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# Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 005**

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

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Chair: Patrick Weiler





## Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

[Translation]

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

[English]

As always, I want to start by acknowledging that we are gathered on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. I express gratitude that we are able to do the important work of this committee on lands they've stewarded since time immemorial.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee is meeting to continue its study on the attribution of redfish quotas and exploratory lobster fishing licences.

[Translation]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. Pursuant to the Standing Orders, members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[English]

Before we begin, I would like to ask all in-person participants to consult the guidelines on the cards on the table. These measures are in place to help prevent audio and feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, but particularly the interpreters. You will also notice a QR code on the card, which links to a short awareness video.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of both the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

[Translation]

For interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

[English]

I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

[Translation]

I believe all members are attending in person today. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We appreciate your patience.

[English]

With that, I would like to welcome our participants today.

[Translation]

With us today is Kelly Tremblay, fisherwoman, attending remotely. In person, we have Ghislain Collin, president of the Regroupement des pêcheurs pélagiques professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie.

[English]

Finally, we have Alain d'Entremont, president, Scotia Harvest Inc.

You will each have up to five minutes to deliver opening remarks.

[Translation]

Ms. Tremblay, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Kelly Tremblay (Fisherwoman, As an Individual):** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today.

Traditional snow crab fishers rarely have the opportunity to be consulted on issues that directly affect our work, and I sincerely appreciate this opportunity.

My husband has been a crab fisherman on the Côte-Nord since 1998. His father was as well, and we bought the family business back in 2017. I have participated in the family business since I was 16, but since the buyout, I have been actively involved in managing the business and meeting all the requirements mandated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, or DFO. At the same time, I have been a lawyer since 2012.

I will be testifying today on the impact of excluding category A snow crab licence holders, also known as traditional fishers, from the lobster exploratory fishing licence selection process on the Côte-Nord. This exclusion, which is based solely on our administrative status as traditional fishers, prevents us from participating in new opportunities to diversify our fisheries and raises serious questions of fairness.

Over the years, crab fishers have been subject to numerous government decisions and requirements, including black boxes, dockside weighing, at-sea observers and records of all kinds to be kept, to name just a few. Obviously, all of this is done at our expense. A little over 20 years ago, the government went so far as to impose a forced sharing of category A fishing quotas to create new category B licences. As a result, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans reduced individual quotas for each traditional crab licence holder by about 10% to 20%, without even consulting the main stakeholders, who had taken all the financial risks to market this little-known seafood product.

These changes have changed the economy of our businesses, and now we feel like we are getting a double whammy. On the one hand, we have already lost a portion of our quota to new categories, and on the other hand, we are now being excluded from the selection process for exploratory lobster fishing, while category B fishers have been included.

We are therefore facing fishers who hold several category B licences and to whom we have been forced to give our permanent quota, without compensation for more than 20 years. They can apply for an exploratory permit, but we cannot. You would think that being a traditional fisher made us privileged or favoured fishers. However, the reality is quite different. We are facing a steady increase in operating costs and expenses and increasingly fragile revenues as a result of market fluctuations and declining quotas.

Given climate change, who can predict with certainty the evolution of crab stocks in the St. Lawrence River? This is evidenced by the fact that there was little lobster found but now we are talking about a possible commercial fishery. On top of that, our secondary fishery, which is the whelk fishery, was closed for over two months this season. We are not challenging this decision, which was made to protect the resource, but it has had major economic repercussions, and similar closures are expected in the coming years.

So we are facing a double pressure: on the one hand, there are increasing restrictions on our existing fisheries, and on the other, we are completely excluded from new fisheries. I am also wondering about the fact that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has not imposed any dockside weighing requirements for exploratory lobster fishing. Catch reporting is at the fishers' discretion. Given the need for transparency, sustainable management and scientific rigour, I think it is essential that, in an exploratory fishery, all catches are reliably and rigorously measured and documented in order to assess the resource, fishing efforts and the resulting distribution.

Also, why is there such a rush in granting exploratory permits without even issuing experimental permits? This decision gives the impression that the process was improvised and conducted on an urgent basis, without any real consultation. What we are asking for is not preferential treatment, it is simply fairness. We are asking

that established fishers, who have proven their know-how and commitment to the resource, be given the same consideration as others.

For over 20 years, we have been carrying out, at our own expense, post-season testing of the status of snow crab stocks in area 17 to ensure the sustainability of the resource. We are already equipped, and we are well aware of the need for scientific data to be collected in order to ensure the sustainability of the fishery.

In closing, even though Ms. Lemire, DFO's fisheries and aquaculture management regional director for the Quebec region, says that, generally speaking, exploratory licence holders will be granted the commercial licences in the future, I can tell you that it is not too late to make adjustments and correct the inequities. Exploratory licences are issued for one-year periods and are not renewable, so why not reduce the number of traps per fisher to allow more to get a small allocation? Why not identify sub-areas on the Côte-Nord and thus give more fishers a chance?

• (1535)

If we really want to build a sustainable and equitable fishery, we must ensure that it is done in consultation with all stakeholders, not just in DFO's offices with the stakeholders it considers relevant.

I thank the committee for this opportunity and I sincerely hope that we will be consulted when future decisions are made and, above all, that our interest will be taken into account when commercial licences are granted.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Tremblay.

Mr. Collin, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Ghislain Collin (President, Regroupement des pêcheurs pélagiques professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the committee for inviting the Regroupement des pêcheurs pélagiques professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie. Today, we are in Ottawa to talk about a discriminatory situation that our members experienced during the exploratory lobster fishing licence issuance process in areas 17 and 19, a situation that had a monumental impact on the present and future of some of them.

In January 2024, we asked, in a letter to former minister Leboutillier, to include the Regroupement des pêcheurs pélagiques professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie as a group in great difficulty in the process of awarding exploratory lobster fishing licences in areas 17 and 19. That might have helped, depending on the luck of the draw, to restore some dignity to a few members of the Regroupement who have been suffering seriously for six years now and to help them economically. The request was acknowledged, but it was never acted upon. In a last-ditch effort to be considered, to no longer be forgotten and to be heard by Ms. Leboutillier, we sent a letter with some recommendations to DFO, but we received no response.

On December 5, former fisheries and oceans minister Diane Lebouthillier issued a press release announcing the primary criteria for the exploratory lobster fishery project in areas 17 and 19. We sent another letter to the minister. We congratulated Ms. Lebouthillier and said that we were delighted that she reaffirmed that this project was intended for fishers' associations in difficulty and that a possible reduction of the number of traps to 100 per fisher could be considered to make room for more fishers in need. We did not receive any response.

Fearing that we would once again be sidelined, we requested a meeting at the regional office in Gaspé. The officials who attended the meeting told us that they were listening to us in good faith, that DFO was considering the representativeness of the groups, that it was only consulting the groups it deemed representative and that our group had to redo the entire verification process. On January 6, 2025, the documents were all sent to DFO.

On December 19, 2024, all fishers received, in a notice, the main parameters of the lottery. Some of our members, including me, were excluded from the process, on the basis that we had sold a shellfish licence after 2014. We have always accepted this provision to have the option of helping other members of the Regroupement, even though some of the excluded have sold crab fishing licences in areas in difficulty, either because the quotas were low or because the fishery was not profitable. In some cases, the average is 10,000 pounds of crab per season.

We were very optimistic at the time that the remaining members of the Regroupement would be chosen through the lottery, which would have saved a few. Some members of the Regroupement had a wonderful holiday season filled with optimism and hope for the future.

In early January 2025, we realized that the criterion that DFO wanted to apply with respect to adjacency would have the effect of dividing the Gaspé Peninsula in two, between north and south, thereby affecting our members' last hope. Yet, our herring and mackerel licences allow us to fish on the north side, and some of our members have fished in area 19 of the project. It was therefore clear to us that the exploratory program, which was supposed to support groups of fishers in difficulty, had turned into a territorial socio-economic program aimed at electioneering.

A letter was sent to Ms. Lebouthillier asking her, once again, to help us out in the face of this discrimination and injustice to our members as only a few days were left before the draw. Having received no response from the minister's office on February 1, we wrote to the assistant deputy minister, Adam Burns, to draw his attention to the unfair and discriminatory situation that once again affected the Regroupement des pêcheurs pélagiques professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie. We asked to meet with the regional director at the Gaspé office, Érick St-Laurent, who agreed. This meeting was held in Gaspé on February 18, 2025, two weeks after exploratory fishing licences were issued.

• (1540)

During that meeting, the topic of the Regroupement's representativeness was at the forefront. After some arguments, Mr. St-Laurent told us about a meeting with the directors on February 19, 2025—

**The Chair:** Mr. Collin, I'm sorry, I have to interrupt you. Your time is up. Can you finish your speech very quickly? We'll have more time in questions later.

**Ghislain Collin:** Okay.

Mr. St-Laurent told us about a meeting with the directors on February 19, 2025, to discuss the subject, and he told us that we would receive an answer around February 23. We pointed out a number of dubious points about the process and the selection of certain fishers, but we got nothing but evasive answers and annoyed, uncomfortable looks.

The response letter from the assistant deputy minister, Adam Burns, drafted on his behalf by the associate regional director general for Quebec, Sylvain Vézina, was received on February 20, the day after the meeting of directors in Quebec City where the Regroupement's representativeness was discussed. Mr. Vézina begins his letter in a paternalistic, protective tone—

**The Chair:** Mr. Collin, I have to stop you there. We are almost a minute over already. You will have time later.

[English]

With that, I'm going to our next witness.

Mr. d'Entremont, you have five minutes or less.

**Alain d'Entremont (President, Scotia Harvest Inc.):** Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Alain d'Entremont, and I'm an owner and president of Scotia Harvest, a vertically integrated seafood company based just outside of Digby, Nova Scotia. I've worked in the fishing industry most of my life, combining an understanding of harvesting, processing, fisheries science and fisheries management with business development. I currently serve on several advisory and management committees, and I actively participate in many fishery science processes.

Scotia Harvest operates company-owned vessels and a state-of-the-art processing facility, and holds various licences and quotas to support our operations. We're part of the Mersey group of companies, and I manage Mersey's groundfish licences, quotas and vessels to ensure consistent raw material access for our facility to products like redfish from throughout Atlantic Canada. We also regularly purchase seafood from other harvesters both inshore and offshore, and often partner with them to provide them with quota, access and a reliable buyer for their catch.

Our integrated model and year-round operations allow us to maintain consistent quality, to innovate and to invest in long-term sustainability, which is especially critical as we expand our redfish business. Redfish represents a major growth opportunity for our company and was a key factor in our decision to invest tens of millions of dollars in a new processing facility, additional vessels and specialized equipment. It's not an easy fishery, particularly with the small size of redfish in many areas. It requires thoughtful market development, product innovation and strategic partnerships. We're not just looking to catch and sell fish; we're building a business that supports jobs, communities and long-term value creation.

