments in deeper water than the environments occupied by lobster. They then migrate to even deeper waters as they age. Tagging studies in Atlantic Canada suggest their lateral movements along the shelf are more limited than those of lobster.

Finally, I will close by underscoring the benefits of cross-border collaboration in monitoring the living marine resources we share. I founded the American lobster settlement index. It's a collaboration of U.S. and Canadian academic institutions, industry members and fishery management agencies that monitor the pulse of baby lobsters that repopulate coastal lobster nurseries each year at some 100 sites between Rhode Island and Newfoundland. For 30 years it has been an important early warning system for changes in this iconic fishery. I look forward to continued collaboration on this program with my Canadian and U.S. colleagues, and would be happy to answer questions about it.

• (1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Wahle.

We'll now go to Mr. Lansbergen for seven minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen (President, Fisheries Council of Canada):** Good afternoon and thank you for the invitation to appear before you today. Since I have appeared on a few occasions, I think you all know that the Fisheries Council of Canada represents processors across the country, many of whom also harvest wild-capture species.

In my remarks today, I'll be sharing a perspective that I hope will complement what you've heard from other witnesses during your study, including Dr. Wahle.

I would like to start by applauding the study. Lobster and snow crab represent our two most valuable exports of wild-capture species. In 2018, exports of lobster were worth \$2.2 billion and snow crab exports were worth \$886 million. These are critical species to

our sector's success and it behooves us to ensure that we have a long-term view of their sustainable fisheries management and market access issues.

Sticking with the economics of these species, it is worth referencing Fisheries and Oceans Canada's sector outlook to 2027. The demand side of the market is very positive. The outlook expects the values of both species to remain high, given strong demand and few substitutes. Growing global population and growing affluence are increasing demand for proteins, including fish and seafood, and that is good news for our entire sector.

The supply side is positive but less certain. Lobster and snow crab stocks are generally healthy, as you heard from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. I am sure we would all like to see all of our stocks be healthy and stay that way. That is why we must take a long-term view and base our resource management decisions on science—science that is comprehensive.

Our oceans, their ecosystems and our fish stocks are in constant flux. You saw the charts from Fisheries and Oceans Canada on stock status over the last 20 plus years. The health of our fish stocks is dependent upon many factors, such as ocean attributes, food supply, predation and fish harvesting, to name a few. Since joining the fisheries sector nearly 18 months ago, it appears to me that most of the attention within fisheries management is given to fishing mortality. That is clearly important and it is the one factor we can control. However, fisheries management is significantly more complex than that.

Your study specifically mentions migration of the two species. Three questions come to mind for me. One, is it year-to-year variability in migration; two, is it a longer-term trend in migration, migration that might be transitory; or three, is it a more permanent change in migratory behaviour? For the long-term health of the stocks and our commercial fisheries, we need three things: we need to understand the underlying causes; we need to determine the permanence of the changes in migratory behaviour; and we need to determine what, if anything, should be done to ensure the health of the stocks and the prosperity of our commercial fisheries.

When the department was here, they talked about migration versus displacement, and that is a good question, but it depends on the scale through which you view the question. Fish don't respect our management area boundaries. Migratory patterns within Canadian waters are just simply migration. However, with a narrower view, migration out of one management area into another could be seen as displacement by an individual harvester.

The economic implications of the two perspectives could lead to different conclusions. The extent or permanence of such changes would also suggest different economic implications and consideration of response actions.

Your study also mentions health of stocks. This is a complex question, so I encourage you to consider this carefully. How do you want to approach the question? Do you want to think of it in the context of stable, natural ecosystem dynamics, or do you want to approach it from a longer-term perspective in the context of climate change impacts? If it's the former, we can have an interesting conversation and you will arrive at some good conclusions about how well Canada is managing its fish resources today. If it's the latter, you will want to revisit this question on a broader scale, perhaps next year. There are climate impacts affecting our oceans, their ecosystems and our fish stocks. We need to better understand and project these impacts so we can adapt. This is very complex and the answers won't be reached overnight.

Having said that, I wish to acknowledge DFO and its efforts to assess climate risks within its portfolio. The environment commissioner has said DFO is ahead of the curve among federal departments, so kudos to DFO.

Next, DFO was instrumental in having the Food and Agriculture Organization study climate change impacts on fisheries and aquaculture. That is this tome of a book full of information. Again, kudos to DFO for this. As I pointed out, this resulted in a substantial compendium of research on the topic, which was released last year. It found that climate impacts on Canada's oceans and fish resources are likely to be both positive and negative.

