



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 014

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald



Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)): I now call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 14 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, October 19, 2020, the committee is resuming its study of the Pacific salmon.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of September 23, 2020. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. So you are aware, the webcasts will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I will outline a few rules to follow.

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either “floor”, “English” or “French”.

For members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the directives of the Board of Internal Economy regarding masking and health protocols.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you're on video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. The microphones of participants in the room will be controlled, as normal, by the proceedings and verification officer.

As a reminder, all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, your microphone should be on mute.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

I now welcome our witnesses today. From the Ahousaht First Nation, we have Clifford Atleo Sr.; from the First Nation Wild Salmon Alliance, Robert Chamberlin, chairman; from the Pacific Streamkeepers Federation, Zo Ann Morten, the executive director; from the Stó:lo Tribal Council, Chief Tyrone McNeil, vice-president and tribal chief; and from the St'at'imc Chiefs Council, Arthur Adolph, director of operations.

We will proceed with opening remarks from our witnesses.

Mr. Atleo, you'll go first, for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr. (Ahousaht First Nation): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon to everyone.

I'm going to say a few words in our language very briefly, but I will interpret.

[Witness spoke in Nuu-chah-nulth and provided the following translation:]

On behalf of Ha'wiih from Ahousaht, I'd like to formally thank the House Standing Committee on Fisheries for the invitation to talk about a most important issue affecting the whole west coast of Canada.

[English]

In particular, our area is severely impacted by what we're talking about.

I'll give you a little background in terms of pre-contact. Most streams and rivers contained salmon in British Columbia. Some had sockeye, some had Chinook and some had both. Others had chum, coho and steelhead. Some had pinks. Larger rivers had all species. Indigenous people managed them all very well.

Since contact, the newcomers learned to harvest and process all the species. Canneries existed on the Skeena River, Rivers Inlet, Fraser River, Nootka, Ceepeecee, Kildonan, Port Alberni, Victoria, Prince Rupert, Bella Coola, Namu and Tofino Inlet. I did make a mistake in my written document, saying that I'm not aware of any canneries operating today. There is one. It's called St. Jean's. It is partly owned by first nations people from Nuu-chah-nulth.

In terms of my history with fisheries, I grew up in Ahousaht. Every family used to participate in a commercial salmon fishery. Our participation enabled our community to be self-sustained. We didn't have to travel far because we fished most of our local stocks. All species were plentiful. All indigenous nations were similar to ours. We trolled, we gilnetted and we seined. This was 60 years ago.

Over time, our participation was reduced, as were the run sizes of all species. In the 1980s, salmon farms were permitted to operate on inlets and bays of the west coast of Vancouver Island. It was around this time that the Canadian government used our trollers to target U.S. chinook stocks. The strategy was to force the U.S. into negotiating what became the Pacific Salmon Treaty. However, our west coast of Vancouver Island chinook stocks were impacted negatively by this strategy. Our chinook stocks have never recovered from that policy and the policies that allowed large numbers of open-net pen fish farms to operate in west coast of Vancouver Island waters. Other species that have suffered as well are sockeye, chum, coho, pink and steelhead.

The existence of salmon farms along the west coast of Vancouver Island migration routes have severely impacted rebuilding efforts of all species.

The management by our Department of Fisheries and Oceans has not helped either. The evidence is that with the newcomers, laws were enacted with good intentions, with conservation being rather prominent in legislation, only to have DFO fall way short of upholding the law. DFO has the authority to manage, with devastating results. This evidence of shortcomings in management has resulted in the current dismal state of salmon stock coast-wide.

Poor logging and inappropriate land use policies by the B.C. provincial government have contributed to the destruction of salmon habitat. Functional habitat is required for long-term rebuilding of all salmon stocks in British Columbia.

Poor action in addressing climate change by all governments is not helping either.

Thank you.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you for that. It's not very often we get a witness to close under the allowable time by a few seconds. I'm usually cutting people off before they're finished. Thank you for that.

We'll now go to Mr. Chamberlin for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Robert Chamberlin (Chairman, First Nation Wild Salmon Alliance): [*Witness spoke in Kwak'wala and provided the following text:*]

Gila'kasla Hama'thlal Lal'kwala'tly. Wigya'xans hutli'laxa la'man wathdam. La'man wath'dam gyan no'kia kas Lal'kwala'tly.

[*Witness provided the following translation:*]

Greetings, gathered people. Listen to my words today. My words are from the hearts of my people.

[*English*]

I just wanted to follow Cliff's lead and speak in my language a little bit. I am imploring you to hear the words that I have to say today on behalf of the hearts of the people of the first nations.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to you today about the state of B.C.'s Pacific salmon. This is a critical topic to B.C. first nations, as salmon are a primary traditional food source and are

constitutionally protected and recognized by Canada's Supreme Court.

In terms of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, wild salmon are considered or captured within a number of the areas, including food security, culture, traditions, education, environmental standards and territorial decision-making, which of course means free, prior and informed consent.

This current government is beginning to set a table for the implementation of the United Nations declaration, and free, prior and informed consent must be a foundational component, especially to the current Discovery Islands fish farm consultations and accommodations process; to embrace the details that have been provided by the first nations involved in this consultation to meaningfully implement the precautionary principle, especially given that none of the Fraser River first nations were included in the consultations that will further impact their aboriginal rights.

The crisis that is B.C. Pacific salmon simply cannot wait any stretch of time for the fulfilment of the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

With the historic low returns, notably to the Fraser River, this is clearly the beginning of a downward spiral to extinction, and I say this with no drama. Historic low returns equal historic low eggs being spawned in the Fraser River. Historic low spawning eggs equal historic lower juvenile salmon entering the ocean.

It is an accepted fact that only 1% to 4% of juvenile salmon return to be the next generation of spawning salmon, so we can reasonably and logically anticipate that we will experience further historic lows, continuing the downward spiral to extinction in the coming years.

DFO Minister Jordan recently announced this government's response to Cohen commission recommendation 19. The announcement included the determination that the open-net cage fish farms of the Discovery Islands area posed less than minimal risk or harm to Fraser River sockeye.

This determination was founded upon nine science papers that were so-called peer-reviewed through the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat, CSAS. The CSAS peer-review process is horribly flawed and provides great opportunity for an extremely biased outcome.

Proponents—in this case, a fish farm company and fish farm industry associations—are involved in every component, every step, of determining if the operations pose a risk to Pacific salmon, such as the steering committee developing the scope of the science, terms of reference, and discussion paper development, and the peer review itself can be unduly influenced by industry, as they can select who will participate in the peer review.

This is far less than the impartiality and objectivity that I and many first nations, commercial and tourism industries and Canadians who rely upon healthy and abundant wild salmon stocks would expect as a reasonable starting point. Decades of science that withstood international peer reviews were ignored, even though that process was far more rigorous and subject to a completely impartial review assessment and outcome.

Sea lice was to be a 10th science paper related to the Cohen recommendation 19 announcement in determining the minimal risk or minimal harm. Sea lice were omitted from this suite of science papers.

This is extremely concerning, as fish farms are located sequentially along key out-migration corridors of juvenile Pacific salmon and produce billions of larvae that reside in the upper water column where the juvenile salmon are to be found. Given that fish farms are located where there is good tidal flush, the juvenile Pacific salmon are brought in very close proximity of areas inundated with billions of sea lice larvae. Sea lice can physically kill juvenile salmon, but also change their behaviours, making them more susceptible to predation.

Regarding the sea lice conditions of licence, the three sea lice average is the trigger for treatment on a fish farm.

• (1545)

Three sea lice may seem like an innocuous number, but considering that each fish farm has 500,000 to 700,000 Atlantic salmon, the number of sea lice becomes staggering. There's also the production of billions of sea lice larvae as well. Within the sea lice conditions of licence, there's an identified out-migration window for juvenile Pacific salmon, this being from March until June. The conditions of licence are to provide special regulatory protection for juvenile Pacific salmon during this time. The conditions of licence are completely and utterly untethered from juvenile Pacific salmon that they are designed to protect, as DFO does not monitor the presence of sea lice on juvenile wild salmon whatsoever—

The Chair: Mr. Chamberlin—

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: If a fish farm company is found to be out of compliance of the conditions of licence, you get a 42-day window—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Chamberlin.

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: Oh, sorry. I'm hearing my own voice.

The Chair: That's because I have my mike turned on. You've gone over time, so we have to end it there with regard to the testimony, but hopefully anything you didn't get to say will be provided in the question-and-answer portion.

We'll now go to Ms. Morten for five minutes or less, please.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten (Executive Director, Pacific Streamkeepers Federation): I'd like to thank you for your invitation—oh, I'm hearing myself twice too. Is there a way to get rid of this?