To meet diverse market demands, we need to produce various product forms, from whole fish to fillets to value-added items tailored to different regions and customer preferences. This flexibility is essential to maximizing value and ensuring long-term viability. The redfish fishery relies on multiple different stocks that fluctuate in biomass over generational time periods. This is not a new fishery; Canada has a long history of involvement in redfish, and our industry has decades of experience adapting to changing environmental conditions.

The specific challenge in unit 1 today is the size of the fish, which seems to be driven by environmental factors. There are other factors, such as fish colour and bycatch, that require constant monitoring and changes, but we are confident in our ability to adapt to environmental change; it's what we've always done, but, to do so, we need regulatory certainty to make the necessary investments and commit the time and resources required to develop this fishery responsibly. To do that, we need to find the right markets, ones that value quality, consistency and sustainability. We need to grow the business the right way, with a focus on investment, infrastructure and workforce development. We need policy and regulatory support that recognizes the importance of our integrated operations and the role they play in maximizing value from our fisheries.

The uncertainty and prolonged debate across multiple ministerial terms around allocation and access have delayed the development of this fishery and risk constraining its ability to realize the full TAC and its market potential.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and I look forward to your questions.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. d'Entremont.

With that, we're going to the first round of questioning, which is the six-minute round. We'll be starting with the Conservative Party and Mr. d'Entremont.

You have the floor for six minutes or less.

**Chris d'Entremont (Acadie—Annapolis, CPC):** Thank you so much for the presentations.

Ultimately, I did hear a common thread through the three presentations, which was the lack of consultation, or taking quota away under the guise of consultation.

My first question is for Mr. d'Entremont.

How much of the TAC did you catch, or how much was caught throughout this discussion of the last year or so?

**Alain d'Entremont:** Over the period of consultations—over multiple ministerial terms, as I outlined—we had an index fishery in unit 1, and there was a small amount of quota being caught. However, the commercial fishery was declared open last year, and it had a bunch of management measures that emerged from the consultation process. I'm not sure. They came from the harvesting sector and really limited our ability to catch the quota.

This year, I'd say we're doing a better job. We're catching more redfish and are able to produce samples for markets and expand harvests. This year, it's going better than it has gone. There's no question about that. A lot of that is because the department was willing to relax some of the restrictive management measures and give us the opportunity to catch the fish.

**Chris d'Entremont:** You also talked about the vessels you have. You are a vertically integrated company. How many vessels do you have? How many people are you employing at this point?

Where does the raw product end up? I'm sure it doesn't end up just in your plant. It ends up in other plants across the Maritimes.

**Alain d'Entremont:** We have a bunch of our own vessels. We have three mobile gear groundfish vessels at Scotia Harvest. We have five scallop fishing vessels as well, to fish a range of species. Redfish, haddock and scallops are the main ones.

For employment throughout the processing plant and the harvesting, we have around 200 employees. Expanded across the Mersey group of companies, I'm not sure but I guess it would be over 1,000 the last time I saw the numbers all around Nova Scotia, in various forms and parts of the operation.

The redfish we're getting are landing in our own plant and other plants that we work with. We also buy from a bunch of harvesters. When you land a large redfish trip, it makes a lot of sense to split that up between plants, so you can access the fish when it's the freshest. Our end-users are all over the world. They're domestic, in Canada and the U.S., but they're also in China, Korea and Japan, and there are some efforts into growing into that market in Europe right now.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Collin, with regard to the discussion you had with the minister, or rather the one you did not have, why do you think she did not at least respond to the letters you had written?

**Ghislain Collin:** I do not see any reason.

For years, we tried to meet with her. When she was appointed, we told ourselves that she was a local woman and that she knew the pelagic fishery file. We saw that as an opening and we were optimistic. In the end, in her entire term, I was never able to meet with the minister of fisheries or even speak with her. We do not know why.

Maybe she thought we were a partisan electioneering group. However, the members of the association for which I am president vote as much for the Conservative Party as for the Liberal Party or the Bloc Québécois. Certainly, at the time the problems occurred, the members elected on the territory came from the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois. Since they were our members, it is normal for us to have had them participate. Maybe the minister thought we were a separatist group.

I actually have no idea. It is a mystery. We have doubts, but—

**Chris d'Entremont:** You tried to contact the minister directly. Have you had a chance to speak with anyone from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, like any association?

**Ghislain Collin:** Yes, but every time departmental representatives met with us, they told us they were doing us a favour.

When we formed our group six years ago, we were representative of our resource. However, from one day to the next—we still do not know why—they said they had to do studies to find out whether we were still representative of our resource.

So they were no longer required to talk to us. Throughout this process, about three years, they ignored us and told us, when they met with us, that they were doing us a little favour.

**Chris d'Entremont:** To your knowledge, have other groups in the region had the same experience with the minister?

**Ghislain Collin:** No, not at all. As far as I know, all the other groups have had the opportunity, at some point or another, to meet at least once, or even a few times, with the minister of fisheries in the region.

We were the only ones who were not so lucky, and we still do not know why today. We have never messed around, and we have always been good fishers.

**Chris d'Entremont:** I think Mr. d'Entremont, Mr. Collin and Ms. Tremblay just told us the same thing. It seems that they have not had a chance to present the facts as representatives of the fisheries in those areas.

My next question is for you, Ms. Tremblay. In terms of exploratory fisheries, where does the data come from to make the change from one fishery to another? It seems that we have gone from one fishery to another without having the data the department needs to make such decisions.

**The Chair:** Ms. Tremblay, please give a short answer.

**Kelly Tremblay:** Yes.

From what we understand, there was no science. So why did we immediately switch to exploratory permits? We also wonder because, for crab, we are monitored closely. We need to do our collections and have data.

Why was that not done for lobster? We do not know and we wonder.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. d'Entremont.

Next we have Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Cormier, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Collin, I would like to ask you for clarification, since there are new members in the room. You primarily fish mackerel and herring. Is that correct?

• (1555)

**Ghislain Collin:** That is correct.

That is the group I represent.

**Serge Cormier:** Okay.

We know that your industry, like many others, like shrimp and turbot, is struggling.

You mentioned other permits earlier. Have you ever been a lobster fisher?

**Ghislain Collin:** Yes. I did pelagic fishing—

**Serge Cormier:** You did not have a lobster licence before.

**Ghislain Collin:** No. When the pelagic fishery started to decline and the spring herring fishery closed, I managed to buy a lobster licence. I prepared a financial plan and was able to buy a lobster licence in 2021.

**Serge Cormier:** Do you still have it now?

**Ghislain Collin:** No. I sold it.

The original provision said that those who had sold crustacean licences could not participate in the draw. It was clear to us, and it was also normal that I did not get an exploratory lobster fishing licence. It is for the members I represent.

**Serge Cormier:** Okay.

How many members do you represent?

**Ghislain Collin:** I represent 15 members.

**Serge Cormier:** Are they all fishing only mackerel and herring right now?

**Ghislain Collin:** Yes. That is the main fishery.

**Serge Cormier:** Did they have lobster licences before?

**Ghislain Collin:** Three other members had one.

There were four of us, and that is why we said it gave the other members of our group more chances.

**Serge Cormier:** Okay.

In terms of the new licences that were issued, why do you think you only had two licences? I want people to understand that. You have only had two. Is that correct?

**Ghislain Collin:** We did not get any licence.

**Serge Cormier:** I thought your group had two licences.

**Ghislain Collin:** No. It was pelagic fishers in the northern Gaspé, whom we do not know, who got licences.

**Serge Cormier:** They are not members of your group.

**Ghislain Collin:** No. No one in my group was issued a licence.

**Serge Cormier:** Okay. They are not members of your group.

**Ghislain Collin:** No.

**Serge Cormier:** Two pelagic fishers were able to obtain licences, but they are not members of your group.

**Ghislain Collin:** Since they said we were not representative, they talked to other pelagic fishers we do not know.

**Serge Cormier:** Okay.

Since your fleet is in trouble, I assume that, like other fleets in the same situation, you would certainly like to obtain a share of these new exploratory licences or licences for other species.

Is that correct?

**Ghislain Collin:** We would have relied on the random draw. If a member had been able to participate and had not gotten any, we would have accepted the result of the draw, but they did not even get a chance to participate.

**Serge Cormier:** I am a little more familiar with how it works in my region, which is right across from yours.

For example, for the Maritime Fishermen's Union, since 1999 and 2000, there has been a sharing of resources for snow crab, as you know. A certain percentage of the resources are allocated to in-shore and indigenous fishers, and the quotas they receive, such as crab, can help their members get through difficult times. Let me remind you that my father fished lobster all his life.

In your region, there is the Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie. Their representatives will be here later on. The members of the Regroupement also receive snow crab allocations, do they not?

**Ghislain Collin:** Yes. They have a good snow crab allocation.

**Serge Cormier:** Could they have given you priority and helped you with their allocations?

**Ghislain Collin:** Certainly.

**Serge Cormier:** Why are they not doing that?

**Ghislain Collin:** We asked for it at the outset, about five years ago, and they dug their heels in.

**Serge Cormier:** Why do they not want to do that?

Are you allowed to participate in that draw?

**Ghislain Collin:** No.

**Serge Cormier:** Not at all?

**Ghislain Collin:** Not at all.

We have never been members of the Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie. That is why we came together and formed our group.

**Serge Cormier:** So you are not members like the others—

**Ghislain Collin:** We are not members who left one group to form another. We were free, and we created a group.

**Serge Cormier:** Okay.

What is your solution in order to receive any kind of assistance from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans? How do you see that?

We agree that other fleets are having problems. As for the sharing of resources for snow crab—I hope I will have time to ask questions to Ms. Tremblay—it is true that we certainly want to help people in difficulty. I will always say this, regardless of what the fishing associations tell me: Getting these licences and resources is a privilege, not a right, and you have to try to manage them responsibly. So what do you expect? What would be your greatest Christmas present?

**Ghislain Collin:** We want to have the same fair treatment as other groups, as in the case of cod fishers a few years ago. We want the same fair treatment.

First, we would like to be able to meet the authorities.

Second, part of the crab allocation is also on our radar, especially today, because it belongs to a group that is very comfortable now.

**Serge Cormier:** That is perfect. Thank you, Mr. Collin.

I think I have only one minute of speaking time left.

Ms. Tremblay, I would like you to quickly confirm something.

I believe the crab fishers you represent are in area 17. Is that correct?

**Kelly Tremblay:** Exactly. They are on the Côte-Nord.

**Serge Cormier:** That's perfect.

I spoke earlier about the sharing that exists with inshore fishers of the snow crab resource. The resource was shared to help them at the time, and rightly so.

You spoke earlier about dockside landings. At the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, or DFO, there is a lot of talk—it is mostly scientists—about the need to have good science, good data to make informed decisions.