● (1545)

Moreover, Canada is planning to host later this year an experts workshop on climate impacts and adaptation. DFO wants to know more so we can continue to show leadership in sustainable fisheries management. This is also good news.

However, we need to do more. Taking lobster and snow crab for example, their migratory patterns and overall health will be affected by changing ocean surface temperature, salinity, density stratification and ocean acidification.

In conclusion, I will offer three recommendations.

One, regarding impacts and adaptation, the committee urges the federal government to deepen its research and consideration of climate impacts on, and adaptation options for, Canada's commercial fisheries.

Two, the committee urges Fisheries and Oceans Canada to undertake analysis of the socio-economic implications of climate impacts on Canada's fish resources and of adaptation scenarios.

Three, for yourselves, perhaps in 2020 your committee can extend an invitation to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to appear for the purposes of discussing climate impacts and adaptation options for Canada's commercial fisheries.

I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lansbergen.

We will start off on the government side with Mr. Fraser, for seven minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you both for joining us today. I really appreciate it.

Professor, perhaps I could start with you. I very much appreciate the comments you've made and also the work you've done in the field for many years on the research side.

What types of resources are put into scientific research in the state of Maine and on the U.S. side with regard to understanding better the movement of lobsters and the migration of the species?

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** There are several sources of funding. They come at different levels of jurisdiction.

At the largest national level, we have the National Science Foundation's support, which is typically more basic science-driven. Then we have sources from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, which runs several programs.

Since NOAA is within the Department of Commerce, it is very much oriented toward fisheries and the commercial impacts of our marine natural resources. There are several programs that fund various aspects of research. Within NOAA, there is our sea grant program, the national marine fisheries service, NOAA's ocean acidification program and several others. There is a co-operative research program, and so forth.

At the state level, within the state of Maine, we have a source of funds that is primarily driven from trap fees to harvesters, which is called the lobster research, education and development fund. Out of that has grown this lobster research collaborative.

There are other smaller pots of money around, but basically it's at the national and state level.

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** I appreciate what you said about the American lobster settlement index and that there is cross-border collaboration.

Is the scientific information that these funding sources support shared cross-border as well with some of the work you do?

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** Yes, they absolutely are.

I should add that there's considerable industry support as well, and again, for that particular program, from both sides of the border.

From our side, Ready Seafood Co., is a big dealer here. It also buys Canadian lobsters for distribution.

The P.E.I. Fishermen's Association has been very instrumental in helping us out, and also on the Canadian side, the Maritime Fishermen's Union. We have also had a bit of support from Fisheries and Oceans Canada for that particular program.

● (1550)

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** Okay.

You talk about the predatory groundfish having an impact on the movement of lobsters. Could you explain a bit more how that has an impact on the movement of lobsters and their spatial distribution?

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** Yes. That's a very interesting story. Since really the late 1970s, the harvesting of groundfish on both sides of the border has taken its toll on both the abundance and size structure of groundfish. By "groundfish" I am referring to an assemblage of several species, more than a dozen or so, including the big ones—cod, haddock, halibut, a number of other flatfish and so forth. They have largely been depleted.

As I am sure you are aware, there are now moratoria on the harvesting of many of those species, especially cod. Well, they're chief predators of lobster, so the removal of those species, especially the large individuals in those populations, has essentially relaxed the predation pressure on lobster. That essentially relaxed the predation pressure and enabled them to exploit habitats they had never exploited before, because it had been essentially too risky to do so. That has certainly played an important part in the surge in abundance and the northward shift of the centre of the population.

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** The other way you talked about the movement of patterns is that it's through either the larval stage or the movement of juvenile, or I guess medium-aged, lobsters on the bottom. I would imagine that they would have the greater ability to move further in the larval stage with regard to currents and perhaps temperature changes. Could you explain a little bit more about those types of movements?

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** It's a very good question. It's important to make that distinction between the larval transport opportunity.... Of course, it's only a few weeks in a lobster's lifetime, but in that planktonic stage they have the potential to be transported tens or even hundreds of kilometres, depending on where they hatched and what the particular ocean currents were that they were entrained in.

For example, lobster larvae could be hatched off Grand Manan at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy and be transported easily down to Georges Bank. That's one opportunity. Then they settle to the seabed and are very cryptic until they are a few years old and become more mobile. By the time they are adults, they are capable of longer-distance movements. Again, the longest distance recorded has been on the order of about 100 kilometres in a year's time, but that's probably not the norm. Probably most of the stock would remain within 10 kilometres to 20 kilometres of where they settled.

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to the Conservative side.

Mr. Doherty, you have seven minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lansbergen, it's nice to see you here, as always.