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, there's massive reverberation. I'm not sure why, but can we fix this before we move on? It's hard to follow the testimony.

The Chair: Have any of the participants got a mike left on? I'm hearing my own voice back in my earpiece.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl): Mr. Chair, we'll suspend for a second, if it's okay with you.

The Chair: Okay, we'll suspend for a moment to check this out.

• (1545)

(Pause)

• (1550)

The Chair: Let's resume. We'll go now to Ms. Morten for five minutes or less and we'll see how it goes.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: I want to thank you for your invitation to present on the state of the Pacific salmon.

I've been involved in many aspects of salmon, but my passion is with community engagement through the salmonid enhancement program, SEP. SEP involves enhancement activities as well as programming, such as Streamkeepers, Stream to Sea, community advisers, science branch, veterinary services, and resource restoration teams, which include an engineer and biologists. These were all brought together and built upon under the SEP banner since 1975 to assist the Pacific salmon.

As I listened to witnesses—and the Big Bar slide kept being referenced—I heard reference to the salmon being in jeopardy prior to this catastrophic event.

It was this knowledge that led to the rewriting of the federal Fisheries Act. The work done by this committee on the Fisheries Act assisted in the renewed federal act, with the meaning and intentions of rebuilding salmon runs and protecting salmon in their habitat. The Fisheries Act can be a strong tool, and we await the regulations being written and followed that will allow it to live up to its potential.

Going back to the Big Bar and the response to it, there was questioning around whether there had ever been a time in history where there was a slide of this magnitude. Hell's Gate was brought up. While I wasn't there in 1914, I did work on the Hell's Gate tram in summer 1974 and got to inform thousands of interested tourists about the slide and the efforts that went into the building of the fishway to allow for the safer journey of our amazing salmon after years—

The Chair: Ms. Morten, the interpreters are asking that you slow down just a little bit. They're good at their job, but they need it to be a little slower.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: I worked on a Hell's Gate airtram in 1974 and got to inform thousands of interested tourists about the slide and the efforts that went into building the fishway to allow for the safer journey of our amazing salmon after years or decades of being blocked by rock and turbulent waters.

The amazing part of Big Bar was the response, the coming together to fix it, the concern for the salmon. Politics dropped away, and survival mode kicked in. It took just five days to put together the 3G unified command structure, a very different response from that after the slide of 1914. Studies undertaken in 1937 may have led to a pathway to follow, but in my estimation it was the strength of the salmonid enhancement program that provided the knowledge and staff that would be needed. The ideas flowed about how to fix it, and some parts could be hired out: "Take this rock and put it there."

For many ideas, the SEP program staff were vital. Existing hatchery staff were brought in to assist in building holding areas and transport tanks. The resource restoration engineers helped build fish ladders and boulder structures. SEP managers were seconded to oversee the day-to-day operations, and area directors who knew the area and the local people came to assist.

DFO Pacific region has a small number of staff, but they hold the unique skill set that understands salmon, water and landscapes. There was a team to turn to and lessons that had been learned.

It's my understanding that when the Big Bar slide happened, the Seymour Salmonid Society was asked to share their experiences of the slide that had blocked the Seymour River in 2015, saving hundreds of hours of research time.

As for communications, Big Bar was and is a big deal. People wanted to know what was happening, what was being done to fix this travesty. The communications tools that were put in place allowed for the participation of all to get a blow-by-blow account as to what was happening, what was being tried, what was being worked on. Never before have I seen such an effort to engage the public to help unravel the story.

This is a very complex problem that the public has a huge concern over. We know full well that salmon and their habitat are in peril. Where's the command centre? Where are the communications teams allowing the public to see what is being done for the sake of our salmon?

We have not become numb to the plight of Pacific salmon. It is the reason we are here today. It is why thousands of regular everyday citizens and some extraordinary citizens have stepped up and volunteered with DFO's SEP programming. It is why we want to help the federal government undertake the changes that the Fisheries Act was rewritten to address. We want to assist in the protection and rebuilding of habitat that will help fish populations recover.

Where is the 3G command centre for the salmon today, where the work is done just for the sake of salmon; where the urgency is real; where those who can, do; where acts, programming, policy and regulations are drawn upon to ensure that the response to flooding is not just the erection of salmon-harming dikes; where economic pressures are relieved by rebuilding our salmon resources,

not by exploiting the last few; where environmental conditions are to strive for the best conditions for salmon, not look at the very minimum before their demise; when we stop damaging and losing habitat and instead look to protect and preserve first, and then rebuild and restore what is lost?

We recently almost lost a large part of the SEP programming through government reductions, and very soon afterward we needed the skill sets and passions that these very people have in order to respond to Big Bar. At this time, the number of resource people who understand salmon and salmon habitat is dwindling rapidly, and it is hard to replace them.

We will need to focus on recruitment and training in order to have the expertise needed for today and for our future. It will take every partnership, process and tool we have made and those yet to come if we truly have the will to address salmon rebuilding and protection. We have shown that we can work together for a common cause and have the pieces needed to create a pathway towards this goal.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Morten.

We'll now go to Chief McNeil for five minutes or less, please.

Chief Tyrone McNeil (Vice-President and Tribal Chief, Stolo Tribal Council): [*Witness spoke in Halkomelem*]

[*English*]

Thank you for the opportunity to share here. I ask the interpreters to excuse me, as I don't have prepared notes to share with them.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee. In preparing to do that, I couldn't help but think of being about seven or eight years old with my late mother. This would have been about 1968 or 1969, something like that. My mom was having a conversation with two other ladies about her age. They were talking about how many fish they had put away for the summer.

The one lady responded 108, and the other one said 52, and my mom's response was 96. They chuckled at my mom because with a big family she had put away only 96 jars of salmon. Those would have been quart jars back in the day. My mom's response was that it was not 96 jars; it was 96 dozen quarts of salmon put away in one season.

Hearing this narrative about where we are with salmon in today's state, I can't help but think of growing up on salmon, as we did throughout our early years, right up until a point in time when the stocks started declining, and we had less and less access to fish.

Also, on the other end of it, we had some studies that showed us as Stó:lo people. What you know as the Fraser River, we know as the Stó:lo. It's the mother of all rivers. It's the food provider for us, the Stó:lo people.

When the first Europeans arrived on the shores, they calculated that we Stó:lo people consumed about 1,000 pounds of salmon per capita per year. They looked at other tribes around us, but we had by far the greatest consumption.

I'm thinking of those two baselines in a narrative of reconciliation. My community now consists of 1,000 people. Had we still been consuming salmon at 1,000 pounds per capita, that would be a million pounds per year. We are certainly not anywhere near that, due only to how DFO regulates us and manages the fishery as a whole.

I would really encourage folks to think about that impact of going from such sustenance to where we are now, where we would only have a chance to fish every weekend like we did growing up. If we have a wedding, we barbeque fish. If we have a funeral, we barbeque fish. If we have a birthday, we barbeque fish. Sometimes we barbeque or cook fish just for the fun of it, because it's in our blood. It's in our DNA.

Thinking of that from a reconciliation manner, Mr. Chair, I would think that in this day and era of reconciliation and of the declaration, folks like you and the department would be doing everything they possibly could to ensure that at a minimum our sustenance is met. In doing that, you have tools in front of you around the wild salmon policy, the Cohen commission recommendations and the precautionary principle.

The 10 principles are supposed to be driving the federal bureaucracy, particularly around the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Articles 18, 19, 24 and 38 really stand out for me, Mr. Chair.

It's about utilizing existing tools that the federal government has at hand through the department, and what can be done to prevent any harm, particularly man-made harm. We know that there are climate change factors that we can do only some things about, but we're in control of the man-made influences, particularly around the open-net pen fish farms and the migratory route around the Discovery Passage in particular.

You can't imagine the harm that those fish farms do on a migratory path. When our salmon are out migrating right by these farms and there are lice outbreaks on them, DFO allows a 42-day window for those farms to respond to the lice. In doing that, they are not monitoring the amount of lice that are on the wild salmon, period.

I think there's a missed opportunity in terms of not using tools that the people have available right here and now to better protect and to do everything you possibly can to minimize the man-made negative impacts on something that's so vital to us. It's more than a food source. It's a way of being. It's who we are as Stó:lo people and who other first nations are as well.

• (1600)

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Chief McNeil.

We'll now go to Mr. Adolph for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Arthur Adolph (Director of Operations, St'át'imc Chiefs Council): Thanks, Mr. Ken McDonald, chair, and vice-chairs, as well as the committee members, for the invitation to present before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

My name is Arthur Adolph. I'm from the community of Xáxl'i'p, formerly known as the Fountain Indian Band, located 15 kilometres north of Lillooet and 365 kilometres north of Vancouver, overlooking the Fraser River.