What I have always liked about the snow crab fishery is that there are dockside landings; that gives fishers control over prices, quotas, and so on. I believe you confirmed that earlier.

Why do you think that does not exist in the lobster fishery? How can we obtain reliable scientific data and know the lobster resource well if there is no dockside landing?

I would like a short answer, because I only have a few seconds left.

• (1600)

**Kelly Tremblay:** It is impossible to know without landing at the dock, as we do.

Why are there none? I do not know. We ask ourselves that question as well. Why would there be for crab and not for lobster? I do not know if it is because it was a smaller fishery before. Now, it must be said that lobster is as profitable as crab.

Dockside weighing is also done for halibut. However, that is not done for lobster.

**Serge Cormier:** Thank you, Ms. Tremblay.

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

The next speaker is Mr. Deschênes.

You have the floor for six minutes.

**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will start with you, Ms. Tremblay.

You said that, on the Côte-Nord, in area 18, you could not access an exploratory fishing licence. When you have a traditional crab licence, you can access an exploratory licence only if you have a class B crab licence. In the notices of interest, that condition is only in area 18, in your area.

Have you been able to get any answers from DFO as to why you were excluded on the Côte-Nord?

**Kelly Tremblay:** I would like to clarify that our area is 17.

Yes, we did not get an answer. Some fishers still applied. Area 17 is crab and area 18 is lobster—

**Alexis Deschênes:** Yes, that is the lobster area—

**Kelly Tremblay:** Yes, that is right. According to your documents, it is area 18 for lobster.

Fishers nevertheless applied, even though it was stated that it could not be done. We have not received a response from DFO. When we call the Sept-Îles office, we are told that this is the directive and that it has to be applied. So we cannot apply.

**Alexis Deschênes:** There is no one—

**Kelly Tremblay:** We do not know why.

**Alexis Deschênes:** The department gave you no answer as to why your group was excluded and another group was included.

**Kelly Tremblay:** No.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Mr. Collin, you ran out of time during your presentation. I will give you a chance to finish your thought, if you want.

**Ghislain Collin:** That is perfect. Thank you, Mr. Deschênes.

I was talking about the letter written by the associate regional director general for the Quebec region, Sylvain Vézina, to which the assistant deputy minister, Adam Burns, responded on February 20, the day after the meeting with the directors in Quebec City, regarding the Regroupement's representativeness.

Mr. Vézina began his letter on a paternalistic and protective tone by telling us that fishing is not easy, that it will result in costs without guaranteed profitability, and so on. He also told us that we are not a representative group, that the situation is difficult and that there are not enough licences for everyone.

Since we know for a fact that we are representative and that we have experienced discrimination, we contacted the media to ask for an investigation into the questionable, discriminatory and deeply flawed process we observed. When asked about the request for an investigation and the licensing process, the former minister of fisheries and oceans, Diane Lebouthillier, said that the process was very honest, that the rules had been applied, that she personally participated in the process by agreeing to the criteria, and that all representative groups had been consulted.

Last July, we met with the new acting director of the Gaspé regional office. We agreed at the time to meet again. However, we are still waiting for her office to give us a date to meet with her.

I have always argued that our group is representative, and sure enough we were recently recognized as representative for the spring herring and mackerel fisheries. This recognition by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is not surprising, but it comes a little late. The fisheries fund has since been exhausted, and the licences have all been granted.

On behalf of my group, I hope that my testimony before the committee today will help further the investigation and shed light on the licensing process and the discrimination we have been experiencing for the past six years. The Regroupement des pêcheurs pélagiques professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie will continue to move forward, to retain its know-how and expertise, while taking its rightful place in a diversified Canadian fishing industry.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for listening.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Thank you, Mr. Collin.

So, if I understand correctly, your group was not deemed representative. DFO refused to engage in discussions with you until this summer, when there was a change. You were then told that, in the end, you were representative.

**Ghislain Collin:** Exactly. We received a call, which came out of nowhere, telling us that, in the end, we were representative. I knew that all along, because we have always been representative.

• (1605)

**Alexis Deschênes:** How did they explain to you this change in DFO's position?

**Ghislain Collin:** No explanation was given. It seems like somebody is trying to right a wrong. There is something going on.

**Alexis Deschênes:** If I ask you to speculate, do you have any idea as to why that change was made?

**Ghislain Collin:** As the recognition of our representativeness was delayed, we had never been consulted. DFO shut us out of the process. It did not need us. Basically, it was a way to easily sideline us and get rid of us. However, the history of the members cannot be erased.

**Alexis Deschênes:** I am trying to understand the situation, and I want to hear what you have to say about why they would have wanted to get rid of you. The situation is that you have 15 members, as you said, and you're under a moratorium. As of April 2022—you were informed at the last minute—herring and mackerel fishing is not allowed. So, those of your members who, for example, did not have lobster fishing licences are in trouble. In the exploratory licence process that took place, you were completely ignored and disregarded, because you were not able to submit your names. You were not even able to participate in the lottery.

Why were you dismissed by DFO?

**Ghislain Collin:** Again, the question must be asked to try to find out why. Who took steps to ensure that the Regroupement was not considered representative? I have no idea, really. It is strange. An audit could have taken two days, but it took three years for DFO to tell us that, in the end, we were truly representative.

**Alexis Deschênes:** An argument that was made at the last meeting by DFO was the residence criterion, adjacency, that is to say that they want to try to give preference to fishers who are close to fishing areas.

What is the situation for your fishers? You mentioned it briefly, but not much. Your herring and mackerel fishing area goes from where to where?

**Ghislain Collin:** It is the entire Chaleur Bay, and as far away as Rimouski. It is the entire Gaspé region. Between the Côte-Nord and the Gaspé, the boundary is in the middle of the river.

**Alexis Deschênes:** So you were fishing in the area covered by the exploratory licences.

**Ghislain Collin:** Exactly. Some of our fishers have been there. Unfortunately, there have not been a lot of landings. The infrastructure on that side could not take large volumes of herring and mackerel. The fishers were going down south to land their herring and mackerel.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deschênes.

[English]

That completes our first round, which will take us into our second round.

First up, I have Mr. Small, for five minutes or less.

**Clifford Small (Central Newfoundland, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Never has there been so much excitement and hype for a fishery reopening as for unit 1 redfish. Liberals hyped the potential for a fishery of 300,000 to 400,000 tonnes. There was lots of jockeying for a quota share.

Mr. d'Entremont, you and your organization, no doubt, lobbied hard for a good share of that quota. Have you ever seen a fishery that had such a lead-up, with so much promise, that had such a low amount of the TAC landed? Do you know of another fishery in Canada that has such a low amount of the overall quota being landed?

**Alain d'Entremont:** No, I can't think of any offhand. There are numerous species that are not fully subscribed in terms of their quotas. In terms of what you characterize as our lobbying, we were asking for the traditional historical shares to be respected. That is a hope for all fisheries across Canada.

**Clifford Small:** I heard you say in your opening remarks that you've invested tens of millions of dollars in vessels and processing.

How have you survived, having to wait such a long time to get some return on that investment?

**Alain d'Entremont:** That's a good question, and I appreciate that.

Over time, we are a diversified business. We do harvest multiple fish stocks, not just redfish. We do fish redfish. Pretty much this year, every NAFO area has come through the plant. We harvest redfish, not just in unit 1. It's a part of our overall suite of redfish quotas. We also fish haddock, halibut and other species, along with scallop.

Our plant was built with the idea that this fishery was going to continue to grow. Once we had access to the resource, we could harvest it and deliver it in various product forms to customers, and we'd find an appetite for redfish. That seems to be where things are going.

**Clifford Small:** Given the long lead-up to this fishery and the anticipation of the success of this unit 1 redfish fishery, other than the size of the redfish not being where folks had expected it to be—it hasn't grown—what other factors have led to such a failure in this fishery?

• (1610)

**Alain d'Entremont:** I think a lot of the discussion around management measures and trying to ensure that every potential measure that would limit the ability to catch redfish was put in place under the previous decision, or at least the original opening decision, made it very difficult for us to harvest redfish. Also, with the timing—the ability to access the fish when they're available to our gear and when we have markets for them—unit 1 was very difficult.

This year, with the opening of the test fishery early on in the spring and then the opening of the commercial fishery, allowing for fishing at various depths and understanding the protocols seemed to work better. I think we're on the right track.

The only issue is that if we had spent the last five years focused on developing markets and building the market for these fish as opposed to having to defend our historical shares, we would be in a better spot and taking more out of the water this year.

**Clifford Small:** The Liberal government failed in putting measures in place to secure a market for this large biomass. Is that correct?

**Alain d'Entremont:** There have certainly been opportunities to grow. I think the time spent on the debate over access, allocation and management measures could have been better spent working on marketing.

**Clifford Small:** What has been the impact of the ENGOs like Oceana, which constantly pushed to have this quota at an extremely low percentage of the biomass?

**Alain d'Entremont:** I think various ENGO groups have participated in the process and in the consultation.

Going back to the earlier questions from Chris, it's interesting, because we don't always know what comes out of the advisory committee in terms of advice going up to the minister. Whether or not the ENGO consultation documents or submissions were held at a different standard from ours as stakeholders is something I don't think we know or fully understand.

**Clifford Small:** You've seen the growth in the power of ENGOs at stock advisories. Do you think the minister should walk that back at this stage?

**Alain d'Entremont:** For me, it depends on the ENGO. I think that some ENGOs come with a very good understanding of the fishery and a practical understanding of how it works—others, not so much. I think that to participate, any type of stakeholder should meet minimum criteria in terms of involvement, engagement or understanding of the fishery.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Small.

Next, we're going to Mr. Connors for five minutes or less.

**Paul Connors (Avalon, Lib.):** Thank you.

Mr. d'Entremont, you mentioned in your opening statement that there are markets around the world and everything. Have you identified a market now?

**Alain d'Entremont:** Yes. We have expanded on our traditional markets here domestically in Canada and the U.S., but the main focus to move large amounts of volume seems to be export markets overseas.

We've spent a lot of time and effort building a market in China. That seems to be going well. I'm headed there in a few weeks to meet our customers, now that we've sent them samples. They seem to be happy with the product.

We are facing competition from other parts of the world. That, of course, makes it challenging, but we do think that with the Canadian product delivered, captured and processed in the way that we can, we can deliver a really good product. We are hopeful that will continue to grow.

**Paul Connors:** Some of the fishermen I spoke to talked about the size. The fillets are just not big enough for the markets.

Do you see that as an obstacle, or can you build on that? Do you have any thoughts on why the fish are not growing to the size we want them to be?

