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# Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 008**

Thursday, October 23, 2025

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Chair: Patrick Weiler





## Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Thursday, October 23, 2025

• (0820)

[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 eight of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

[English]

I want to start by acknowledging that we are gathered on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people and by expressing gratitude that we're 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 commence its study on the review of the Fisheries Act. Work on this important matter was started in the 44th Parliament. As you know, the committee has agreed to bring forward the testimonies and submissions from last year and to continue hearing witnesses for at least five additional meetings.

[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 written 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, including the interpreters. You will also notice on the card a QR code, which links to a short awareness video.

Pursuant to our routine motions, I would like to advise committee members that all witnesses appearing virtually today have successfully completed the required technical testing.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and the members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. Those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you're 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 will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

[Translation]

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 everyone's patience.

[English]

Before we go to our witnesses, Monsieur Deschênes, I understand that you have something you'd like to raise quickly with the committee.

[Translation]

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

I would like to raise a question of privilege.

At our last meeting, which was last Tuesday, I believe one of the witnesses misled the committee. When I asked specific questions, the answer given was incorrect.

I therefore wanted to raise this question of privilege at the earliest opportunity, as required. I suggest you look into this matter at some point.

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

I know we've talked about this. We'll try to get that out of the way before we're no longer in public, if we can.

[English]

With that, I'd like to welcome our witnesses.

Joining us by video conference is Andrew Campbell, counsel, from the firm Cox and Palmer. In the room, from the Northern Coalition Corporation, we have Alastair O'Rielly, executive director, and Garry Best, board member.

[Translation]

We also have Normand Déraspe, vice president of the Rassemblement des pêcheurs et pêcheuses des côtes des Îles. He is joining us by video conference.

[English]

We'll start with the opening statements of the witnesses, each for five minutes or less, beginning with Mr. Campbell.

The floor is yours.

**Andrew Campbell (Counsel, Cox and Palmer):** Good morning, everyone.

Thank you to the standing committee for allowing me to speak today about some inconsistencies and ambiguities related to legislative changes to the inshore fisheries regulations made in April 2021, and the fact that the legislative changes deny fishers the full benefits, privileges and corporate structures that were intended under the legislative amendments. I've encountered these in dealings with the Atlantic fishery and maritime provinces' fishery regulations.

My name is Andrew Campbell, as you stated. I'm a lawyer with Cox and Palmer, and I practise law in rural Prince Edward Island, in the western part of P.E.I. My areas of practice are mainly real estate, corporate, commercial, wills and estates and, of course, fisheries. I have represented individual fishers, local fishing groups and buyers. I've represented all of them and have gained a good appreciation and understanding of the fisheries in the Maritimes. I began doing fisheries matters 34 years ago, when a good friend of mine bought a fishing fleet. I grew up with fishermen and have known them all my life. I've played hockey with them, and many of them are good friends.

I was part of a panel regarding changes to the inshore fisheries regulations in 2020 and 2021, which were made in April 2021. These regulatory amendments were made to strengthen and better protect the independence of the inshore fisheries and bring into force many of the policies, such as those on owner-operators, independent core fishers and new entrants, into the Atlantic fisheries regulations and maritime provinces fishing regulations. The panel also recognized the importance of inshore fisheries in our rural communities, the benefits received by family members from fishing, corporate structures being used by fishers and other corporate structures that should be available to fishers, like any other professional organization.

The regulations created a new eligible criteria known as the inshore family fishing corporation, or IFFC, to recognize the importance of families who contribute to the fishing enterprise and to allow fishers the same corporate structures as other professional groups, such as lawyers like me. DFO emphasized the criteria in a pamphlet, which I have submitted, called "Inshore regulations implementation: Guidance on corporate structures" that outlined the following criteria for the inshore family fishing corporation.

Inshore licences must be issued in the name of an independent core harvester or in the name of a wholly owned corporation. The licence-holder must own all voting shares issued by the company. The licence-holder must be the only director or trustee of an in-

shore family trust. The only individuals who can be part of an inshore family fishing corporation are family members, and they can own only non-voting shares. Non-voting shares can be issued only to family members as defined in subsection 251(2) of the Income Tax Act, and individuals who qualify are set out in the pamphlet by DFO. They are mainly spouses, children, brothers, sisters and common-law spouses.

DFO has also brought out new forms, which continually change. I think they've changed no fewer than 10 times in the last four years. I've included one of those questionnaires as well. These forms identify the independent core fisher, the operator of the vessel and the vessel being used in fishing. It also requests information on the shareholders of the corporation, the director and family members who have shares. There is full and absolute disclosure to DFO when dealing with inshore family fishing corporations. All of this information is also posted on the local, provincial or federal website when you're dealing with the Business Corporations Act.