I was chief for my community for eight years and a council member for 17 years. My career began after graduating from high school, when I enrolled in heavy-duty mechanics. After an industrial accident, I went back to school and received a B.A. in sociology and anthropology.

Early in my life, when I was eight months of age, my mother passed. Through custom adoption, Chief Sam Mitchell and his wife Susan, who were 66 and 65 years of age respectively, raised me. They immersed me and indoctrinated me in St'át'imc culture, traditions, way of life and authentic St'át'imc ecological knowledge, as well as our St'át'imc language.

My presentation will be from this perspective: the importance of the Fraser River sockeye to our St'át'imc culture, way of life and, most importantly, our food security and well-being.

Since time immemorial, in early spring we have the annual beckoning calls of ecological and phenological indicators that begin at the valley bottom with the blossoming of the buttercups and then the rose bushes, and, shortly afterwards, the distinct clicking sound of the grasshopper we call *tl'ek'atl'ék'a* to the mountain top with the melting "snow horse", all of which resonates throughout our territory for the St'át'imcs' annual return to our fishing ground and fishing rocks.

Throughout St'át'imc territory, each one of our fishing rocks has its own distinct traditional name. Also at our fishing rocks are distinct rock markings left by the Transformers. According to our legends, Coyote, one of the Transformers, brought the sockeye from the coast to the interior, leaving his marks by our fishing rocks to remind us of his endeavours.

In the Lillooet area, the St'át'imc are well known for our wind-dried salmon, which is called *sts'wan*. Prior to B.C. joining the Dominion of Canada in 1871, this food staple was well known to the Hudson's Bay Company as well, which purchased substantial amounts for their staff stationed at the Kamloops trading post.

Sam Mitchell, who was born on June 2, 1894, and who raised me, stated that there used to be so much salmon at the Bridge River Rapids that you could almost walk across the river on their backs.

In regard to the abundance of salmon, Michael Kew stated that the heavy commercial catch was beyond the aboriginal catch. Kew also pointed out that there was an abundance of sockeye in the Lillooet area, and that over 23,580,000 sockeye passed by in the peak years and 5,050,000 in low years. CBC News reported on August 11, 2020, that the Pacific Salmon Commission estimated the pre-season Fraser River sockeye salmon forecast to be 283,000 sockeye for 2020. Last year's return of the Fraser River sockeye is 1.2% of the historic peak years of the sockeye return.

As you are aware, the Cohen commission was initiated by the federal government on November 5, 2009, to investigate the decline of the Fraser River sockeye. The Cohen inquiry concluded with 75 recommendations to improve the future sustainability of the sockeye fishery. One of the major components that we see is recommendation 3, which identifies the conflict with the DFO and in their mandate: promoting fish farms while protecting wild salmon.

I'll move to my conclusion.

• (1605)

In closing, using the analogy of big-box stores, it is not like if we cannot go to Costco, we have the alternative of going to Walmart. This is not so if the Fraser River salmon become extinct; we do not have another alternative. Our St'át'imc culture, traditions, way of life and well-being will all collapse, forcing us further into fourth world conditions within our own homelands.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Adolph.

I realize that you have more material in your notes that were submitted. Once they get translated, they will be circulated to all the committee members for future reference. Anything you didn't get to say will hopefully come out in the line of questioning.

We will now go to our questions.

Up first is Mr. Arnold, for six minutes or less.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

I'd like to start out with Mr. Chamberlin.

Mr. Chamberlin, on November 30, 2018, the B.C. government's Broughton LOU steering committee submitted its consensus recommendations. These recommendations included that a first nations-led monitoring and inspection program be immediately put in place to monitor fish health and screen for sea lice, pathogens, disease agents and so on.

My understanding is that the CFIA and the DFO do perform monitoring and inspections on open-net pen salmon farms. Why was the additional inspection and monitoring program deemed necessary?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: First off, we need to acknowledge that there is a clear lack of any measure of trust between the first nations of British Columbia and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I'm not trying to be untoward or combative. I'm just stating

what I've seen and heard many times over. As a result of that, there is a very high level of mistrust of science.

In terms of the DFO's monitoring of disease and sea lice on the fish farms, you have to understand that it's a monitoring program. They come by and they just check on the audit. They audit the fish farm company's work.

I'm mindful of a recent science paper that spoke about how numbers were higher when the DFO was around and lower when it wasn't. This is the kind of information that causes great consternation for first nations. We want independent monitoring and oversight, by the standards that we insist upon.

The DFO relies upon counting adult and sub-adult sea lice, but we know that the ones in a smaller life cycle will grow into adults, so we consider counting those, which the department doesn't do, as well as science and the methodology.

• (1610)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Next I want to move on to a question for Ms. Morten from the Stó:ló and for the other Fraser chiefs who are here.

As recently as late September, the fisheries minister was to make a decision on the net pen farms in the Broughton Archipelago. That decision was basically kicked down the road. Then there were to be consultations started with the seven first nations in that area.

Does that constitute consultation? Someone, I believe today, mentioned that the consultation hadn't taken place with those other first nations. Does that consultation with the seven nations in the area...? Will that be sufficient, or will it be another failed attempt by this government to form reconciliation?

Ms. Morten, are you able to speak?

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: My last name is Morten. I think you might be thinking of Alexandra Morton.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I'm.... Are you speaking on behalf of the Stó:ló?

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: No.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Pardon me.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: I'm from the Streamkeepers.

Mr. Mel Arnold: You're from the Streamkeepers. Okay, pardon me.

Chief McNeil, would you comment?

Chief Tyrone McNeil: Thanks for the question.

First, we're extremely dissatisfied that the government originally committed to begin removing fish farms by September 30 as per Cohen and at the very last minute came up with an airy-fairy decision to allow them to stay there and then shoot for another date down the road.

Specifically to your question around consultation, the government is obliged to formally consult with those seven closest first nations, but I'm a thousand kilometres away from that and I'm directly impacted. I'm not potentially impacted; I'm directly impacted by those fish farms being there, and I have no opportunity to consult at all.

I can't remember the last time we engaged a minister or a deputy minister in a conversation around fishing in general. Too often we correspond to a minister, and we get a non-response back that's not even worth the paper it's written on.

The government has to do a lot of work on consultation, I think, in particular on article 19 of the declaration, which speaks of free, prior and informed consent; article 18, which speaks to our right to be involved in decisions that affect our rights—fish are a big piece of our rights—and, in particular, article 24, which speaks to protecting our food and our sustenance.

The short answer to your question is that the federal government has completely dropped the ball with regard to consultation for those of us who aren't part of those seven communities, but we do need to be involved.

Thank you.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

I'm going to move on to another question and hopefully get a really quick answer from each of the participants today.

When you look at the federal government's actions and investments, what is being missed in their efforts to rebuild salmon stocks? In other words, if there was one thing you were able to do to restore our wild Pacific salmon stocks, what would that be?

I'll start at the top of the list with Mr. Atleo.

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: It would be to start recognizing the results of their management, their poor management. To have the province untouchable, benefiting from the forests, but having a direct impact on rebuilding efforts—that is a huge problem.

There's much more to say, but I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

• (1615)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Chamberlin, would you comment?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: The top one would be land-based closed containment. Second would be land-based closed containment. The third would be working with first nations across the province to redevelop and rehabilitate salmon habitat.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Excuse me—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: The interpretation was not working, but it's back now.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm getting it translated to me in French. Is anybody else having that problem?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I was as well. Is it me?

The Chair: Nancy, can we check to see why that is coming through?

Mr. Chamberlin, what have you got your translation set to?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I have it set to “English”.

The Chair: Okay, so yours is done right. That's what it should be. There shouldn't be any translation. The only translation to French should be for Madame Gill or anyone who has selected French.

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: Do you want me to speak again?

The Chair: If it seems to be working now, yes.

There is limited time—

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: Yes, I understand—

The Chair: The time expired when Mr. Arnold finished asking his question, but I'll allow a quick answer from you, Mr. Chamberlin.

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: My answer is land-based closed containment now, and working with first nations across the province to identify rehabilitation efforts and get strategically out of the way to let the salmon come back.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chamberlin.

We're getting that echo sound again, Nancy.

The Clerk: Thank you for letting me know. Do you want to suspend, or do you want to continue, and we'll try to fix it at the same time?

The Chair: I'm getting it from my mike. I don't know why. Is anybody else getting an echo? Yes, the committee members are getting an echo.

We'll suspend for a moment, Nancy, and you can get it checked, please.

The Clerk: Absolutely.

• (1615)

(Pause)

• (1615)

The Chair: We will go now to Mr. Hardie for six minutes or less, please.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for being here.