In your opinion, has the predator-prey dynamic changed in this fishery?

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** I think as Dr. Wahle just described, there have been some dynamic changes. The food chain has implications right along. How one fishery gets impacted or one species gets impacted can have implications far up and down the food chain.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Would you say that the government has studied this enough or invested in enough science at this point, or would you suggest that more study needs to be taken?

•(1555)

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** For this particular species, I can't say. In terms of enough research and science for all our commercial species, I think the easy answer is no, more can be done, because more can always be done. It's very complex, and it's very difficult to know all of the interactions.

Last year you had the environment commissioner come and testify on one of her reports that dealt with climate change and, at the time, you had DFO officials come and talk about the work they've done. After that, I followed up with them to ask more specifically.... I come from a history in the forest industry where we looked quite heavily at climate impacts on the forest. The Canadian forest service had done a very good job in projecting out what those impacts could be and trying to figure what adaptation strategies the industry and governments could implement in response to those impacts.

For the fishery sector, it's quite a bit different because DFO takes the active management decisions, not the industry. On the forest side, CFS had developed adaptation strategies and guidance for the industry and practitioners to implement, but for fisheries, it's DFO that needs it itself. The big question is: are they resourced enough to do the science and make the decisions that they need to? I'm not sure if they have enough resources at the time.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Like the forestry industry, is the fisheries industry, in your opinion, investing in science or studies?

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** Some companies are to greater degrees than others, and it depends on their capacities to do so. The industry structure is completely different between forestry and fisheries. The immediate and direct benefits of investing in science are completely different between fisheries and forestry, so I think it's an apples-and-oranges comparison, but we all need to do more, for sure.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** How heavily, in your opinion, is the department relying on the precautionary principle versus science, and how does that impact your stakeholders?

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** It's a difficult question. It's a good question, but a difficult one, I think, to answer as a whole, because I think for each species their level of knowledge in terms of stock assessments and things like that is different. Where there's a greater lack of data and knowledge, they have to rely more fully on—

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Perhaps I'll rephrase that. We heard in a number of reports that our snow crab fishers and our lobster fishers, at the last minute, had to go back out, and, with a stroke of a pen, had to retrieve their pots, risking life and limb, so to speak, to do that just because of, again, no science backing, but the thought that perhaps there were issues and the use of the precautionary principle.

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** Certainly I heard similar stories with regard to efforts to protect right whales, for example. Even in our standard regulations that have been in place for years, there are certain windows in terms of retrieving your pots, regardless of what the weather is, so that could place harvesters in dangerous situations, because they have to obey that window.

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to the NDP.

Mr. Donnelly, welcome back again. It's good to see you. You have seven minutes or less, sir.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both our witnesses for being here and providing your testimony.

Dr. Wahle, I will start with you on a few questions. Could you summarize for the committee the eastern U.S. lobster/crab fishery and how that fishery has been impacted over the past five to 10 years?

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** It's sort of a tale of two cities in that the southern part of the species range, southern New England and the mid-Atlantic states, has suffered severely from mass mortalities related to extreme temperatures. Long Island Sound is an example. Shell disease has become very prevalent, to the order of 30% to 40% prevalence levels south of Cape Cod.

Once you move into the Gulf of Maine, it's a completely different story. These same warming-related events they are seeing in the south are positively affecting the cooler areas of species' range. When you move up into the eastern Gulf of Maine-Bay of Fundy area, which has historically been on the cold side of the lobster comfort zone, if you will, it has in the past 10 to 20 years surged in abundance. That fishery has now elevated its productivity to its current status. For the United States, that is the most valuable fishery in the nation right now, and I know the Canadian side of the eastern Gulf of Maine and into the Gulf of St. Lawrence is now contributing to your nation's most valuable fishery.

Does that sum it up?

•(1600)

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** I think so. If you were to reiterate the top two or three impacts—you kind of hinted at that—to the fishery, what would they be?

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** I would say the top two impacts that have affected the productivity are warming climate, warming oceans, and the depletion of groundfish.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** What would be your number one recommendation to this committee if we were looking at the Canadian Atlantic lobster and snow crab fishery?

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** I will just add a little continuation to your previous question if I'm permitted. I didn't really address the crab

part of the story. If I'm running short on time, I'll answer your other question.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** No, you're good.

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** We don't have snow crab really as a fishery in New England, but to answer your question as to what recommendations I would make, I would say at all costs protect the broodstock. If there's a simple answer to this question, it's protect the broodstock.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Lansbergen, you gave a number of recommendations to the committee. That is very helpful, thank you. I'd like to ask you a couple of questions,

I think you've given three recommendations. If I could just summarize them, increase research in climate adaptation is probably a pretty standard one. That's what we've got to do in changing ocean climates. We're looking at our U.S. counterpart and seeing that's a huge impact. A "tale of two cities" was how that was described.