● (0825)

Here is the issue that has arisen in relation to the act. Subsection 19(1) of the Atlantic fisheries regulations states—and DFO has continually stated—that a licence can be issued only to an individual fisher or a wholly owned corporation by the fisher. It does not allow a licence to be issued to an inshore family fishing corporation, which, I would submit, was the true intent of the legislation and was an oversight during the amendment.

● (0830)

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

I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to wrap up. There will be more time to go deeper during questions from members.

**Andrew Campbell:** Sure.

My point is that adding the words "an approved inshore fishing family corporation" to subsection 19(1) of the Atlantic fishery regulations and to section 29.2 of the maritime provinces fishery regulations would give fishers the full and absolute benefit of the legislative amendments.

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

Next, we will be going to Mr. O'Rielly.

You have the floor for your opening remarks for five minutes or less.

**Alastair O'Rielly (Executive Director, Northern Coalition Corporation):** Thank you, Chair.

Good morning, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Northern Coalition's proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act.

My name is Alastair O'Rielly, executive director of Northern Coalition. I'm joined by Mr. Garry Best, who is the CEO of the Nunatsiavut Group of Companies and is one of our board members.

The members of the Northern Coalition are based in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and southern Labrador. I hope you have an opportunity to view the member listing and perhaps the websites that I've provided.

All members are community-based indigenous organizations. These firms have been engaged in the northern shrimp and the Greenland halibut fisheries since Canada declared the 200-mile exclusive economic zone in 1977. These companies have successfully engaged in these fisheries for almost 50 years, generating substantial profits that have been reinvested in infrastructure, economic diversification and community services. Collectively, roughly 40,000 residents in 52 coastal communities share in the surplus revenues and associated benefits of these fisheries, which currently approximate \$50 million annually.

Our member firms and the communities they represent are firmly committed to achieving an equitable share of the fisheries resources in their adjacent waters. These would be NAFO areas 0 and 2. At present, less than 50% of the northern shrimp resource is for the benefit of the north. Northerners' share of Greenland halibut is about two-thirds. However, there are some significant imbalances. For example, while 70% of the 2+3K Greenland halibut quota is harvested off of Labrador, only 10% or 15% of this resource is harvested by Labrador-based vessels.

Similarly, the recent reopening of northern cod provides all quota holders in Labrador, in NAFO area 2J, with 22% of the available quota, even though over 50% of the resource, the biomass, is located off Labrador. Throughout all southern coastal regions of Canada, fishery resources are primarily for the benefit of those who live adjacent to these resources.

In accordance with Canada's northern and Arctic policy, the indigenous reconciliation policy and, most importantly, Canada's long-standing access and allocation policies, northerners should receive access to adjacent resources to a comparable degree as licence-holders and quota holders in Canada's other marine regions.

We provided a few key references to the stated, but not always applied, access and allocation policies of the department. Your committee recently heard DFO's senior director of resource management, Mr. Todd Williams, describe the vague art of applying adjacency, historical dependence and economic benefits as considerations in decision-making. You have also heard from witnesses that the extent to which these principles are applied isn't evident. Amazingly, there currently is no requirement for ministers to even consider these principles or to report on their application.

Our board is concerned with references that arise within DFO and within the industry to the concepts of "willing buyer, willing seller" and "stability of access". As defined, these concepts would entrench existing allocation keys, would remove the minister's discretion in access and allocation decision-making and would in effect cause Canada's common property fishery resources to be treated as permanent property rights. Access and allocation should be based on a predictable, coherent and consistent policy framework that not only offers a reasonable period of assured access but also enables the minister to optimize the public good when responding to substantive socio-economic and ecosystem shifts.

Accordingly, we recommend that section 2.5 of the act be amended to require that the cornerstone principles of adjacency, historical dependency and economic benefits to be incorporated as mandatory legislative considerations in all access and allocation decisions, and that the minister must report how these principles have been applied. These amendments would improve consistency, predictability, transparency and accountability in access and allocation decision-making without fettering the minister's discretion.

We note that these proposed amendments are consistent with the 2019 amendments to the fish stocks provisions of the act, which require ministerial actions and responses to sustainability risks.

Thank you for your attention. We welcome your questions and comments.

● (0835)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. O'Rielly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Déraspe, you now have the floor for five minutes.

**Normand Déraspe (Vice President, Rassemblement des pêcheurs et pêcheuses des côtes des Îles):** Good morning, everyone.