The whole issue here is try to figure out what we have to do to rebuild abundance in those fish stocks. This is not about how we share the catch between all the various interests; this is about making sure that there are more salmon. This is difficult. We have the example, which our chair knows only too well, in Newfoundland, where we're building back stocks of cod after everything was shut down. We're still not back yet, so this is not easy.

There are two things. First of all, we hear you and we've heard so many people express a lack of confidence in the DFO. Therefore, in your opinion, who best, of anybody you can think of, is in the position to lead the effort it's going to take to really get serious about rebuilding our salmon stocks?

I'll throw it wide open. If you have a thought, put your hand up and I'll call on you.

Go ahead, Robert.

• (1620)

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I believe first nations are. A lot of these river systems and watersheds are in very remote locations where you will find first nations. There are a lot of cost savings to be enjoyed in the effort, and as well as the traditional ecological knowledge.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you.

Arthur, what are your thoughts?

Mr. Arthur Adolph: Actually, I would just echo Robert Chamberlain. Basically, if we really want to take a look at reconciliation and implementation of UNDRIP, we need to take a step back and look at where we actually went wrong in regard to the management of land and resources. What was missing was our traditional and ecological knowledge, because for over 15,000 years we had the land and resources that sustained us for generations and generations. It just started collapsing within the last 150 years, so we need to incorporate that, led by indigenous people.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Cliff, would you say the same thing?

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: Yes, I definitely would. We have offered our help to the department many times, to no avail. They continue along the lines of "We are in charge, we are the ultimate authority, and we are the best managers in the world." All of it, of course, is proven by the state of our stocks today.

We only have a few thousand years of experience. What people don't think about is that when the newcomers arrived, every stream was a producer. Every river had multiple species that were reproducing, and that was not by accident. First nations were many more in population than even we are today. Those rivers and streams sustained us because of good management.

We know we can help. Just be open to it.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Chief McNeil, do you have anything to add to that?

Chief Tyrone McNeil: In support of us as rights holders being more involved, we do have existing mechanisms that DFO chooses not to empower.

For example, we have 74 communities signed on with the Fraser Salmon Management Council. From there, we have set up the Fras-

er Salmon Management Board, in partnership with DFO, to actually manage Fraser-bound salmon. However, DFO doesn't fund it appropriately and doesn't populate the committees appropriately, so it's a vehicle without wheels.

We built a vehicle with DFO that needs them or somebody to put some wheels on it and allow us to occupy that space that's described in that agreement.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Ms. Morten, you and I have had chats over, actually, a number of years now out in the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows area. I know you have been very active on the ground, literally, there.

Regarding one of the concerns that I thought I heard you express some time ago, I want to get the current state. Are there changes taking place at the municipal level or the provincial level that are affecting the ability of streams to support salmon? Have riparian setbacks been changed? Are too many exceptions being allowed? What's going on there at that level that works against us in restoring these stocks?

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: Well, in Maple Ridge, you have people wanting to build in the flood plain, so that might be part of it. We have riparian area regulations, but the ombudsperson said they were not working, and that was the end of it. We just got the report that it was not working, but nobody looked to try to make them actually work. We have a fisheries act now in place, but we have regulations that are either ignored or not strong enough to do anything.

This week, Beaver Creek in Stanley Park has been drained. We had spawners in there two weeks ago, and now it's without water. If you go to metro Vancouver, you can have, day to day, moment by moment, how many sewage spills are released into the Fraser River and into Keith Creek, which goes into Lynn Creek.

We have fish passage issues. We have all these issues that have paperwork to go along with them to say this isn't going to happen, but it keeps happening.

• (1625)

Mr. Ken Hardie: All right.

Do I have much time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have six seconds. That's hardly time to ask a question and hardly time to get an answer.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I think we'll call it a wrap.

The Chair: I'll bank that six seconds for somebody else.

We'll now go to Madame Gill for six minutes or less, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us today.

My question is about the First Nations' trust in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. A number of you have brought that up on several occasions.

I have heard snippets of answers, but I would like you to be able to develop them and talk to us about the reasons that have led to the loss of that trust. Of course, there's the other side of the coin, which is what could be done to regain the trust of the First Nations.

My question goes to all the chiefs, so you can all answer. Take the time to do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Arthur Adolph: Mr. Chair, I'd like to go first.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Arthur Adolph: I think what needs to be done in order to have DFO restore confidence is that there needs to be one law for all. Back in 1979, I went fishing down at our fishing rocks. I caught four fish. DFO came in on a helicopter. Three of them knocked me to the ground and charged me for fishing, yet two kilometres down the river, towards Lillooet, there were sport fishermen who were fishing on both sides of the river. DFO didn't come in with their helicopter, knock them to the ground and charge them for fishing.

As well, take a look at the Mount Polley mining disaster. The spill was devastating to the salmon habitat as well as the salmon. This was one of the worst mining disasters in Canada. DFO did not charge Imperial Metals, which owns the mine. As indigenous people, we get charged for catching four fish. Others are not charged.

The Chair: Mr. Chamberlin, would you comment?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: The long mistrust has been in place ever since the government has consistently disregarded the Supreme Court of Canada rulings. We saw it played out recently with the Mi'kmaq moderate livelihood. I can't remember a time since the Sparrow decision that there has been a true allocation consistent with that Supreme Court law.

I believe the DFO minister now needs to make the proper steps and respect the state of Pacific salmon and make the decisions that will benefit wild salmon without exception. Fulfill the obligations or the commitment for land-based closed containment, and not just with a plan. Remove this known threat that's within reach so that we can then get on with the other aspects of stress to the Pacific salmon.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Atleo, your hand is up.

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: Yes. Thank you.

I think racism is a real problem within the department. It needs to be addressed. That's precisely why Mr. Adolph mentioned his personal story. We have all witnessed racist attitudes within the government. The confidence will not return without addressing, acting on, eliminating and maybe providing zero tolerance for racism. It would go a long way if we actually added that and worked at it—

not just the government by itself, but us helping. They need to understand who we are, where we've come from and what we're able to do.

Thank you.

● (1630)

The Chair: Chief McNeil, go ahead.

Chief Tyrone McNeil: Three things jump to mind in response to that.

First, implement Sparrow. What I mean by this is that in the Lower Fraser, we typically go after what's called "early timed" chinook. The way DFO manages the fishery is that they allow the marine recreational sector to get their full feed on it, so by the time the early timed chinook reach the Fraser, there are not enough for us to access. They're not implementing Sparrow.

Second, take the open-net fish farms mandate away from DFO. They're in too much conflict. They can't do fish farms and protect wild salmon at the same time. Their default is to support farms over wild salmon.

Third, the Fisheries Act right now suggests an ecosystems-based approach to the management of the fisheries. I really encourage that. The current management regime by DFO is simply access and nothing else, although they do have a broader mandate. Put it on the table and do it, particularly with us.

The Chair: I don't know, Ms. Morten, if you have a comment.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: Years ago, DFO used to have consultative processes for the community at large, and anyone could attend. I can't even think of the last time they had that consultative process.

However, the last time they did, the facilitators wrote down the answers without listening to the people who were speaking. When we were speaking, they would stand with their hands by their sides and not write things down. Then, when we weren't speaking, words magically appeared on the screen.

The consultative process died a long time ago, and it would be nice to renew it in a new fashion with new people.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Madame Gill. Your time is up.

We'll now go to Mr. Johns for six minutes or less, please.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for your important work around fighting for wild Pacific salmon.

I also want to thank, obviously, Wickaninnish, who is the head of the Council of the Huu-ay-aht for being here, because I am in Nuchatlaht territory today.

I'll start with you, Wickaninnish. The B.C. salmon restoration fund right now is an agreement between the province and the federal government. It's \$142 million over five years to invest in restoration.

Right now we're seeing many projects denied in our region as well. We've seen 3% of the traditional return in the Tranquil and in rivers in your territory.

Can you speak about how important it is that government urgently increase that amount? Many people are saying we need five times that. That \$142 million is over five years, and we need that every year. Can you speak about the importance of that and about the opportunity for reconciliation in investing in that?

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: When the modern-day treaty-making process began in the early nineties, we sent our staff from the tribal council to all the areas on the west coast. Politically, they were the northern, central and southern regions of Nuu-chah-nulth.

We estimated in the early nineties that it is was going to require at least \$90 million to \$100 million for habitat restoration. Then a few years later, toward the end of the nineties, the government announced this restoration fund for five years and \$75 million, which is really a pittance. Subsequent to that are the additional funds you talk about.

I think the province has been let off the hook until now. They contribute just a wee bit, despite the fact that they have benefited the most from the destruction of habitat. It has prevented the ability of our people and our nations to get serious about restoration.