**Alain d'Entremont:** Yes, thank you. There are a couple of things.

In terms of the size of the fish, I think it's a carrying capacity and density dependence issue, where you just have so much redfish competing for the same food in that same ecosystem. The warmer waters in the gulf certainly have an impact. I think we're seeing population-level impacts across many of the species in the gulf. It's hard to ignore that there must be some environmental factor contributing to that.

In terms of the fillets, it certainly is challenging to process small redfish fillets, but we do it. I also think the world has changed, where product forms are different. We sell whole round redfish, H and G redfish and butterflied redfish. There are various fillet forms and value-added forms. It's going to need a suite and a combination of all of those to make this viable, especially for this small fish.

**Paul Connors:** I have a question about the sustainability of the fishery, and it concerns redfish and gulf shrimp. Is there any concern among shrimpers that not catching the redfish quota will lead to a worse recovery or damage to the shrimp stock?

• (1615)

**Alain d'Entremont:** I've heard that argument. At the levels of redfish removal that are possible, even if we sent every vessel in Canada to go harvest redfish in the gulf, we don't have the port facilities, the markets or the processing capacity to handle all that, but I'm not sure we could have an impact on the population at that level to save shrimp. I certainly think that redfish play a part in the ecosystem, but I think it would be very difficult or challenging for us as humans to be able to have that level of impact on that redfish stock.

If you look at the recent assessments with the high level of natural mortality, it looks to me like the environment is somewhat correcting or rebalancing itself based on what we see in the surveys and in the fishery.

**Paul Connors:** Do you process redfish from any other provinces, such as Newfoundland and Labrador?

**Alain d'Entremont:** No. As I said earlier, we've harvested in pretty much every open redfish fishery this year that's gone through my plant. We've harvested redfish in 3L, 3N, 3O, 3Ps, 3Pn, 4R, 4T, 4Vn and then 4Vs, 4W, 4X and 5Z. I think the only open area we haven't fished would be 4S, and that's just because we haven't had to go that far.

**Paul Connors:** Mr. Collin, I have a question for you now about the lobster fishery. You mentioned in your opening remarks that it became a territorial fishery when it was divided and the line was drawn, but isn't adjacency a big part of some of the fisheries that are on the go now, and hasn't it been a part of the fishery historically?

Is there no interpretation?

**The Chair:** We're going to have to pause briefly to make sure the interpretation is working.

[Translation]

I am going to speak in French to see if it works.

[English]

Okay, we're getting French to English, and now I'm going to talk in English and we'll see if it's going to translate into French.

We're back.

Mr. Connors, I'm going to turn it back over to you. You have about 45 seconds left.

**Paul Connors:** Okay.

This is a quick question on adjacency in the lobster fishery. You mentioned at the beginning that it was a territorial fishery. Can you provide some comments on that?

[Translation]

**Ghislain Collin:** The Gaspé fishing territory was split in two. Northern Gaspé was favoured at the expense of southern Gaspé. Southern fishers were not allowed to participate in the draw, even though they often fish and work in the north. The argument that it was not our fishing grounds does not hold water. That was the last provision to disqualify us. It was added to benefit certain groups. There was only one group of fishers for whom it was devastating, and that was the pelagic fishers. We were never consulted on that.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Connors.

[Translation]

I now give the floor to Mr. Deschênes for two and a half minutes.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Mr. Collin, I want to come back to this point. When we look at the regional lobster knowledge and development plan in areas 17 and 19, we see that the allocation criteria were different for the fleets. For pelagic fishers, anyone who did not live between Rivière-du-Loup and Gaspé could not apply.

How do you respond to this idea by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to prioritize those who are closer to fishing areas?

**Ghislain Collin:** This process was set up by DFO to help fishers who were in dire straits. In six years, the only thing the department has set up to help fishers in dire straits is this process for the lobster

fishery. We thought it was pretty shameful to see DFO disqualify us like that.

I do not understand why the department decided to split the Gaspé in two. It had already separated the Gaspé and the Côte-Nord. For a number of years now, you cannot buy a licence on the Côte-Nord if you do not live there, and vice versa.

In this case, the department split the Gaspé in two. However, all the fall herring fishers gather in Chaleur Bay and all over to fish. Sometimes we go up to Rimouski to fish.

We do not understand why the department made that decision.

• (1620)

**Alexis Deschênes:** At the same time, in this process, there are people from the southern part of the Gaspé who have been able to obtain exploratory permits.

**Ghislain Collin:** Yes. There were criteria for certain fleets, and there were different criteria for other fleets. Those are called accommodating criteria.

For us, the criteria have always been meant to disqualify. Criteria were always used to get in our way. When we had hope, something else happened to take that hope away from us. In the end, we did not participate in the draw at all.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Why do you think it ended that way in your case?

**Ghislain Collin:** In the beginning, when we started our representation, because we were in trouble and the fishery had stopped 24 hours before the beginning of the fishing season without us being notified, elected officials who were in the region stood up to help us.

Perhaps the Liberals believe that we are sovereignists. As I told you earlier, I am the president of an association. However, in that association, members vote for both the Liberals and the Conservatives.

The only ones who stood up and had the courage to help us were members of the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois. The Liberals, who were in power, could not really stand up and say it was disgusting.

**Alexis Deschênes:** So you think you were punished for that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Deschênes, your time is up.

[English]

We have two more speakers and I'm going to do a shorter round, because we're getting right up against it here. We'll do four minutes for Mr. d'Entremont and then Mr. Klassen.

Mr. d'Entremont, you have four minutes or less.

**Chris d'Entremont:** With four minutes or less, where do I go now?

On the issue of lobster licences, I think the problem we run into is that the data to support the fishery is not necessarily there. I think the minister sort of popped it out of the air and said, “Well, let’s try to support it with a lobster fishery.”

[*Translation*]

My question is for Mr. Collin.

Would lobster be the answer to fishing problems in Gaspésie?

**Ghislain Collin:** No, but since it was a program designed to help struggling fleets, just like shrimpers and turbot fishers, we were flatly discriminated against, to the extent that the minister, thinking we were not Liberals, might have thought it was not worth helping us. I do not know. This happened when the election campaign was about to begin, so we are still wondering whether this process was electioneering and used to get votes in less heavily Liberal regions.

[*English*]

**Chris d’Entremont:** My last question will go to Mr. d’Entremont.

With that 60,000 tonnes of quota, how do we look at this year coming up? Are we going to be able to take more of that out of the water? Are catch rates going to be a little better as we’re learning about the fishery and the other participants in that as well?

**Alain d’Entremont:** I think the biggest thing with redfish in the gulf is not anything related to catch rates. It’s catching the product in a form or producing it in a form that the market will demand. It doesn’t make a heck of a lot of sense to go out and just fill boats unless you have the ability to process it and then deliver it to the market in the form the customers need.

I think the market constraints are going to be the limiting factors of the TAC more than any other limit that we have currently.

**Chris d’Entremont:** Is there an opportunity on bait? We’ve been having some bait issues in southwest Nova Scotia with the lobster fishery.

**Alain d’Entremont:** There’s no question that there are opportunities to replace some other species, or to at least replace imports from other parts of the world, but fishermen tend to want certain bait.

We’ve made a lot of redfish available. We do sell a lot of redfish cuttings and heads for bait, but it’s not going to be the whole answer, because there’s no question that there are more redfish there and available right now than what the demand would be for bait for trap fisheries.

• (1625)

**Chris d’Entremont:** In the larger context, is the Department of Fisheries still in the way of some of the processes you’re looking at?

**Alain d’Entremont:** I mean, I’m sure we can come up with reasons for why it’s more difficult to do business, but I think that this year we’ve had a better start than we did last year. A lot of that started with the department actually listening to us for the first time, when we told them at the advisory committee why so much fish stayed in the water.

We pointed to the issues with certain management measures and depth restrictions and said that we could meet other conservation needs ourselves through adjusting our gear, changing our fishing patterns and changing our time of year. Fishermen are really good at their jobs, and if you give them the opportunity and tell them, “This is what you need to do,” they generally can find a way.

I think that DFO’s approach of saying, “These are all the limits. Find a way to make it work,” is a lot easier. If they just tell us how much fish we can catch, we’ll figure out how to get them out of the water in a way that works.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. d’Entremont.

Our last questioner in the first panel will be Mr. Klassen.

You have four minutes or less.

**Ernie Klassen (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.):** Thank you.

Mr. Cormier was wanting to finish up some questions he’d started, so I’ll pass it over to him.

**Serge Cormier:** Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

It is hard to ask all our questions in four minutes.

Mr. Collin, I understand that you are disappointed in this whole process. I, too, have been disappointed over the years with some of the decisions made by ministers, whether it is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans or other ministers. We were certainly disappointed by the decisions of ministers from other parties as well. However, if we spend too much time discussing that, we will not find a solution today. We want to see how we can move forward.

You mentioned that some of your members, including you, have had a lobster licence in the past. I am just trying to sort it out. If, tomorrow morning, I sell my house for \$200,000 and, five years later, I realize that it is now worth \$500,000, I will not go back to the buyer to ask for the difference. What I mean by that is that there are fishers who made the decision themselves to sell some of their licences when the fishery was not doing well and now that the fishery is doing well in certain areas, they want them back. People look for all kinds of reasons, and that is understandable. Everyone wants to live well, have an income, and so on.

What I am getting at is this. I understand that some of your members are struggling. There are also fishers in difficulty in my region, in the herring and mackerel industry. However, there are already mechanisms in place to help them, as I told you earlier. For example, crab quotas have already been transferred between fleets. We could also revise those quotas, or allow the buyback of certain licences. Maybe the lobster licence you sold is not worth \$500,000. There is a price.

Would you be in favour of some sort of licence buyback program? That is the only question I have for you.

**Ghislain Collin:** What needs to be clearly understood is that the four members, of which I am one, who were excluded from the draw because they once had a crustacean licence, always knew that they would be excluded. That has always been clear, and we have never fought against it. We are here today for those who have been sidelined and have never had a crustacean licence. They live in poverty now.

**Serge Cormier:** It is a little different, okay. I understand that.

**Ghislain Collin:** That has never been challenged.

**Serge Cormier:** Okay.

[*English*]

Mr. d'Entremont, thanks for being here. I'm not sure if you're the brother or cousin or whatever of our colleague. I'm not going to question that.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Serge Cormier:** Kidding aside, what was the share of the offshore you got through the new redfish allocation quota? Was it about 58%?

**Alain d'Entremont:** Yes. After the 20% was taken off for the other two shares, it would have been around 58%.

**Serge Cormier:** Of course, some of the historical share was not respected, as you said. You probably had a little more than that before the fishery was closed.

That being said, you said earlier that there's a way to have a partnership—for example, for shrimpers or other fleets to partner with you, get some of your quota and go fish redfish.

• (1630)

**Alain d'Entremont:** Correct.

**Serge Cormier:** Let's say a shrimper wants to go fish tomorrow with some of your allocation—30¢ a pound. What share will you give him to fish that quota for you?