My name is Normand Déraspe. I've been a fisherman for 30 years. For nearly 20 years, I have held a commercial lobster fishing licence in area 22, near the Îles de la Madeleine in Quebec. As vice president of the Rassemblement des pêcheurs et pêcheuses des côtes des Îles, or RPPCI, I want to thank you, on my behalf and on behalf of more than 200 fishers—325, in fact—for inviting us to this meeting to hear our views on the Fisheries Act in Canada. To my knowledge, this invitation is a first. Here, then, are our challenges and recommendations for the commercial fishery.

Fisheries management in Canada is about regional fairness. Over the years, commercial fishers have observed that Fisheries and Oceans Canada's enforcement of acts and regulations isn't equitable from one region to another. This perception of inequity is reflected in several aspects related to licence management and the regulation of fishing activities.

For example, the cost of a commercial lobster licence varies by region. While fishers in the Gaspésie and the Îles de la Madeleine carry out the same activities, the cost of licences differs between those two regions of Quebec. This disparity creates a sense of injustice within the Îles de la Madeleine fishing community.

In addition, the enforcement of Fisheries and Oceans Canada regulations is perceived as variable between the different regions. By way of illustration, the deployment of the e-log isn't consistent across Canada. For example, cod fishery is allowed in the fall in Newfoundland, while it remains banned in Quebec during the same period, which heightens the feeling of unfairness among Quebec fishers.

To remedy this situation, it would be desirable for Fisheries and Oceans Canada to standardize its regulations and ensure that the legislation of its own department is applied consistently and equitably for all regions of the country.

I'll now talk about reporting lost or retrieved fishing gear at sea. First, we would like to draw your attention to the requirements imposed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada regarding the reporting of lost or retrieved gear at sea by commercial fishers. This issue is of great importance to our community, as it has a direct impact on our practices and responsibilities for the sustainable management of the marine resource and on the time spent on this activity.

We call on Fisheries and Oceans Canada to be flexible in reporting lost or retrieved gear at sea. Specifically, we propose to increase the number of replacement traps allowed on board vessels during the fishing season and to extend the period allowed for the recovery of lost traps. For example, if a fisher loses eight traps, they should be able to have eight replacement traps on their boat during the recovery period.

I will now turn to the issue of the distinction between commercial and recreational or food fishery. Another area of focus for us is recreational commercial fishery. We stress the importance of distinguishing these two types of activities and highlighting their implications for commercial fishers in our region. Over the years, commercial fishers have demonstrated good practices and sound management of commercial fishery. However, we are concerned that there could be an imbalance in fish and shellfish stocks if food fishery were to be authorized by the department.

Furthermore, it would be appropriate for Fisheries and Oceans Canada to consider various avenues, such as establishing defined quotas for commercial fishers or extending the fishing season in the fall, for example for the cod fishery, for those who practise food fishery, also known as a recreational fishery.

Now I'll talk about cohabitation with right whales and gear adaptation. This issue of cohabitation with right whales is also crucial. It implies that special attention is paid to adapting fishing gear to the fishing area and the characteristics of the seabed. Equipment needs to be modified and adapted in order to reduce the risks to these marine mammals as much as possible. Practices must therefore be adapted to a specific environment in order to promote better coexistence between fishing activities and the preservation of right whales.

We propose that Fisheries and Oceans Canada adapt the regulations according to the area and the type of fishery specific to each region. For example, we fish in a migration territory to nutrition zones between June and August, while our fishing season takes place from April to July. We are right in the transition zone, which

results in closures of areas that are unnecessary and, in our opinion, too long.

• (0840)

**The Chair:** Mr. Déraspe, you're out of time. Can you wrap it up?

**Normand Déraspe:** We feel that it's very important to continue to do scientific monitoring, given climate change.

We're also asking Fisheries and Oceans Canada to provide financial support for research projects, through a program like the Quebec fisheries fund, for example, to better understand our marine environment.

Thank you.

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

[English]

That finishes our opening remarks.

We're going to move to the six-minute round of questioning, starting with Mr. Small.

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

I'd like to welcome the witnesses here today.

We have a comprehensive submission from a group of ENGOs that are mostly foreign-funded. Most of their funding comes from the United States. The list of ENGOs includes Oceans North, Oceana, the David Suzuki Foundation and the Ecology Action Centre. The list goes on. The number one recommendation these groups are putting forward is to have subsection 6.1(1) amended so that all fisheries are managed in the healthy zone.

Mr. O'Rielly, you mentioned turbot and northern shrimp. What would be the impact to these stocks of exclusively being managed in the healthy zone for your harvesters and coastal communities?