Mr. Gord Johns: We're seeing a 3% return in the Tranquil and the lowest recorded return in the Fraser two years in a row. Do you believe the minister is acting with a sense of urgency? She hasn't even said it's a salmon emergency. Can you speak to that? Do you feel she's taking this seriously enough?

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: There's been very little urgency on the part of government with regard to what we are experiencing here.

I recall the minister being out here with the Stó:lo when they were going to formally sign a Fraser management council agreement. We were fortunate to be invited to that, because we've always supported that initiative.

The slide had occurred a week before. The leaders of the Stó:lo got together and put a resolution to the government that said they had to act now. It was only then that activity started to happen. Prior to that, there was next to nothing.

There really has been a huge separation or gap or lack of connection with reality from out here, so the importance of listening and hearing our leadership becomes rather critical.

• (1635)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chamberlin, you probably heard the testimony on Monday. The minister's mandate letter said that she would work with B.C. and indigenous communities "to create a responsible plan to transition from open net-pen salmon farming" in coastal B.C. waters "by 2025".

We heard from the industry on Monday that they didn't believe the transition was to closed containment or to land-based contain-

ment. Can you tell me what you thought "transition" meant in that mandate letter?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I can tell you that I've worked with and identified 102 first nations in British Columbia that support the transition to land-based closed containment. It's because people have now become more in tune with just what the impacts represent.

The fact is that this is something that needs to happen. When we heard of the announcement and we read the words, it was to "transition", not to "develop a plan" to transition. Across B.C., 102 first nations support this government in that action, and by doing so, it would approach a very broad-stroke reconciliation effort across the province. It could go a long way to removing what is understood as systemic racism based upon 21 years of ignoring the Marshall decision as well as all these years without meaningfully implementing the Sparrow decision.

How else can that be viewed from a first nations perspective, other than as systemic racism?

Mr. Gord Johns: Can you speak about the importance of Cohen recommendation number 3, about removing the mandate of DFO to be both the protector of wild Pacific salmon and also the agent for the industry? Can you also speak about conditions of licence when it comes to sea lice and their approach to industry?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: Absolutely. Thank you for that.

When I think about the conflict of interest—and you look at the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat, CSAS,—this is such a confirmation that the conflict and bias is built into every aspect of DFO and the fish farm industry. This is something that must change.

When you consider the condition of licence, if you have three average sea lice producing larvae on a fish farm, it triggers the need, by regulation, to treat the farm. Well, three sounds innocuous, doesn't it? When you consider there are a half a million or three-quarters of a million fish on each fish farm, you're getting into the millions of sea lice producing larvae, which of course means billions of larvae in the upper water column where the Pacific salmon are migrating through. It's a clear threat. It's a clear impact. With the condition of licence, there is no monitoring of how many sea lice are on the juvenile salmon. It's completely untethered from what it's intending to protect.

The biggest farce of all is the 42-day window that's given to industry if they're out of compliance. When you think about the reporting, the response and the 42-day window, you now have an industry, coast-wide, that's allowed to operate in defiance of regulation during that critical out-migration window.

It's absolutely useless and it is not looking after wild salmon.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns. You've gone a bit over time, but I wanted to hear the answer.

We'll now go to Mr. Calkins for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the testimony that I've heard today. I've not only been educated a lot; I've also been entertained at times during this meeting. I appreciate the good nature in which we're discussing a very serious issue.

I think everybody in the room right now wants the same thing. They want the protection, longevity and health of wild Pacific salmon. I don't think anybody here wants anything but that.

I'm going to ask along a bit of a different line of questioning. When it comes to abundance, Mr. Hardie and I would agree on this particular point—that the issue is abundance. Commercial fishermen tell us that DFO has mismanaged and that there's no more abundance. Sport fishing and recreational fishers would say that DFO has mismanaged and there is no abundance anymore. Of course, first nations would also—yourself included today—say that there are issues in regard to abundance. I don't think anybody is disputing any of that.

I do want to talk a little bit about what some of the potential options are going forward, rather than just looking at one or two options. I think there are couple of other opportunities that are available. One of them would be the potential use of hatcheries, not as a permanent solution, but as an interim solution to increase abundance and to restore stocks. Of course, there's going to be ongoing efforts for cleaning up our streams and making them more productive, but there's also the use of selective gear to ensure that wild salmon are given every opportunity.

Would any of you want to talk about what changes we can make, whether it's the harvest taken by first nations along the fresh water or along the coast, or whether it would be sport fishers or others? What sacrifices or ideas can we make in order to ensure that wild salmon are allowed to return to spawn? We can use different vehicles.

What we're doing right now is basically watching salmon disappear. We have to do something different. What things could we do differently, other than just closing or moving the fish farms? I don't think that, in and of itself, is going to solve the problem. What other things can we do?

Who would like to take a shot at that?

• (1640)

Mr. Arthur Adolph: I would.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Go ahead.

Mr. Arthur Adolph: Right off the bat, because of the amount of money that was spent on the Cohen commission, I think we should really take a look at what came out of that report and ensure that every recommendation that was identified is implemented.

First and foremost, I think the appropriate way to look at restoring the Fraser River wild salmon is to examine all the impacts. What are the impacts to the salmon? What are the impacts to the habitat? We then need to take a look at what is causing all this. Once we understand all this and we come up with a methodology

for addressing all the impacts to the fish and to the habitat, hopefully, out of all our work and the Cohen commission recommendations, we'll see an abundance of salmon.

Right now, DFO is in denial and not really taking into consideration the full implementation of the recommendations of the Cohen commission.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Mr. Adolph.

Madam Morten, I think you wanted to say something.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: I would agree that we should look at the Cohen commission again, and not just say, “Working on this,” but actually say how we're working on it.

I remember my first day on the fisheries renewal board of directors, coming in and Joy Thorkelson asking, “How come the only salmon that we talk about as being removed from the system are the adults?” Why are we not looking at when a cow steps on a red? Why are we not looking at water pollution? Why are we not looking at all the other ways that salmon die?

That's something I'd very much like to see. Where are salmon dying? At what stage in their life cycle? When they do come back as pieces, as they're called, we're finding a lot of the coho pre-spawn mortality is due to the water quality issues. They're dying without laying their eggs. It's fine and dandy to have a fish come back, but they are not providing the next generation for us, and I think we have to look at that full cycle and ask where our fish are disappearing in that cycle.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chamberlin, would you comment?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I just want to jump on the comment about pre-spawn mortality. This is something that occurs.... One of the indicators is liver problems and other organs being taken over by piscine reovirus and becoming HSMI and the explosion of red blood cells. It's one of the contributors to pre-spawn mortality.

In terms of how we move forward, we need the government to implement the Cohen recommendations, not “act upon” them, because I think that includes the disregarding of important pieces. There are a number of first nation reports, including one from the First Nation Wild Salmon Alliance, the First Nation Leadership Council and the provincial government that articulates a path forward to rehabilitate salmon.

We've got the plans. We need an investment similar to what the State of Washington is doing in regard to the true value of healthy and abundant wild salmon stocks.

• (1645)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Is that it?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calkins. You've gone way over, actually.

We'll go to Mr. Hardie now for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Oh, my goodness—so many questions and so little time.

I'm looking at Cohen recommendation number 4, which said that they were to create a new position in the Pacific region at the associate regional director general level with responsibility for developing and implementing the wild salmon policy, supervising the expenditure of funds and so on. It's been all these years. I've had the opportunity to ask them two if not three times why they have not established this position. Based on what I heard you say on my first question, can I suggest that the position should not exist in the DFO?

If it shouldn't exist in the DFO, should it exist, period? If so, where? Does anybody have a comment on that?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I'll jump in.

This is a great example of what I just mentioned. The government can say that they have "acted upon" that recommendation, but disregarding it or dismissing it is acting upon it. It's not implementing.

I believe that with the set of recommendations being as broad as they are, there is a need for such a position, whether it's inside DFO or inside first nations. I think if the government wants to get very serious about the concepts of reconciliation and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, we have to think outside of the box. We can't think within the confines of existing structures. We would need to create a position that is of equal status to what you just described for first nations to be a linkage between the three levels of government, those being federal, provincial and first nations.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Actually, I'd like to build on that a little bit, Robert, and I'll invite the others to chime in.

We've had a situation on the east coast with the lobster fishery, and we've spent a lot of very productive time studying that. One of the things that has emerged—at least, from my observation of it—is that there hasn't been sufficient collaboration between indigenous and non-indigenous fishers to try to sort things out so that you come to an accommodation and an arrangement that works. What is your reading on the state of that relationship in British Columbia? For instance, if we were to turn all of this over to you guys to do, would you be in a position to marshal the energy and the creativity of the non-indigenous fishers to get their contribution to this situation?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I would think that, yes, we could, given the fact that we have Supreme Court law that gives footing for the government to act and to pursue reconciliation on something that's so heavily nested inside the United Nations declaration and given the crisis that is Pacific salmon. Of course, if we were just talking Cohen, we would be talking about Fraser sockeye, but we're talking about Pacific salmon across the province.