**Alain d'Entremont:** Do you mean a price per pound?

**Serge Cormier:** Yes.

**Alain d'Entremont:** It depends on the size of fish, and it depends on the time of year. When we make arrangements with vessels to harvest for us, we tend to look at a longer-term partnership throughout the year. For a lot of those vessels, they're not available for a good chunk of the year. In terms of being able to land them in a form that we can then transport to the plant and produce, it makes it difficult, but we pay a fair price based on what they land. Right now, most of it is being landed in Glace Bay and then trucked down to my plant. We have purchased from other places in the past.

**The Chair:** Your time is up, Mr. Cormier.

That will finish our first panel.

I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony and for being here in person and by video conference. This will be very, very helpful for the report we'll be doing on the testimony we have received.

We will suspend briefly while we get our next panel set up.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1635)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting back to order.

Before we get started with our second panel, I want to make a few comments for the benefit of the new witnesses.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, please click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

[*Translation*]

For interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

[*English*]

I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

With that, I would like to welcome our witnesses.

[*Translation*]

We have Mr. Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay, fisherman.

[*English*]

By video conference, we have Ian MacPherson, executive director of the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association.

[*Translation*]

Online, from the Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie, we have O'neil Cloutier, director, and Claire Canet, project manager.

[*English*]

You will each have five minutes to deliver your opening remarks.

[*Translation*]

We will start with you, Mr. Sandt-Duguay. You have five minutes.

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay (Fisherman, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their invitation. My name is Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay. I am a fisher and a resident of the municipality of Rimouski, Quebec.

Unfortunately, there have been a lot of inconsistencies and irregularities in the mechanisms and criteria that were used in awarding exploratory lobster fishing licences in the Lower St. Lawrence region in 2025. There have been far too many for me to list here. I only have five minutes of speaking time. I would be happy to answer any questions afterwards.

I would nevertheless like to point out that the commercial fishing licensing policy for eastern Canada clearly states that proximity to the resource is a recognized factor of precedence for issuing new exploratory licences. This priority factor was recognized in the Quebec region in 2018 by the use of a residence criterion when lobster fishing licences were issued in Gaspésie, between Rivière-à-Claude and the Tartigou River. You had to be a resident of the area. The intent is to promote a local fishery with local fishers and local economic benefits. However, in its last allocation session, in 2025, the department used new mechanisms and reserved licences in my community of Rimouski to award them to fishers, most of whom were from outside the region and some of whom live more than 400 kilometres from us.

The knowledge and development plan project is as follows: issue 24 of the 35 planned licences in area 19 directly in my area between Matane and Rimouski. I fish for whelk. That is my main fishery. I do not have a snow crab licence, a snow crab allocation, a shrimp licence or a turbot quota, and I do not fish pelagic fish either. I was not selected for the application of the allocation plan.

However, the whelk fishery is locally important and has been increasingly precarious in recent years. We are experiencing major changes in the St. Lawrence estuary ecosystem. In February, Fisheries and Oceans Canada biologists from the Maurice Lamontagne Institute presented a study during the scientific review indicating that lobsters prey on whelks. Lobsters, which have just arrived en masse in the estuary sector, eat whelks. While the total allowable catch in my area had been stable for over 20 years at 491 tonnes, it was reduced by 66% in 2025, or two thirds of the quota. In addition, the fishery was closed from May 15 to July 15 to protect the resource during the spawning season.

I agree that we need to protect the resource. However, I do not have anything else to fish in that time, other than maybe a little bit of Atlantic halibut. I have not been able to guarantee my crew a job, and my wages cannot compete with the wages offered by those who have obtained lobster licences. One of my employees went fishing with another fisherman who had a lobster fishing licence. I did not, and I am wondering why. Why were local fishers, who are negatively affected by the new lobster resource in the territory, not considered in this plan? I was never consulted by DFO; there were no meetings organized. Things were rushed in the awarding of these licences, and I was not invited to any draws.

On the one hand, I was asked last spring to stop fishing my main species, the whelk, in order to protect the resource. Whelks are eaten by lobsters. On the other hand, I see other fishers coming from outside to my home port to benefit from this new resource. In addition, we now learn that some licensed fishers caught up to 150,000 pounds of lobster in 2025 with these new allocated licences. At an average price of \$8 a pound, that is about \$1 million or \$1.2 million, quite a bit more than the salary of the Prime Minister of Canada. Yet, lobsters are a public resource.

I am wondering about the future of the fisheries. Is DFO's proposal to make a handful of individuals millionaires and make it so that no one else can benefit? Is it to move people more than 400 kilometres from their place of residence and deprive local fishers of access in a limited dock space in the context of a housing

shortage? Does that make sense from an economic or social standpoint or from a regional development standpoint?

The allocation plan introduced in 2025 is a plan that divides the various fleets, sometimes creates division within the same fleet, creates division in villages, creates division in the wharves and divides the fishers. This is a missed opportunity, in my opinion, to propose a better future for all. However, it is really a beautiful gift to have this new lobster resource in abundance in our waters. The year 2025 was a record year for lobster landings in Quebec. Could we do a better job of distributing the effort? Can we be fair and share this resource collectively?

Why not impose catch limits or a quota system for these new licences? Most other species have quota systems. Why not favour as many fishers as possible? Why not allow all stakeholders in Quebec's coastal community to benefit?

I would like to conclude my remarks by mentioning that the decision-making framework for granting new access, which the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans recommended and approved in November 2002, is based on three principles, which I will present in order of priority.

• (1640)

One is conservation. Next is the recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights. Then there is fairness. There are two parts to it, procedural and distributive. In terms of procedure, access criteria must be used fairly and consistently in an open, transparent and accountable decision-making process that ensures fair treatment for all. As for distributive fairness, fishing is a resource—

**The Chair:** Mr. Sandt-Duguay, I will ask you to wrap up.

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** I only need a few seconds.

As for distributive fairness, the fishery is a common public resource that should be managed without creating or exacerbating excessive disparities between individuals or regions.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[English]

Next we'll go to Mr. MacPherson.

You have the floor for five minutes or less.

**Ian MacPherson (Executive Director, Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association):** Thanks very much, Chair.

On behalf of the over 1,260 captains who make up the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association membership, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for the opportunity to present on these divergent but important items.

The recent increase in redfish resources created unique and challenging circumstances. For reasons of expediency, I would like to list some of the key situations and comments that are related to the recent allocation of redfish quota and exploratory licences.

On the attribution of redfish, the points on the redfish are based on the current two-year trial program announced by former federal fisheries minister Diane LeBouthillier in 2023. It's uncommon to have a species bounce back after 20-plus years of moratorium. It created a chicken-and-egg scenario. Market development was limited, as quota was not assigned due to a high percentage of small fish. It's a classic case of each jurisdiction feeling that they should be in line for most of the quota based on catch history.

There was much debate over when the fishery should commence. The fish have stopped growing, as mentioned earlier, and are under preferred market length for fillets. It is mostly a bait fishery to date, which equals a low harvester return. There was a lack of a comprehensive allocation plan despite having five-plus years of notice that a large cohort of fish was developing.

Industry knew that historic quota allocations would not apply and opened the door for new arrangements. The Prince Edward Island bid was made jointly with the Abegweit and Lennox Island first nations. The first nations would direct their quotas if allocated. Unfortunately, there was no allocation to the PEIFA or Island first nations. Small allocations made to 210 licence-holders were for approximately 13,000 pounds per fisher.

Diversification is critical in some areas, but infrastructure is needed. We need viable quota amounts for individual harvesters. Associations could assist if plans were requested and presented for fair and equitable distribution of quota to the members. Associations could also assist in coordinating the sale of the product on behalf of the individual harvesters.

Exploratory licences can lead to economic diversification for an area or region if they meet the criteria below. As noted in the previous redfish dialogue, economic diversification and equivalency should be a key component for any exploratory fisheries. On the issue of exploratory licences, there are some key concerns that must be addressed.

We must ensure that the principle of one licence in, one licence out is maintained. We must ensure that specific and sufficient scientific assessment programs are in place. Additional assessment may be required, depending on the species and existing programs.

On lobster, there must be geographic limitations if catches decrease. This could disrupt the balance of areas where one in, one out has achieved a healthy stock balance. The duration of licences must be reviewed annually and have very limited terms. The history is that most pilots become permanent. More access and volume are not always better. We are seeing marginal returns. I'm referring to lobster in some fisheries related to price in the marketplace. Once again, the economic viability of area harvesters must be more of a consideration.

The topics of increased redfish volumes and potentially more exploratory fisheries are indications of changing ocean conditions. It is incumbent on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada not only to work closely with harvesters and fishing organizations

but to understand that existing programs and policies may not meet the needs of our current fisheries.

Our margin of error is very thin, and opportunities for expanded or new fisheries must not be squandered away. These opportunities require proper planning, oversight and the singular focus of protecting the resource under consideration.

This concludes the opening remarks of the PEIFA. We welcome any questions from the committee members.

Thank you.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. MacPherson.

[*Translation*]

We now move on to Mr. Cloutier and Ms. Canet, who will share five minutes of speaking time.

**O'neil Cloutier (Director, Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have been a fisherman since 1977, and I have been the executive director and founder of the Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie, or RPPSG, since 1991.

My colleague here has been leading a number of RPPSG files since 2017. We represent the 146 individual lobster and commercial licence holders in areas 19, 20 and 21. So it is the entire southern part of the Gaspé Peninsula and part of the northern part of the Gaspé, all the way to Mont-Louis.

Our mission is to ensure the sustainable development of the lobster fishery, which supports the socio-economic needs of current fishers without compromising the ability of future generations to continue fishing, through a sustainable and prudent management of the resource based on science.

The increased fishing effort by DFO is concerning. Since 2022, the RPPSG has funded 100% of a postseason lobster survey by a fisher in commercial area 19B. All lobsters caught are released after being characterized.

We also conduct in-season data harvesting with experimental traps in commercial subzones 19C and 19B. The two participating fishers retain the commercial-sized lobsters from the two traps made available to them, representing approximately 0.4% of the fishing effort in area 19.

However, as part of phase 1 of the implementation of DFO's knowledge and development plan, with exploratory licences, the fishing effort increased by 113% for area 19 as a whole and 37.5% for commercial sub-areas 19A2 and 19C2.

In 2024, DFO verbally confirmed to us that there was no objective scientific evidence to support the significant increase in the 7,750 exploratory traps for the planned data harvesting. Several answers need to be provided regarding recruitment, the available biomass and the additional fishing effort it could potentially support, including in commercial sub-areas 19A2 and 19C2.