**Alastair O'Rielly:** In the case of Greenland halibut and the shrimp stocks, they are already in the healthy zone.

You will be familiar with SFA 6, off the northeast coast of the island in the southern part of Labrador. That stock was in the critical zone for some time, but fishing laws allowed it to continue at a modest level during that period, which helped sustain the fishery and maintain operations and allowed us to learn more about the status of the resource.

In the proposal you just referenced, that opportunity would not be there. It would be unduly restrictive in terms of being able to operate the fishery and sustain the communities and the people who are dependent on it.

**Clifford Small:** I understand that areas 4 and 5 shrimp are not in the healthy zone. They're both in the cautious zone. What would happen to those fisheries?

**Alastair O'Rielly:** No, actually, they are both in the healthy zone. The PA framework is going through a fairly significant and rigorous revision. The new science that's been worked on for the past couple of years has changed the arrangements of the analysis to two fishing areas, as opposed to the seven we currently have for assessment purposes.

At present, the findings of the science community are that both of these regions are in the healthy zone.

**Clifford Small:** Mr. O'Rielly, these groups like Oceana and Oceans North have consistently lobbied for the complete closure of forage fisheries. Take a species like mackerel, which is not an alpha predator but is pretty close if it consumes the larvae and the spawn of every other species. What would the impact be of the population of a species like mackerel becoming out of control? This is what we're seeing in our areas in Atlantic Canada, which I'm sure you're pretty well aware of, with your vast knowledge of the local ecosystems.

What would the impact be on cod, capelin, herring, lobster, mackerel, shrimp and so on? All spawn rises to the top of the water column and the larvae hatch there, and then the mackerel comes along in immense quantities and consumes that larvae.

What would the impact be of a stock like mackerel being out of control?

• (0845)

**Alastair O'Rielly:** You're right. That could have significant detrimental effects on a number of species.

You mentioned predator relationships. Shrimp is a species that is consumed extensively by groundfish. These ecosystems, as you all know, are very dynamic and very complicated and have been highly erratic over time in terms of shifts in biomass. We do not have the knowledge base or the expertise to have arbitrary rules, such as closures, when we determine that we're in the healthy zone or the cautious or critical zones at any particular point in time. It requires a level of engagement with industry, science and managers to take prudent and practical decisions.

What you just outlined would be arbitrary rules with little or no opportunity for industry engagement.

**Clifford Small:** This amendment, Mr. O'Rielly, to section 6.1 poses a bit of a threat to those who make their livelihoods on water. If this goes through, would we see a northern cod fishery right now?

**Alastair O'Rielly:** It's difficult to know what the implications would be, other than that they would be negative. That's for certain.

In 2019, the amendments to the fish stocks provisions attempted to bring into place a situation where the minister had to either act to ensure sustainability or explain why that wasn't being done. It sounds as though the NGO community is now wanting to go further, back to where they hoped to go in 2019, to take away discretion from the minister and force decisions that are oftentimes based on very weak, inadequate and incomplete analysis.

**Clifford Small:** I have just a quick question on the 30 by 30 marine conservation area desires of the federal Liberal government.

How would that impact you if it came to full fruition that 30% of the waters that you fish are protected and not accessible to you? Do you agree with the 30 by 30 principle?

**The Chair:** Please give a very short answer.

**Alastair O'Rielly:** The concept is okay. The practical application of it is challenging. We went through a fairly extensive process in 2017 to get the first 10% to 14% of protected areas. That was relatively straightforward. The next part would be absolutely painful and very restrictive.

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

Next, we'll be going to Mr. Morrissey for six minutes.

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

My first question will be for Mr. Campbell.

I would like, Mr. Campbell, to take it back to.... You referenced subsection 19(1) of the regulations and that the wording around that could cause problems for inshore fishers. Before I get you to respond, could you give an opinion?

Do most of the inshore owner-operator fishers arrange their affairs in a corporate structure similar to one you articulated?

**Andrew Campbell:** For the past five years, I've incorporated all fishers. Whether they be existing independent core fishers or new entrants, they would be incorporated. We are seeing more and more of them as senior fishers pass away or due to succession planning. These are the corporate structures that they are utilizing in order to do that succession planning for the next generation.

**Robert Morrissey:** If this ability to structure their affairs in this manner was questioned or removed, would that impact the transition or movement of licensing from father to son or to family members or others in the community?

**Andrew Campbell:** The amendment that I requested allows for the smoother flow of the licences from father to son, from mother to son, from brother to brother or amongst siblings in the family. It would allow a smoother transition and avoid conflict between the Income Tax Act and the Fisheries Act.

• (0850)

**Robert Morrissey:** What are the issues surrounding this if ambiguity is left in this act that could be contradicted in the Income Tax Act?