What DFO has done with the programs and so on that they've moved forward with, be it AAROM or AFS, is they've compartmentalized the discussion to different pieces around the province, whereas we need a very broad and cohesive plan informed by first nations, but that's not going to happen unless there's a key decision and resourcing made from the government to facilitate such a bringing together of all the technical pieces and formulating it into a province-wide strategy, which then can be brought together with the federal and provincial governments.

As well, of course, the message of reconciliation is not just a Crown initiative but something that needs to be communicated to society at large. I think the salmon and the rebuilding can be a unified experience for streamkeepers, for commercial fishermen and sport fishermen. They've all been brought together, primarily this past year that I've worked on it, in relationship to the fish farm impacts. It's something to build upon that we could capitalize on right now, if we were serious about it, if the government was.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I want to run through a list of the conditions that I think are contributing to the problem that we have.

The factors in the abundance of fish have to do with fishing effort, predation, climate change and habitat—change in habitat or destruction of habitat. Is there anything else? Are we missing anything off that list that we also have to think about when it comes to restoring abundance in salmon?

Do you have any thoughts?

• (1650)

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: I think that we need to actually connect all the dots. Society is a label society, and it works to our disadvantage when we try to deal with rebuilding, because all of those things that you've mentioned are interrelated. The habitat is important, and of course the management is also important. In our view, management is not accountable to anyone. They're not accountable, and that should never be with any government agency responsible for natural resources. When the government makes a mistake in management, who do they answer to? No one. That should never be.

We never had that in our history of governance of first nations people. We made sure we looked after and eliminated housing concerns, hunger concerns. We looked after everything. The government needs to actually adopt that principle.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie. You've gone way over time.

We'll now go to Madame Gill for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to put this question to all the chiefs.

Forgive me for being blunt, but we have just finished studying the crisis in Nova Scotia. It is still going on there, because there is still no conclusion.

As an elected official, I am concerned about people's welfare. A lot of parallels between the two situations can be established, although they are very different. But the fact remains that we are talking about livelihoods and rights. So, since prevention is better than cure, and since we want to prevent the same thing from happening again, I would like to know whether you, who are on the front lines, feel any tensions in terms of that situation.

[English]

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I'll jump in. Thank you very much for your question.

I think we need to understand where the man-made, government-controlled opportunities to effect change are, in whatever industry it may be that is harming wild salmon. We are challenged with global warming, a warming ocean, and a lack of food, things that we can't reach out and change, but there are things we can change. I think a strong partnership federally and provincially would be beneficial, because many of the contributors to the demise are provincial, whether it's forestry, mining or farming. We need to come together and provide the resources necessary. As I believe Cliff identified earlier, what has come forward is a pittance, because \$120 million over five years is not going to do what's necessary.

Thank you for your question.

The Chair: Chief McNeil, you had your hand up.

Chief Tyrone McNeil: I will respond in the context of Bill C-15. Quite often we're educating everybody, including commercial and recreational fishers, on our rights, for example, regarding Sparrow. The federal government should be assisting us in that role, because if it's first nations standing alone, like on the east coast, you're going to get that racist attack by the public, but if we have the federal government standing with us, with an understanding of what our rights are, and moving that forward, bringing our local rights to bear, we could actually bring the province in with a similar conversation.

We could have a tripartite agreement between British Columbia first nations and the federal government in a collective, positive, forward-looking way, as opposed to being reactive to an uneducated public later on down the road, which is so harmful. Let's educate them collaboratively.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gill.

We'll now go to Mr. Johns for two and a half minutes or less, please.

Mr. Gord Johns: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Wickaninnish, can you speak about the precautionary principle and how DFO has applied that to herring or to PRV and sea lice in terms of fish farms, forage fish, a whole-of-ecosystem approach, and in terms of management?

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: Oh, my gosh, have you got a whole day?

I think the government agencies have often used words to appease the public in terms of what is actually going to happen, and this term came around, "precautionary principle". The assumption is that you're going to be more careful in how you manage, and we've never witnessed that. We've never seen them actually apply that principle, whether it's to do with actual fish management or herring fisheries or fish farms. In fact, the reality is that the government was actually funding the growth and development of fish farms, while actual management funds were being decreased considerably coast to coast. That's something many people don't look at. In fact, the budget for the fish farms was going up and management monies were going down.

That doesn't add up and it doesn't make sense. It doesn't add up to actually upholding what your law says you're supposed to do.

• (1655)

Mr. Gord Johns: Can you speak about the fish farms a little bit? What would you like to see happen in terms of protecting wild stocks and with the fish farms that are in Clayoquot Sound, for example?

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: Well, I don't know when people are going to start paying attention to what actually is happening and what has been happening. Cohen revealed it, reported on it and recommended accordingly, and what have we done? The date came and went. Nothing has happened. There has been no contribution of any kind of investment to shore-based facilities. There was only one on Vancouver Island, and it stopped there.

Mr. Gord Johns: Bob, did you want to add anything?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I think Cliff's on the right track there about land-based closed containment. With such broad first nations support around the province, I have spoken and engaged with leadership for the past year very intimately, and I can identify no less than five or six first nations that are extremely interested in that economic development opportunity.

If we view this as some sort of a measure to protect wild salmon—an economic stimulus, economic development for first nations—there are a lot of ways that we could shape this to come out much further ahead with proper and adequate protection. In terms of the precautionary principle, it ranks right up there with adaptive management. I've never seen it in regard to fish farms. I just simply haven't. Any adaptation was more of an obfuscation of science or pretending to make changes that were going to protect something, but all they're protecting is the function of the fish farms.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns.

We'll now go to Mr. Mazier for five minutes or less.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the presenters.

On the precautionary principle, I'm from agriculture, being from the Prairies. The way it's used in agriculture is to just keep everything the same and not change it. You just keep on. It's kind of insanity. That's the way the precautionary principle is applied in agriculture.

There were comments, Ms. Morten, about where the salmon are dying. Have there been any studies? Is there any data? I think you brought up the streams. Where are the salmon dying? What is the biggest cause of salmon being taken out prematurely? Is there any knowledge on that? I think you mentioned cows stepping on them.

How do you answer that? I guess being new to this committee, I don't know what I'm going to get for an answer here. What kind of information is there about predation, and where should we be looking at that?

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: We could talk about the death by a thousand cuts when we talk about the death of salmon. It's not just one thing. It could be human predation or bears or eagles or lots of others that have a right to those salmon as well.

I've seen a lot of studies, but I haven't seen a study that has that comprehensive look as to which industry or which place kills the most salmon, whether it's one spill at a time like the Mount Polley mine, dewatering of streams, or flooding in the Kamloops area. That's the huge one right now.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Could it be just natural predation, though, too? As you say, there are the eagles, the bears, and the seals. I don't know.... Could it be just nature doing its thing? How much natural background is just sitting there? Is something going on in nature that has never been studied on the west coast?

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: There are little bits of studies here and there, but I've never seen a complete one. However, if we look at just the Mount Polley mine by itself and how many died in that one incident, a lot of eagles would have to eat to make up the same amount.

• (1700)

Mr. Dan Mazier: Well, that's true. It's a pretty big area, though, too.

Coming across from the east coast to the west coast—Ms. Gill talked about it—there's a common link between DFO and inaction. You talk about the Cohen report. When was the Cohen report done?

This is to anyone, Mr. Chamberlin or Mr. Atleo.

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: It was done eight years ago.

Mr. Dan Mazier: It was eight years ago. At that time, was there inaction? Did the groups all get together and say, "Okay, here are our next steps"? Was there nothing in the Cohen report that was...?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: First nation organizations—the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, First Nations Summit and the BCFN—all passed resolutions supporting the full implementation. Then we've been misdirected by governments saying "we've acted upon", whereas what they're really saying is "We didn't implement; we just ignored them." We haven't had a substantive dialogue; we've just had more of what I always call "deny, delay and distract".

Mr. Dan Mazier: Do you think the denials and distractions by the department have become worse in the last couple of years?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: Absolutely.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay, why? I would like to know why you think this is all being ignored.

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I think it has continued, when you look at the nine science papers and the faulty CSAS process. This is another delay and distraction. When the consultation that I've been involved with for the three first nations on Discovery Island wanted resourcing, they said, "Sorry, there's no resourcing, but maybe there will be in the next round of work that Mr. Beech is going to be taking on."