It will take several years of additional data collection to develop sufficient knowledge. Some answers regarding a few sub-areas in area 19A1 were provided by the Wolastoqey after years of experimental and then exploratory fisheries. However, a number of sub-areas have never been studied, particularly west of Matane. Scientific data on commercial sub-areas 19A2 to 19C2 is still very incomplete. Increasing suddenly a fishing effort without any conclusive scientific data can endanger the resource and the current fishers who depend on it. We do not want lobster to be a victim, like cod, of management based on an apparent abundance.

• (1650)

**Claire Canet:** The resource is a common public good that does not belong to DFO, yet DFO uses it to fund its data harvesting. The principle is that, if the harvested resources are marketed by those who perform the data capture, the project must be done under a co-operation agreement with the fishers who depend on the resource. Otherwise, DFO or a third party must fund 100% of the data harvesting operations, and the catch has to be released. However, that is not the case for the implementation of this data harvesting plan.

Management of access to the resource has been based on the principle of adjacency for over 50 years. That way, access is granted to those closest to the resource, since they seem more likely to rely heavily on that access for the economic health of their village. That is what we heard, by the way, from Mr. Sandt-Duguay.

However, it appears that this principle has not been consistently applied to exploratory fishing licences in area 19. Fishers in the southern part of the Gaspé have obtained individual or community exploratory licences, while others, in difficulty, have been excluded in the name of this principle.

In closing, DFO has not assessed the economic risks to lobster fishers posed by this new exploratory effort, which is in fact similar to a commercial fishery. The value of a fishing business is based on the health of the stock in its sub-area, the potential catch per licence, the number of participants and the landed value, which depends on the volumes landed and the market's ability to absorb them.

In 2025, there was a lack of processing capacity. Thousands of lobsters caught under an exploratory licence could not be processed and sold. The resource is being wasted. Fishers have sometimes had to keep their boats at the dock.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Canet and Mr. Cloutier.

[English]

With that, we're going to get into our first round of questioning. It will be a six-minute round.

I'll turn the floor over to you, Mr. d'Entremont, for six minutes or less.

**Chris d'Entremont:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Mr. Sandt-Duguay, you said that fishers living 400 km away came to fish for lobster in your region. Where did they come from? Did they come from Montreal or someplace else?

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** They came from the Gaspé direction.

**Chris d'Entremont:** Gaspé is quite far away.

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** Yes. Some came from Rivière-au-Renard, near Gaspé. That's 400 kilometres away.

**Chris d'Entremont:** What makes you think they had exploratory fishing licences?

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** I sympathize with the other fishers. The shrimp fishery is going through some tough times right now. I think this committee has addressed the topic before. We're having problems with turbot too. However, I don't think that was the right solution.

The same thing can be said of redfish allocations. Shrimpers are suitable for catching redfish. If they'd been allowed to catch more, they might have caught nothing but redfish. But since they couldn't catch a lot, they would have needed something else. Maybe they could have caught snow crab. With a shrimper, it's easier to catch and process snow crab than it is to catch lobster. For the lobster solution, they would have had to buy another boat to go and fish offshore. It was as if some fishers won the lottery, with really good permits in really good areas, but the outcome for others wasn't the best.

• (1655)

Some collateral damage was done to residents in the area, however. No one at DFO checked to verify dockside capacity. There were socio-economic implications on the ground too.

People make decisions in their offices, but on the ground, fishers coexist on the docks, and some collateral damage was caused.

**Chris d'Entremont:** I don't think that the department consulted with local fishers. This is a problem that we've seen multiple times. Otherwise, it might have gained a better understanding of the adjacency issue. It could have allocated quotas to fishers who reside closer to the resource.

However, as often happens, there doesn't seem to have been much meaningful consultation with the fishers. Someone far off in Ottawa decided who needed a license.

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** I couldn't agree with you more. It's a top-down and bottom-up approach, where you make decisions somewhere in the middle.

There was no consultation at my level.

[English]

**Chris d'Entremont:** I'll switch over to Mr. MacPherson. Thanks for joining us today, as well.

My question revolves around the issue of exploratory or experimental licences. As industries or fishermen or fishers identify different kinds of species to fish, how should the department treat some of these things?

It's really hard to figure out sometimes who different fishers are supposed to go to, to actually talk about these things. We see in this particular case, in the Gaspésie, that they came up with an exploratory licence.

How do you think that should be happening in and around Prince Edward Island?

**Ian MacPherson:** It's always good to dialogue with associations. The associations are the best to redirect specific things to either their various committees, a board of directors or individual harvesters. There has been a kind of a common theme here regarding a lack of communication with the previous minister. All of a sudden, we just heard about things through a colleague who's on the call right now.

These are big things. I allude back to my question: What kind of market impacts does this have in terms of these fisheries? Many of them are emerging, but in the case of the Gaspésie, there's quite a bit of product that is now in the marketplace.

**Chris d'Entremont:** That brings me to my second question. When it revolves around, you know.... Fishermen are always chasing the best price, depending on the time of year and depending on the markets that are actually available to them. What is the effect of...? Mr. Sandt-Duguay said they were catching somewhere near 150,000 pounds in a season. Multiply that by the number of licences that have been brought forward, and how does that affect the total price of lobsters in the area?

**Ian MacPherson:** I agree. That volume at that price seems like a pretty good return, but there are other areas that aren't seeing those kinds of returns. We've had various conditions this year that contributed to not a huge amount of lobster in inventory, but that's not always the case every year.

**Chris d'Entremont:** I know I had a bunch of other questions. I know I'm running out of time quickly.

Just quickly to Ian, how do we better consult with fishing groups, when it comes to bigger decisions like this?

**Ian MacPherson:** You need the dialogue. Certainly, we needed to understand what DFO's plans were and how it was going about it. We need sufficient time, so that associations can have real input into it, not just be advised at the last minute. As associations and members, we've got some really good ideas we can bring to the table on how a launch could go smoothly or badly.

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. d'Entremont.

Next, we're going to go to Mr. Morrissey, for six minutes or less.

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

With my first question, I want to follow up with Mr. Sandt-Duguay.

Could you expand on the comment you made that it was a divisive plan and a missed opportunity. Could you explain a bit more the missed opportunity?

[Translation]

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** I think we're going through some big changes. With climate change, the lobster we find in Quebec now is an opportunity not to miss. On Anticosti Island, only a few licences have been issued. Quebec alone has more than 3,000 kilometres of coastline, while Anticosti Island has about 500. Right now, there might be 50 lobster licences, including the ones already issued. Prince Edward Island, as Mr. MacPherson can confirm for us, might have about 1,200 lobster fishers. The gulf region alone has 3,000 lobster fishers.

I think there's room, but let's be patient.

[English]

**Robert Morrissey:** Could you clarify? Was it more a case of spreading the resource amongst more individuals within the adjacency areas? Is that the missed opportunity?

[Translation]

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** Absolutely.

I think we can meet everyone's needs with the same number of lobsters. I can give you an example. We can look at the requirements.

One fleet of crabbers in region 12A includes five individuals. Three of them received a lobster licence and two didn't. It certainly can cause tensions, but there were only five of them. If three fishers each caught 50,000 pounds of lobster, that adds up to 150,000 pounds of lobster. However, the 150,000 pounds of lobster could have been divided differently. Each fisher could have caught 20,000 pounds of lobster, with 50,000 pounds of lobster set aside for conservation of the resource.

Everyone would have been happy. There would have been some conservation, and the process would have been fair for everyone.

[English]

**Robert Morrissey:** Just to clarify for the committee, it wasn't so much the granting of the exploratory licence to exploit a resource that is now growing because of a changing environment; it was in the better distribution of that resource or the potential better distribution of the resource.

Am I interpreting you correctly?

[Translation]

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** Yes.

[English]

**Robert Morrissey:** Thank you.

Mr. MacPherson, you used the term "viable quota amounts". Could you, again, elaborate on what you were referencing there and what a viable quota would be?

**Ian MacPherson:** I don't have a specific number in mind. What I have heard back on redfish is that a boat probably needs about a million pounds.

The intent of quota coming to P.E.I. was to hopefully revive the industry there. We used to have a significant redfish industry, but that takes investment, not only in boats but in processing, etc.

We're finding now, with some of the shrimp fleet there, that the costs, returns and things like that could be a benchmark, but at the end of the day, we're very dependent on lobster in P.E.I., and we were hoping that redfish could be a potential species to diversify into.

Thank you.

**Robert Morrissey:** Following up on that, you also referenced infrastructure investment. I take it that would be land-based, on the processing side. Is that correct?

**Ian MacPherson:** Yes, absolutely. We talked to some processors who were very interested in adding that dimension to their operations, but if they don't know that there is a secure supply coming, it's pretty hard to go out and make that investment.

The other thing that has been alluded to in previous presentations was a five-year period of, "Well, the quota will be next year." It's hard to make substantial investments and then not know if you're ever going to get a return on those, so I see that as a contributing factor as well.

• (1705)

**Robert Morrissey:** A number of presenters here today have referenced a rebalancing of the environment, so we know something is happening in the gulf that's impacting a number of species, but there was also a reference to regulatory certainty.

What would you leave with the committee from a regulatory certainty perspective that would be positive for this emerging redfish fishery?

**Ian MacPherson:** I'm not so sure I can speak to the regulatory aspect, but I think the process could definitely be refined. It's not every year that we have a fishery that's been dormant for over 20 years bounce back. Our colleague just alluded there to a missed opportunity. This could perhaps also be one in that prior to the quota announcements, I don't think there was nearly enough discussion on market development, the potentiality and who could get involved.

**Robert Morrissey:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Morrissey.

[Translation]

I'll hand the floor over to Mr. Deschênes for six minutes or less.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to start with a question for Mr. Cloutier.

Mr. Cloutier, you mentioned earlier that you've been active in the fisheries since 1977. I gather from your comments that you believe that the exploratory fishery is being opened without scientific advice or sufficient objective data, and that continuity criteria are being applied inconsistently.

What words would you use to summarize the procedure being used to allocate exploratory lobster fishing licences?

**O'neil Cloutier:** Clearly, a residence qualification requirement has never been applied consistently to all applicants. This principle has existed for a number of years. At least, it's been around long enough to reasonably expect that the department would apply it in 2025, to give the mechanism some consistency and credibility. Unfortunately, the department has played with that requirement by applying it to some fleets but not to others.

I want to reiterate that the residence qualification requirement was specifically designed to protect the regions, ensure their economic growth and allow them access to inshore fisheries in their home region. That's why, as fishers and as an organization, we have no problem with the application of a residence qualification requirement. Unfortunately, the department didn't apply it.

**Alexis Deschênes:** How would you describe the process?

**O'neil Cloutier:** I would say it that was very fast. We only participated in it once, and that was during the consultations, when we tabled a fairly comprehensive document on the development plan vision, the economic aspect necessary for developing the fisheries and participation. The minister and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans accepted none of the proposals we made to protect the current lobster fishery or future exploratory fisheries.