Next is adapting to those scenarios. That's asking the department to look at how they are adapting.

Finally, you gave a recommendation about the minister coming and talking to the committee in 2020, with a new government, new Parliament.

Is there anything else that you could recommend or add to what you've provided in recommendations that the committee should include in the study?

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** I think I could have perhaps gone a little bit deeper in terms of recommendations on those three themes, but with the extent of this study, I didn't know if you would necessarily have time to fully consider some deeper recommendations.

In terms of the science, and how much more science is needed within a certain time frame, you could certainly look at that more specifically in terms of how many resources DFO is putting in to understand climate impacts and the adaptation scenarios and options that we have for the years and decades ahead of us. You could look at how quickly they need to do that work.

Then there's having the minister come and discuss that with the committee. Given that we do have an election later this year, is next year too soon? That's for you to decide, but I think having him or her come and talk is a good thing.

•(1605)

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** What are your biggest concerns for the lobster and snow crab fisheries, or your organization's biggest concerns, aside from your recommendations?

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** The immediate outlook for those two species in particular is still relatively positive, so I don't have an immediate concern. There are other species that I think will face more negative climate impacts sooner, and we need to be concerned about them.

I'm an economist by training, so my depth of knowledge on the climate is pretty thin, but from reading parts of that book, I think some trends off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, and even Nunavut, are going to be quite different from, say, those in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Bay of Fundy and the Scotian Shelf. They are also going to be different from those on the west coast.

We need to look at all of our coastlines, and the different regions along our coastlines, to figure out the impacts on different species, and how that is going to interact, from one species to the next.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Donnelly. Your time is up.

We will now go back to the government side with Mr. Rogers, for seven minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to our guests.

Mr. Chair, before I get into the questioning, I would like to introduce a motion that is very relevant to this topic of snow crab and lobster, if that's appropriate.

The motion is very simple. It says:

That the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans undertake a study on the use of the Precautionary Approach and limit of reference points to determine future management of fish stocks and the economic and environmental impact of this approach.

I have copies available. If it's appropriate, I'd like to have the motion distributed to the committee.

**The Chair:** Mr. Calkins.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Mr. Chair, normally any motion that wouldn't require 48 hours' notice must be germane and relevant to the study that is already going on.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** This is totally relevant to the study.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** The motion being proposed by Mr. Rogers is for a separate and independent study that I do not see has a direct relationship to, nor is a subset of, the current study. I think that given the normal, friendly discourse at this committee, there shouldn't be a problem in giving the committee 48 hours' notice. It does not sound like the kind of motion we would object to, but I don't think it follows the rules of the committee.

**The Chair:** Mr. Rogers.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** I think it is very relevant to the topic we are discussing today. I want to focus on the management practices that DFO is planning to implement in our jurisdiction, when it comes to crab stocks, fish stocks and any other kinds of stocks.

**The Chair:** Mr. Doherty.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** It is quite interesting that our friend across the way all of a sudden has a full head of steam, as we discussed the precautionary principle at length through Bill C-55, the Fisheries Act review, as well as through other studies that have come before this committee.

Mr. Chair, I would offer, similar to what my colleague Mr. Calkins mentioned, that this is something that can be discussed in committee business, which we have scheduled after this. Witnesses are before us right now. One has travelled a long distance, and one is online. We are taking up their time.

In fairness to all members of committee, this is something that should be taken up and given due course after this session is done.

**The Chair:** Do you have something else to add, Mr. Rogers?

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** Mr. Chair, I think this motion is very relevant to what we are discussing here, particularly as to the management practices related to crab stocks, lobster and other species. I want to focus on those particular management practices. That's why I thought it would be fair to put them into a motion that we could discuss.

**The Chair:** Mr. Doherty. Then we will try to end there, if we can.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Mr. Chair, I move to adjourn.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Obviously, a motion to adjourn is not debatable.

All those in favour of adjourning?

I am calling the vote.

Are you moving to adjourn debate on the motion, or to adjourn the committee?

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** I'm moving to adjourn debate on this motion.

**The Chair:** I thought you were moving to adjourn the committee meeting.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** First of all, Mr. Chair, you have to make a ruling. I don't want to tell you how to do your job, but we should have a ruling from you as to whether or not the motion is in order. If it is in order, then Mr. Doherty's motion to adjourn the debate on the motion Mr. Rogers just moved would have been, I think, the procedure.