Then, in terms of deny, delay and distract, you have DFO saying that sea lice aren't going to a part of the assessment. We found in the documents in 2018 that DFO identified within their science that sockeye are more susceptible to sea lice, yet on their website it says it's the Atlantics. The guy who was part of this paper didn't include either of those in the PowerPoint he shared for consultation.

When I think about that as one small example of how they are contradicting, how can you say that there's conclusive science? If there is an absence of conclusive science, the precautionary principle must be implemented, and part of the problem is that there is simply no policy to guide the implementation of the precautionary principle for aquaculture.

There are so many things I'd like to say, but I know we have a time limit.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Yes. The other—

The Chair: The time is up, Mr. Mazier. Five minutes aren't long going when you're hearing interesting testimony.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Thank you.

The Chair: We will now go to Mr. Battiste for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): [*Member spoke in Mi'kmaq*]

I just want to thank you all for opening up with your indigenous languages. As a Mi'kmaq language speaker, it's always great for me to hear other languages.

I also want to thank you for your continued advocacy in speaking of UNDRIP. Many of you may know that my father was part of the initial UN indigenous working group that drafted UNDRIP.

I'm going to ask two questions. I'm going to open it up to the floor, because you probably all have recommendations on this.

Do you think that implementing UNDRIP is a good first start in achieving reconciliation and a recommendation for this committee to look at?

Second, in 2017, the Liberal government announced \$25 million over four years to support the indigenous guardians pilot program, and with it sunseting in 2021, I'm wondering if you think that it has been effective. Do you believe that when indigenous nations are able to co-manage the resources, that is one of the best practices?

I'll leave that open for you guys to answer, with short answers if you could, so that I can hear from everyone.

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: I'll open it up.

I think UNDRIP can be helpful, but it really needs to be unlike the existing legislation in the federal government. It hasn't mattered that there are laws that actually prevent the kinds of things happening that we're talking about. They happen anyway. UNDRIP really doesn't mean anything without a strategy to actually implement what it says and what is intended. I'm happy to hear that the provincial government and the federal government are actually tabling a piece of legislation, but it remains to be seen what kind of action follows.

I'll just leave it at that.

• (1705)

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is critical. We need to see that go forward. We need to see it enacted in a broad way. We can't wait until everything is finally in place and then we're going to be able to move forward. We have to identify the areas where there's opportunity to implement components of it, especially in situations like the critical state of Pacific salmon.

In doing so, we're going to bring the Canadian public along about why not to fear what "free, prior and informed consent" can represent, because we've seen across this country and around the world the need for more stringent environmental considerations, and that's something first nations have been struggling to advance for generations. I think we could then start to exemplify to the electorate that this is beneficial and it's a quicker path to certainty.

Chief Tyrone McNeil: I'd encourage everyone not to look at it so much as implementing the declaration as a whole. I'll draw your attention to this. Let's implement article 18, for example, which is our right to be involved in decision-making that affects our rights, and article 19, which is about seeking our "free, prior and informed consent". If we did those two articles, we'd move the system a long way. I'd encourage you to think of that context so that it is something real in front of us, not something big and broad.

In terms of the guardians program, we used to have a guardian program here in Stó:lo country, and we did a really effective job not only of managing others but of managing ourselves in a way that nobody else could manage us.

Also, absolutely, that \$25 million over five years needs to grow and to build more programs. It shouldn't be only about fish; it should be about wildlife and conservation writ large as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Adolph, did you have a comment?

Mr. Arthur Adolph: Yes. Actually, what I was going to say is that it would be one step towards reconciliation, but I think the ultimate step with regard to reconciliation is to really take a look at why we are in this predicament we're in. It is all because of the doctrine of discovery of Pope Alexander VI in 1493, when he drafted up this doctrine of discovery and referred to indigenous people as "heathens" and "infidels" who didn't have a soul; thus, we weren't people.

This is what government used and this is what the courts used throughout the court case: *terra nullius*, that the land was empty. I think that for us to move forward with regard to reconciliation, the

government must get the Vatican to retract the doctrine of discovery so that we can move on equally, but with the doctrine of discovery we are held down as "heathens" and "infidels" and we aren't people, and thus the Indian Act.

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

We'll now go to Mr. Arnold for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chamberlin, in 2019 the federal government announced an Atlantic seal task team. They have yet to announce anything similar on the Pacific coast. Recently I learned that there is a hypothesis out there pertaining to steelhead, which are in dire trouble in the Thompson and Nechako systems. The hypothesis is around the predation in the inshore areas. It was estimated that a doubling of the survival rate from predation in the inshore areas could lead to an almost 500% increase in return rates.

What are the views of the First Nation Wild Salmon Alliance on the pinniped populations on B.C.'s west coast? Do B.C. first nations have a history of harvesting pinnipeds?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: I've heard from many first nations concerns about pinnipeds—it's kind of a fun word to say, actually—but you can see the prevalence around them. I've seen video footage of them being within herring nets and causing a lot of damage and so forth. We're focusing on the 1% to 4% that actually return, in this line of questioning, and I think we need to identify the areas where we can ensure that a vast amount of smolts get to the ocean so that the 1% to 4% that come back are extremely meaningful in comparison with what we have today.

I know that our people have harvested them in our past. They're part of our regalia-making. Certainly, we're always open to exercise our aboriginal rights in whatever manner that may be.

• (1710)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Ms. Morten, I'm sorry for earlier mistakenly thinking that you were with one of the first nations bands. It was the way the meeting notice sheet was printed off today. I misread it.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: It's my husband's side.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Okay.

In 2012 the previous government introduced Canada's first national standards for wastewater treatment. They were to be fully implemented by the end of this year. When the current environment minister, Minister Wilkinson, was the fisheries minister, he himself stated that untreated wastewater was the largest source of contamination in the Salish Sea. The Cohen report warned that effluents posed threats to salmon stocks.

Now that Minister Wilkinson is deferring the implementation of treatment standards down the road, what he's doing is delaying the protection and conservation of aquatic habitats like the Fraser River estuary that fish stocks need to survive. As a streamkeeper, what are your perspectives on the need for national minimum standards for sewage and wastewater treatment?

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: I can't imagine that we would allow sewage into our wild spaces, but it happens every day. In North Vancouver our sewage treatment plant was going to change from tertiary and go upwards. It was one of our local streamkeepers who led the charge on getting a substantial increase in the amount of debris that would be taken out of the water before it entered our wild spaces.

We cannot count on dilution any more to be the solution. We can be the solution by taking out the pieces that we know about.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

I'll stay with you for this one as well. We saw the Cohen commission come out of the record-low salmon returns in 2009. In 2010 we saw record returns of Fraser River sockeye. Again in 2014, the numbers were high. To me that indicates that in-stream habitat conditions are there to still produce those record numbers of fish.

Do you see that the interior or freshwater habitat has changed dramatically in that time, or would you think that there may be other factors at play in the marine environment that may be having more effect?

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: We have that combination of the marine environment as well as the freshwater. Freshwater we can deal with a little bit more. I do know that this year the water levels in the Shuswap were so high I was unable to do any training. We have high water, which has not been the case in the past. Kamloops is getting flooded. Debris and silt and stuff are coming down because of the response to the pine beetle—because of taking that out—and then there were the wildfires that happened afterwards.

The cyclical effects need to be taken into consideration as well. We have low times that are supposed to be low and high times that are supposed to be high, and sometimes they can move about. We'd sure like to find out, and get a little bit more curious, when things go bad. Chum salmon didn't turn up last year, but we haven't heard a big fuss about them. I hear they're not as tasty as the sockeye.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arnold. You've gone a little bit over.

We'll now go to Mr. Morrissey for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

It's fascinating testimony that was given over the last almost two hours.

Would it be fair analysis that Fisheries and Oceans Canada is not all of the problem and they do not have control over all of the solutions? I have heard different testimony coming from several witnesses that there are issues that are not under the control of DFO and that they are having a significant negative impact on salmon stocks.

Would you care to opine?

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: There are many different impacts, and Cohen was very clear about that. Certainly some of them are federal and some of them are provincial. I think that really shows the need to have federal-provincial-first nations co-operation in working together to address the situation.

I want to draw your attention to the precautionary principle. This is what was the basis of the LOU to remove fish farms in the Broughton Archipelago. We have the Province of British Columbia stepping up and meaningfully—meaningfully—safeguarding wild salmon environment by implementing the precautionary principle as identified by the first nations.

There is nothing different going on in the Discovery Islands in that regard, and we're going to see whether the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is going to be able to follow suit and enact the same precautionary principle to safeguard what we have already identified, and nobody can deny, are critical declines in Fraser River fish.

Thank you.

• (1715)

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you.

Ms. Morton, you used the reference as well.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: I think if we could get the provincial and federal governments working together with first nations to that common goal, it will go a long way.