Today, we're in a fine mess. The residence qualification requirements have changed, leaving some fishers excluded, while others from the same region have to travel 400 kilometres away to an exploratory lobster fishery, as Mr. Sandt-Duguay said earlier. It makes no sense. We informed the department, but nothing was done. It's really unfortunate, because it has left one fishery fractured. Fishermen are fighting with each other instead of behaving like brothers and competitors.

**Alexis Deschênes:** I'd like you to tell us how things went in area 19, where commercial fishers were already active when new exploratory fishing licences were issued.

**O'neil Cloutier:** The Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie had always supported the development of an exploratory fishery, provided it was carried out in an orderly and unhurried way. That's one of the first recommendations we made in our document. It's unfortunate to note today, however, that the minister issued exploratory fishing licences in a commercial fishing area where the resource was known to exist. Ultimately, what this did was to create competition between exploratory fishers and commercial fishers in a location where licences are very expensive. It's unfair competition when some fishers buy their licence while others get it for free, even though all of them are operating in the same environment.

This creates a really bizarre situation that's not good for the fishers or anyone interested in buying a licence, since there is no way of knowing what direction the department will take when it issues future licences. Will it grant exploratory fishing licences in other areas and destroy the market, in other words, undermine the practice among fishers of selling licences to each other, with one coming in while the other goes out?

These are things we have to think about now, since we can't trust the future to Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

• (1710)

**Alexis Deschênes:** Thank you, Mr. Cloutier.

I have one minute left.

Mr. Sandt-Duguay, you talked about a divisive plan and a missed opportunity. You suggest quotas or smaller traps. What would you have done to increase support for licensing among fishers?

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** First, we need a picture of the situation that's based on science and data. Initially, there were no data. Now, however, with the first year behind us, the situation could be corrected. If nothing is done, the division could grow.

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

That concludes the first round.

[*English*]

With that, we're going to start the second round here. We're not going to get through a whole second round, but we're going to start for the five minutes with Mr. Small.

**Clifford Small:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll read out a motion that I tabled on September 18. I assured Jeanette Russell, the mother of a young lad who lost his life off the south Labrador coast in the fall of 2021, that I would put this study to this committee. It is as follows:

That, given that fishing is Canada's most deadly industry, with an average of 11 fish harvesters losing their lives each year, compared to a nation like Iceland that lands two times more fish than Canada with an average of one life lost per year,

(a) the committee conduct a study consisting of:

- i. one two-hour meeting with officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard,
- ii. one one-hour meeting with the Honourable Steven MacKinnon, Minister of Transport,
- iii. one one-hour meeting with officials from Transport Canada,
- iv. one two-hour meeting with representatives from other countries, and
- v. three two-hour meetings with different stakeholders and experts;

(b) the committee report its findings to the House; and

(c) pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to its report.

I'm moving to resume debate on this motion, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Small.

It's my understanding that this was the motion on which the debate was adjourned. With that, you're moving to resume debate on the adjourned motion.

**Clifford Small:** That's correct.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Small.

Just so you know, your time was paused when you brought forward that motion, and that motion is a dilatory motion, so we'll have to proceed to a vote on resuming debate on the motion that was adjourned.

This is a vote to resume debate on the motion.

Mr. Cormier.

• (1715)

**Serge Cormier:** Can we just have two minutes, just to make sure? He needs to put a motion forward first to resume the debate on that motion. Then, if it's a yes or whatever, we can debate the motion. Is that what you're saying? We just received the motion. Can you just give us two minutes? Is that okay? Can we just recess for two minutes?

**The Chair:** We'll suspend for two minutes to review the motion.

We'll very briefly suspend.

• (1715)

(Pause)

• (1715)

**The Chair:** We are going to resume. We're back here.

Just so the witnesses know, we are proceeding with some business of the committee. We will get back to your testimony in short order, once we've been able to dispose of this business.

With that, we will go to a vote. We just confirmed that this was the same motion that was brought forward before, which was adjourned.

We're going forward with a vote on whether we want to resume debate on this motion that was adjourned previously.

It's non-debatable, so we need to go straight to a vote.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The motion has been passed, so debate on the motion can resume.

[*Translation*]

We'll start with Mr. Deschênes. Mr. Cormier will then take his turn.

Mr. Deschênes, you have the floor.

**Alexis Deschênes:** I propose an amendment that will allow us to study this important topic without encroaching on provincial jurisdictions, particularly when it comes to occupational health and safety. I therefore move that we add, after the list of meetings, "the study will focus on areas under federal jurisdiction" or "the study will be limited to areas under federal jurisdiction".

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll continue with the amendment to the motion.

Mr. Morrissey.

• (1720)

**Robert Morrissey:** Chair, I would like some clarification. Could you circulate the amendment so that we have the language? It was pretty clear, but I want to see what the amendment states before I discuss it. He could rephrase it.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Deschênes, do you have that amendment in writing?

If not, you could read it again very slowly so that we can—

[English]

**Robert Morrissey:** Chair, if he verbalizes it, it's fine, but he should do it slowly so I can hear it.

[Translation]

**Alexis Deschênes:** The amendment consists of adding the following words: “exclusively on matters under federal jurisdiction and excluding matters under provincial jurisdiction”.

[English]

**Robert Morrissey:** It doesn't stray into provincial jurisdiction.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Is there anybody else who would like to weigh in on the amendment to the motion? No.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Debate can continue on the motion as amended.

Mr. Morrissey.

**Robert Morrissey:** Chair, we have no issue with the motion—in fact, we support it—but we have witnesses for this study. I would prefer it if we could deal with how the motion is going to move during committee business.

We are supportive of the motion as it's now amended. It's timely. There are a couple of issues with foreign jurisdiction that it would bring, but we would prefer that it move to an order of committee business at a later time, so that we can return to the witnesses who are here on the redfish.

**The Chair:** Mr. Small.

**Clifford Small:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It seems that everyone in the room is in favour of this motion. It's a very important study to put more moms and dads around Christmas trees. I think we should put the motion to a vote and carry on.

**The Chair:** Mr. Morrissey, I wasn't sure if you were moving a motion to adjourn the debate. I'll turn it over to you to clarify that.

**Robert Morrissey:** Chair, I believe the committee accepted the motion, which will then return to the committee at an appropriate time. If we're going to begin debate without having the chance to fully analyze and go through it... We have only a few minutes left of the study that the witnesses have appeared for.

The motion was accepted by the committee. It was not ranked by the committee in terms of when it would move. Am I correct?

**Some hon. members:** Correct.

**Robert Morrissey:** So that's our position.

**The Chair:** Mr. Arnold.

**Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC):** Everybody has seen the motion. We've approved the amendment. We could simply go to a vote and have this done in a matter of a minute and a half, if everyone is in agreement with the motion already, rather than delay it any further on debate.

**The Chair:** If there's no more debate on it...

**Robert Morrissey:** What are we moving on?

**The Chair:** This would be to vote on the motion as amended, to have this be one of the approved motions to study.

• (1725)

**Robert Morrissey:** Okay. Let's go to a vote.

**The Chair:** With there being no more debate, can we move to a vote?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Mr. Small, you have the floor. You have two minutes left. We'll continue with our witnesses.

**Clifford Small:** Mr. Chair, I'm going to pass my time on to Mr. Deschênes.

[Translation]

**Alexis Deschênes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sandt-Duguay, let's continue our previous discussion since the purpose of this exercise is to see what happened and how to improve things. One of your suggestions was to reduce the number of pots.

You didn't talk about that much in your presentation, but I know that you were a consultant to indigenous communities. That's an important role. In these last two minutes, I'd like you to give us your opinion on the indigenous issue.

If other fisheries were to open in the future, how would you create a plan that unites as many people as possible, rather than a plan that sows division?

**Emmanuel Sandt-Duguay:** Essentially, I think that more consultations are needed. As I said, the lobster fishery is an inshore fishery. So I think the residency qualification should have been applied, and there should have been more consistency.

The requirements favour some fishers and exclude others. I'm talking about non-indigenous fishers. I think that caused some disappointment because a lot of fishers didn't get a license. The plan talks about the next generation. However, I'm disappointed for the next generation when I think of all the people who bought high-priced businesses in recent years, especially turbot fishing businesses. They're the ones who should have been helped. They're the ones who paid a high price in recent years and were let down by the scoring system. They were left out. Maybe a few older people about to retire decided to stay in the fishery once they got a lobster licence.

I think that DFO had other solutions in its tool box to help struggling fleets like shrimpers and turbot fishers. On top of that, circumstances change; this year, the shrimp fishery is doing better.

Concerning the shrimp fishery, turbot fishing grids closed two weeks ago because too many small turbot were being caught. This fishery could also make a comeback. Without consultations, however, it's hard to bring home the point that fishers who already live in the area should come first or receive priority. Without enough consultation, things happen too quickly, and later on, when we demand explanations, we get no response either.

I wrote a letter but I didn't receive a reply. I never even received an acknowledgement of receipt. I went into problem-solving mode. It occurred to me that licenses had been issued as far as Rimouski, but what if other licenses could be issued for areas further west. I discussed the idea with other local fishers, because I'm not the only one who has no licence. We decided that we needed more information to make an informed decision or submit a request for a licence in areas further west.

We decided to mount a scientific project. I applied for a scientific lobster release licence to perform a random sampling that would let us know whether there were lobster to the west of us in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of several local residents who had been passed over for a licence. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans turned us down. I carried out this project at my own expense, and it was turned down.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I'm sorry, but I have to interrupt you.

[English]

Next we're going to go to Mr. Klassen for five minutes or less.

**Ernie Klassen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Cloutier.

Access based on residency is standard in many fisheries. It helps to keep the wealth that fishing brings in coastal communities. Since a residency cut-off made by the last minister wasn't considered right by some, where would you suggest the residency requirement be set?

• (1730)

[Translation]

**O'neil Cloutier:** Adjacency principles are recognized and known by all fishers and organizations in Quebec. They exist to protect each region, as I said earlier. What surprises us is that the department failed to apply these principles unilaterally or equally to all fisher groups applying for a licence. That's the problem.

Because requirements were not applied fairly, we now have disgruntled groups of fishers demanding restitution, and the department or the Regroupement is going to have a very hard time repairing the damage, because the harm is done. It's not a matter of figuring out whether to apply the residence qualification requirement or not. It should have been applied, because it's the only requirement that treats the various regions developing different fisheries fairly.

[English]

**Ernie Klassen:** Okay, so if the stock then moves from one area to the next, I'm wondering how the licences transfer with the stock as it moves.

[Translation]

**O'neil Cloutier:** In fact, a region doesn't deplete a species completely. In the case of lobster, for example, stocks are declining in the United States, in the Maritimes and in southwestern Nova Scotia. However, because the species moves, transferring a fisher's licence to another region where he could keep fishing would be difficult if the other region wants to develop a new fishery. If lobsters are moving north, regions currently unable to fish lobster would obviously want to develop their own fisheries, like any other region.