In fairness, Mr. Chair, could we have a ruling from you on whether or not the motion from Mr. Rogers is in order?

**The Chair:** I believe the motion is in order, but I would like to delay the vote on the motion until after we question our witnesses and move into committee business, if the committee is satisfied with that.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Because he's moved the motion, we are now debating his motion. If it's in order, then we either have to start debating his motion or we have to table it or somehow adjudicate that motion.

**The Chair:** Then I'll move that it is in order. We've debated it to some degree, so I guess we'll call the question on the motion made by Mr. Rogers.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** There is a motion that has been moved and halfway voted on. We have to finish that.

**The Chair:** Yes, but it was straightening out which way it was—

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Mr. Chair, in fairness, you had clarified Mr. Calkins' question, so it was in order. Todd's motion was in order. We need to finish.

You were just clarifying. I was under the impression as well that it was moving to adjourn the committee, and it was clarified that it was for debate.



**The Chair:** So the motion actually is to adjourn debate.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** So far, there are three in favour.

**The Chair:** Those in favour of adjourning the debate?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now we're back to questioning our witnesses.

Mr. Rogers, go ahead for the time remaining, please.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** I want to focus on the management practices I just referenced.

Mr. Lansbergen, how satisfied are you that DFO's stock assessment process is following this precautionary approach, with limited reference points and so on as part of the principles they're using? They talk about how the academics and industry and other groups get together and then they go out to communities and spread the message about this approach. Harvesters tell me they're not being consulted and they're not being listened to. How confident are you that they are following an approach that is acceptable to the harvesting sector in this industry?

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** As you alluded, our sector is quite fragmented and we don't always agree with each other. If you ask different people in the sector the same question, I think quite frequently you'll get different answers. I don't know how we can necessarily get around that, but I think one of the issues is how many resources the department has for the stock assessments of all of our commercial fisheries and whether they have kept them up to date. For some that they have not and for others that they have, do they have the time to undergo consultations with the stakeholders and the harvesters to the extent that will meet their expectations? That's part of the challenge.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** I guess the point I'm getting at is whether people are really listening to these harvesters. The consultation pieces are being done with different sectors and so on. You have harvesters who have major differences of opinion compared to some of the science. A perfect example from the area where I live is that harvesters this year are experiencing extremely good catches, much faster than they've had in the last three years, but the science was proposing a 30% cut to the stocks. Fishermen are at a loss to explain why that is the case. Many of them have already fished and have their quotas caught by this time, which is out of the ordinary.

●(1615)

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** On that particular case, I don't have enough knowledge and information of the specifics to really answer the question. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** I appreciate that. I just wanted to know if you might have a perspective on that, because there seems to be a major discrepancy between what the people who have been fishing for decades are saying about the state of stocks and what science is saying, and I didn't know if you might have an opinion.

Mr. Wahle, would you be prepared to comment on that?

**Dr. Richard Wahle:** Just to clarify, as far as I know, the Canadian stock, like the American stock, is at its maximum level of productivity, at historic levels right now. That's not to say there aren't areas that are suffering. I pointed out the examples of southern New England in our part of the world. There are also parts of Atlantic Canada that may be more vulnerable than others, such as the Northumberland Strait near P.E.I. in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. Because of its shallow nature, the summer warming can be extreme in that area.

To my knowledge, and in conferring with my Canadian colleagues at DFO, at the University of New Brunswick and at Memorial University, in the past 20 or so years, all stocks have been up by anywhere from 50% to 100%.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Wahle.

What time remains, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Very little.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** Okay.

I just wanted to put that point out there, because I am not expressing my frustration as much as the frustration of the harvesting community, in particular in Newfoundland and Labrador, versus what the scientists are saying, and get your and Mr. Lansbergen's perspective on how you see things.

I appreciate your comments.

**Mr. Paul Lansbergen:** Whenever the science is presented to the harvesting community, whenever it suggests there should be a cut in the allowable catch, the emotions and reactions are going to be way stronger than when it's up. That's when we see arguments over which area should be cut more than another. Then you get questions about the science being correct and any gaps. People very quickly point to the gaps in the data that's used for the conclusions.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** Yes, I appreciate and understand that, but the reality is that the catches this year have been really good. It totally contradicts what is being proposed in the needs for proposed cuts. That's what the harvesters are telling me.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That concludes the first part of our committee meeting for this afternoon.

Thank you to our two witnesses, Dr. Wahle for appearing by video conference and Mr. Lansbergen for appearing in person. He is no stranger to the committee.

We will suspend for a couple of minutes now so we can discuss committee business.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*





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