I was on the agriculture committee meetings the other day, though, where there was talk about land-based aquaculture, and the fellows were saying we need a pipe to bring the salt water in and then we need a pipe to take the effluent out and put in the salt water.

It's a matter of actually having an interest in solving the problem, and not just moving it around.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I have a question to Chief McNeil.

Chief McNeil, you referred to allowing us to manage ourselves, referring to first nations.

Could you elaborate on that a bit? You indicated in your discussion that when you were managing yourselves more, there were more successful results. Did I interpret you correctly?

Chief Tyrone McNeil: It's twofold. One is managing ourselves around the guardian program. We had our own citizens trained to be guardians to hold—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: You don't have that anymore, Chief?

Chief Tyrone McNeil: No, the funding ran out, and it's all proposal-based now.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: How long has that been happening? What's the timeline between when you were managing yourselves?

Chief Tyrone McNeil: It was from the early nineties up until the late nineties or early 2000s, and from then on it's been purely DFO.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: When you compare those two periods, could you just paint a picture for the committee on what the state of the stock was in the period when you were managing yourselves and how you saw it, versus now, when you're no longer involved in that management process?

Chief Tyrone McNeil: In that component of management, it's about managing and monitoring the access during fisheries.

In the nineties there was still abundance—not as much as there was in the seventies and eighties, but still lots for us, for recreational, for sport and for commercial fishing. We were working with our citizens, who were transitioning from a time when if we were hungry, we would go out and fish for the table, to lesser runs, especially the Early Stuarts. That's when they started to decline, so we had to really monitor ourselves. We did it effectively by working with people, with fishers, with communities, but now DFO's management approach is to charge as many of us as they can. If we don't plead guilty, it takes five to seven years in court to finally come to whatever the decision is by the court. That's, by default, DFO's approach on management now: tying us up in court. We lose our jobs. We don't want to say we're guilty because we're not guilty, so we have to keep going to court. It's hugely problematic.

They take our boats, our trucks. They take everything from us, whereas when recreational fishers and others are caught, they don't do that.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Could you just explain to me—I'm an east coaster—what would be a charge that would be laid against you now in this environment that would not have occurred when you were managing the resources?

Chief Tyrone McNeil: When we were managing the resources, if one of our members was caught fishing out of licence times, we'd go in there and look at him and see that he was in complete poverty and his family was in complete poverty, so it was an absolute sustenance fishery.

Then, rather than taking his boat, if he had one, or his nets if he had them, we'd then work with the community that he was from, because there are social supports available that could be brought to bear under the right conditions. It was more of a social support, encouraging and supporting, as opposed to the purely punitive position that DFO manages with.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Morrissey. You're about 10 seconds over.

We now go to Madame Gill for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like Mr. Adolph to have the floor, as he wanted to answer my question. But I would like to rephrase the question because the answers were not what I was expecting.

I would like to address Mr. Chamberlin's hypothesis about the salmon becoming extinct, the uncertainty about traditional food, and the suspicion with regard to DFO. Those concerns could lead to dissatisfaction among the First Nations.

I would like to know whether, in the long-ish term, they feel tensions like those that have arisen with the Micmac in Nova Scotia.

I don't want to be a prophet of doom or talk about a crisis, but do you see that as a possibility?

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Arthur Adolph: Yes, actually, it is possible. In regard to taking a look at the situation that was happening on the east coast in

comparison to the west coast, I think really what occurred on the east coast was that there was lag. There was a long lag of time for the federal government to actually look at implementing the court case, and it kind of erupted into this situation for the lobster. When we look at that context in the east coast compared with the west coast, really what we need to look at are the court cases that have recognized our right to fish. We need to actually move these forward so that we can become part of the solution in relation to management.

What I was going to also mention earlier is that we have two paradigm shifts that are competing within our culture, our values and our principles. In Xaxli'p here in Fountain, we take only what we need, but the environment we're in is a capitalist society. What happens in a capitalist society is exploitation of the resources, compared to our need for the fish and taking only what we need, knowing that the fish are going to feed the bears and the eagles. In turn, that's going to be carried into the forest and the old-growth forest is going to flourish.

Building on Mr. Chamberlin, provincially, we need to take a look at how best we manage the forests so that we're not taking out the old-growth forests and the fish will come up and replenish the old-growth forests. Then the bears will come and the eagles will come. Right now, everything is collapsing. The whole ecosystem is collapsing because of the state of the fishery.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gill.

We'll now go to Mr. Johns to finish off for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Gord Johns: Right now, I believe this is a watershed moment where if the minister doesn't take emergency action with emergency investments.... Without implementing urgent policy and without a salmon recovery plan that is, obviously, led by indigenous people, this minister could be the minister who oversees the collapse of wild Pacific salmon, or she can be the minister who helps bring salmon back.

I ask you, do you believe it's true that this is the pivotal moment right now? I'm going to ask each of you for just a yes or no.

I'll start with you, Ms. Morten.

Ms. Zo Ann Morten: Yes, we've had lots of moments, but this is the time.

Mr. Gord Johns: Wickaninnish, would you comment?

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: It's yes.

Mr. Robert Chamberlin: Yes.

Mr. Arthur Adolph: Yes, and I included today in my submission in the third paragraph the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

• (1725)

Mr. Gord Johns: Chief McNeil...?

Chief Tyrone McNeil: We have the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Mr. Gord Johns: [*Technical difficulty*] Chief McNeil.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: [*Technical difficulties*]

[English]

The Clerk: This is the clerk speaking. I don't know if anybody can hear me, but we cannot hear anyone here the room.

Mr. Chair, can you hear me?

• (1725) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1730)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Johns, you have one minute and eight seconds.

Mr. Gord Johns: This is a question for Wickaninnish.

We heard in the B.C. Supreme Court case *Ahousaht Nation v. Canada* that the judge said that the indigenous and the local management of the fisheries was much superior to the local DFO's.

Can you talk about how systemic racism that impacts the management of fishery stocks has come into play?

Mr. Clifford Atleo Sr.: Yes, very briefly. It's something that we haven't dwelt on too much in this particular discussion, even though it's alive and well.

I want to cite one of our representatives from Hesquiaht—which is part of the Tla-o-qui-aht table—who overheard two DFO officials talking about how the government has dealt with an indigenous problem, asking how it did that, and replying, “Well, they don't have any more wild stocks, and we know that they don't eat farmed fish.” They were gloating about that. These are our employees of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

We formally levelled that charge to the government in our negotiations in a press statement that really didn't get a lot of traction. However, it's real, and somebody needs to wake up and say that we can't have racism in the management of aquatic resources. I know it's alive and well, and so do many other first nations, as has been presented here on occasion.

We really don't spend a lot of time.... Nobody has stood up and said, “zero tolerance”. I ask the question: Why not? Is it because it's okay to have those policies in place that negatively impact our way of life as a people?

If I hear a resounding “no”, I'll say, “yes”, but I hear nothing.

• (1735)

The Chair: Thank you, Gord. Your time has gone well over.

I'll thank our witnesses for their insightful testimony, both in their opening statements and in the responses to the questions. I've

found it most interesting this evening, listening to it from both sides.

We'll allow the witnesses now to sign off, and we'll just do a very small bit of committee business before we say good evening for the day.

Chief Tyrone McNeil: Thanks, everyone. Take care.

The Chair: I think the witnesses have all gone.

You've all been sent a copy of the budget, which was circulated by the clerk. We need approval for this. I don't know if I can just ask. Do I have unanimous consent for the requested supplementary amount of \$3,100? That's necessary to supply our witnesses with equipment. I see thumbs up all the way around. I don't see any thumbs down.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I'll take it that it's passed unanimously, Nancy. You can go ahead with that.

There's just one thing I want to say to the members of the committee. When we're in the questioning part of our committee meeting with witnesses, I would ask you to try to identify whom you're asking the question to. Your time is your own. You can do as you want with it. I shouldn't have to manage the time for the individuals who are asking questions. Identify whether it's John Q, or Betty B, or whoever you want to answer it. Sometimes the witnesses just stay there, looking at the screen, the same as we're doing, but nobody is saying anything. Your time is running out as nobody is speaking. Your time is getting used with no response.

Keep in mind, in the future, to try to identify whom in particular you want to answer the question. If not, as somebody said, you have dead air. Keep that in mind.

I hate jumping in and using your time to identify this witness who may have their hand up, or another witness. It's your time. You manage it how you see fit. I'll tell you when your time is up, of course, as always. I know we are a little free on it at times.

Again, thank you to everybody: the clerk, the analysts, the translators and our own individual staff, for another very insightful and interesting meeting.

Of course I wish everybody a merry Christmas and happy and safe New Year. Until we meet again, goodbye, all.

The meeting is adjourned.

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