So I don't think that transferring licences from one region to another is feasible. It may be possible to sell them from region to region, but we certainly couldn't transfer a fisher's licence to allow the fisher to go fish in another region. That would not be enforceable.

[English]

**Ernie Klassen:** Okay.

My next question is for Mr. MacPherson. I'm wondering how much fluctuation actually happens in the industry. You talked about the fluctuation of the stock happening. Can you explain that a bit or expand on that?

**Ian MacPherson:** Well, we've seen some pretty dramatic increases over in Prince Edward Island due to... When I talk about "one in, one out", that means that one licence is bought and one licence is sold. There's no extra effort put in. About 12 years ago, we eliminated over 44,000 traps on Prince Edward Island, and it's really helped the fishery rebound.

Yes, you know, we saw some declines related to the hurricanes on the east coast in the last five years in certain areas, but it usually happens quite often in terms of... If an area is fished hard, even in four or five years, you could see a change. Some of it's climatic, but we have to be sensitive to the fact that it can also be related to the amount of effort coming out of an area, too.

**Ernie Klassen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Klassen, you have only about 10 seconds left.

**Ernie Klassen:** Okay, that's good, then.

**The Chair:** Great.

Thank you very much, Mr. Klassen.

With that, we're going to wrap our second panel here.

I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony, for being here in person or joining virtually. Your testimony will be very helpful as we complete this report, which will have recommendations for the government going forward.

We do have a couple of bits of business for the committee, but I want to thank you again and excuse you from our meeting here.

We have a couple of things I would like to get through fairly quickly. Number one is—

Mr. Gunn.

• (1735)

**Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC):** I'd like to move to resume debate on my study motion considering B.C.'s salmon open-net pen aquaculture transition.

**The Chair:** Okay. Hold on for one moment here. I just want to make sure that folks have this motion that is being brought forward.

**Serge Cormier:** Chair, can we suspend, please?

**The Chair:** Yes, let's suspend very briefly.

• (1735)

(Pause)

• (1740)

**The Chair:** We're back.

Just for clarification, the last time we were debating this, it was the motion and then it was the amendment to that motion, which hadn't yet been voted on but had been brought forward by Monsieur Deschênes. That's where we were when the debate was adjourned on this motion. That's what we would be voting on to bring back at this time.

With that, this is not a debatable motion, so we will need to move to a vote on this. You should all have the motion. You should also have received an email that goes through the difference in terms of the original motion and then the amendment to that motion that was also brought forward and that we were in the middle of debating when it was adjourned.

With that—

• (1745)

**Paul Connors:** Is there no debate?

**The Chair:** No, no; when this was adjourned the last time, we were in the middle of debating Monsieur Deschênes's amendment to this motion. We would be voting to return to the debate on this motion and the amendment that Monsieur Deschênes had brought forward for this motion.

With that, we need to move to a vote on whether we will resume the debate.

I'll turn it over to the clerk.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0)

**The Chair:** The debate on the motion resumes.

With that, we will open it up to debate on the amendment and go first to Mr. Klassen.

I'm sorry. Mr. Morrissey had his hand up first.

**Robert Morrissey:** Chair, to clarify, it's the amendment that was being debated that we have returned to. Just so everybody knows, it is not the motion.

Perhaps you could reorient the committee on the amendment that was put forward by Monsieur Deschênes, or maybe he will do it. That's where we're at now. I'm not familiar with what it was.

**The Chair:** If I may, when the debate resumes, it will be on the amendment of Monsieur Deschênes, that the motion be amended in subparagraph (b)(3) by replacing the words "three two-hour meetings" with the words "two two-hour meetings". That's the amendment that was proposed to it.

Is there any more debate on Monsieur Deschênes's amendment?

All those in favour of Monsieur Deschênes's amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** We're back to the motion as amended by Monsieur Deschênes.

Is there any debate on this?

Mr. Klassen.

**Ernie Klassen:** It appears to me that there is a report coming out shortly, so I don't think the timing of this is in the best interest of this committee. Right now we'd be doing double the work by waiting for this report that is almost completed. We could be using the time of this committee in a much better way. Last year the draft report on the transition for salmon in B.C. was released by ISED. The intergovernmental task force on salmon aquaculture is based in their department, not in Fisheries.

It just appears to me that it would be in the best interest of this committee to not be starting on something that will be coming forward as a report shortly anyway.

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

Next, I have Mr. Small, and then it's Mr. Cormier.

**Clifford Small:** Thank you, Chair.

With all due respect to the parliamentary secretary, Mr. Chair, this study could be several months down the road. I guess the report that Mr. Klassen has referred to is pretty much imminent, and we know that this study may not even happen until this time next year. Who knows? I don't know if that's a reason not to have this study completed, Mr. Chair.

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

Next, I have Mr. Cormier.

[Translation]

**Serge Cormier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Further to the comment by my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, I agree with him that a report is about to be published soon. If we moved ahead with this study, we would be duplicating virtually the same work that has already been done.

I therefore propose an amendment for distribution in both official languages.

I move to delete items b. and c. from Mr. Gunn's motion and replace them with the following:

That the Committee hold a two-hour meeting with representatives of the inter-governmental task force on the salmon aquaculture transition in British Columbia to receive an update on their work.

[English]

In English, it will be to remove sections b) and c) of the motion and replace them with the following: "That the committee schedule one two-hour meeting to hear from officials from the Intergovernmental Task Force for Salmon Aquaculture Transition in British Columbia, so that the committee can be provided an update on their work".

Doing that does not add another full study to the list of studies we already have, and at least we will be able to get an update from those officials who were working on the transition plan, on where it's at and where we go from there. I just think that doing that will again save some time from the list of studies we already have in front of us.

This is the amendment I'm proposing, Mr. Chair.

• (1750)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Cormier.

There has been another amendment that's been put forward to this motion that has been amended already by Mr. Deschênes. Debate will continue on this amendment from Mr. Cormier.

I see that Mr. Gunn has his hand up.

**Aaron Gunn:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, there's a handful of study motions that have been passed, and we're going to determine the order of what we study at a later date, but the idea that we are going to remove sections about talking to individuals who are having their livelihoods destroyed by the lack of certainty created by this decision and by DFO is completely unacceptable.

We have thousands of people in British Columbia who don't know if they're going to be able to pay their mortgage. They don't know if they're going to be able to put food on their table to feed their families. They don't know if their jobs are going to be there six months from now, nine months from now or a year from now.

While I would love to give the government the benefit of the doubt that a magic solution is just around the corner, I believe it is the purpose of this committee to look into these issues and, in my case, stand up for my constituents. I would be happy to hear an update from the department. That's why we have here in section b) a meeting with the Minister of Fisheries as well as b)(ii) with relevant officials from the Department of Fisheries. That's fine, but we need to hear from the individuals whose livelihoods are going to be potentially destroyed by these decisions. We need to talk to harvesters with generational employment, and we need to talk to industry experts and scientific experts who can try to rationalize the science behind this decision.

I think it is essential that this gets put on the books. Presumably, it will be up to the committee at another time to determine the timing of when we look at these issues, but I don't think we should be sweeping under the rug decisions that have the potential to impact the livelihoods of thousands of people, thousands of Canadians. I

should also point out that this has the potential to set a very concerning precedent for other provinces in Atlantic Canada and Quebec that have their own aquaculture industries.

**The Chair:** Thank very much, Mr. Gunn.

Next, I have Mr. Cormier.

**Serge Cormier:** I totally understand Mr. Gunn's point when he says that there are people affected by that, whatever the decision will be, but the group that we're talking about, that we want here to talk about this, also heard from some of those people from his riding probably. At least they can get us an update on what they're doing and where the plan is now. Instead of having a couple of meetings on that, let's hear from this group.

I propose that we vote on the amendment, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Arnold is next, and then it's Mr. Deschênes.

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

I have to speak against Mr. Cormier's proposal. It sounds like the top-down approach that we've seen from this government. Mr. Gunn's proposal is simply to hear from the people who are affected, not just from the people who are making the rules. I support Mr. Gunn's proposal here, without the amendment from Mr. Cormier.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Deschênes, you have the floor.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Mr. Chair, considering that the committee will be conducting other studies prior to the proposed study, and that we've been told that a transition plan will be publicly available soon, I think we should retain the existing wording of the motion, while keeping in mind that our study will probably draw to a close after the transition plan becomes public. The plan's signatories will then be able to come and defend it.

• (1755)

[English]

**The Chair:** Is there anybody else who would like to weigh in at this point? No.

With that, we can go to a vote on Monsieur Cormier's amendment.

(Amendment negated: nays 5; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** The amendment is defeated, so we're back to debate on the motion as amended by Monsieur Deschênes. Would anybody else like to weigh in on that at this point?

No. Let's go to a vote.

(Motion as amended agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

**The Chair:** Okay, so that disposes of it.

There are two quick items I'm really hoping we can get through in the next four minutes here.

Number one is that we have the budget for the redfish study. You all have been sent this. Is everybody happy to approve this budget as it was circulated?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We need to finalize the report for abandoned and derelict vessels. From discussions that have been had, I don't believe that there are any more changes to the draft version that was sent around by the analysts, so are we comfortable with approving that as is?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We need a title for this report. The analysts have put together a title for this that could be shared, unless people have any ideas for what they want to put forward for the.... Let me mention this one. The analysts suggest "Acting together to address derelict vessels in Canada". Does that sound agreeable to everybody?

**Mel Arnold:** It should be "derelict and abandoned vessels", DAVs.

**The Chair:** To me, it's abandoned and derelict vessels.

**Mel Arnold:** It's derelict and abandoned vessels, DAVs. It's easier for an acronym.

**The Chair:** DAVs...I have no problem with that personally, and it looks like we have agreement around the table.

Does the committee agree that the chair, clerk and analysts be authorized to make—

**Mel Arnold:** Are we supposed to be dealing with a draft report in public?

**The Chair:** It's fine. We're not actually going to be making changes to it here—that's why. Normally I would not, but given that there's agreement....

The motion that we have here is, will the committee vote in favour that the chair, clerk and analysts be authorized to make such grammatical and editorial changes as may be necessary without changing the substance of the report?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Do we agree that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Is it agreed that dissenting and supplementary opinions be in Calibri 12-point font, left-aligned, line spacing 1.5, submitted electronically in both official languages to the clerk of the committee no later than...?

**Mel Arnold:** Could we ask for October 20, the Monday after we return from the break? We have to deal with translation and so on.

**The Chair:** Is everybody happy with that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay. We will say by October 20 and that the chair present the report to the House.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** All right. That's it. It's passed, and we did it with one minute left.

With that, thank you all for today.

The meeting is adjourned.

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