**Andrew Campbell:** The proposed amendments would avoid that ambiguity and those conflicts that are often caused between the Income Tax Act and the Fisheries Act and the regulations. It makes for a smoother transition.

**Robert Morrissey:** Could you expand a bit on what you referenced in the section? With regard to the way that DFO is interpreting this section, you indicated that there have been numerous interpretation bulletins from DFO that constantly change. Could you expand a bit on what issues that creates for the inshore fishers, the owner-operators, who may wish to structure their fishing operations in this manner?

**Andrew Campbell:** Probably 25 years ago, there was a lot of confrontation or conflict between the Income Tax Act, the Fisheries Act and the incorporations of companies. That was amended by amending the legislation to allow wholly owned corporations. Today, what is proposed is the inshore family fishing corporations, which would allow families to better structure their affairs and avoid many of the income tax ramifications that are imposed by the CRA, such as bare trusts, declarations of trust and things like that. The proposed amendments would avoid that ambiguity and allow for the distribution of the beneficial interests from the net proceeds of the fishing licences to family members, as defined in the Income Tax Act.

**Robert Morrissey:** If a new entry to the fishery could not arrange their affairs in this manner, would it impede their ability to get financing through commercial entities?

**Andrew Campbell:** Most of them who we deal with are incorporated and they are able to seek financing through the local credit union through the structure we use, but it all comes down to the independent core fisher.

**Robert Morrissey:** Okay, but if they didn't have the ability to structure in the corporate manner that is now common practice with maybe some ambiguity as it comes to CRA legislation, will that negatively impact their ability to get financing?

**Andrew Campbell:** Yes, it would negatively impact their ability to get financing.

**Robert Morrissey:** One of the tenets of the act is the protection of the owner-operator, which was a protection long sought after by inshore fishers. Does anything you're proposing take away or undermine the principle of the owner-operator?

**Andrew Campbell:** No. It's all within the legislative amendments. There's nothing that affects the owner-operator or independent core fisher or new entrant.

**Robert Morrissey:** Just to sum up, the simple amendment you're recommending would remove the possibility, in future years, of there being some question that would negatively financially impact the inshore fisher if this legislation did not clarify this particular point. Am I interpreting you correctly?

**Andrew Campbell:** It would negatively impact the fisher, the fisher's ability for succession planning and the fisher's ability to obtain financing.

**Robert Morrissey:** Thank you, Mr. Campbell.

That is my question on that, so I'm fine, Chair.

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

[*Translation*]

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

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

My questions are first for Mr. Déraspe, who is with us by video conference from the Îles de la Madeleine.

Good morning, Mr. Déraspe.

In your presentation, you talked about the issue of uniform application of the act. You mentioned a number of examples, and I'd like to hear more about them.

First, you say that the cost of a lobster fishing licence differs depending on whether you're a lobster fisher in Gaspésie or a lobster fisher in the Îles de la Madeleine.

How much is the difference?

**Normand Déraspe:** Where I'm from, we pay a little over \$800, while in Gaspésie, the cost is less than \$300. There were years in the past when catches in Gaspésie were much lower than those in the Îles de la Madeleine, so we agreed to pay a little more or to let fishers in Gaspésie pay a little less.

Today, we know that the price of lobster has gone up a lot, and we think the cost of the licence should be standardized. We wouldn't want to increase the cost in Gaspésie, but rather adjust ours.

• (0855)

**Alexis Deschênes:** I suspected that's what it was.

As far as the logbook is concerned, you say that the obligation to have a logbook is part of regulations that apply to fishers in the Îles de la Madeleine, but not to those in other areas.

Is that correct?

**Normand Déraspe:** We discussed it at length a few years ago. That was when the Rassemblement was formed. For us, it's an obligation. We checked with the other provinces on this, and we confirmed that the obligation applied only to people from the islands.

Today we've kind of accepted that, but it's still not consistent across Canada. We really wonder whether the regulations put in place by Fisheries and Oceans Canada are fair for everyone.

**Alexis Deschênes:** So Îles de la Madeleine fishers are required to use a logbook, but not their neighbours in the Maritimes.

Why is that a problem?

**Normand Déraspe:** When you're at sea, the weather isn't usually very nice. Waves rush into the cabin, soaking everything. As a result, fishers don't have time to pick up a pen and paper and keep a log. They're more concerned with fishing and catching lobsters than paperwork.

In addition, this obligation must be met before arriving at the dock and weighing the catch. The time between the end of fishing and arrival at the dock is sometimes very short. When you're battling the elements, it's really not easy.

**Alexis Deschênes:** In your opinion, the fact that other fishers in the Maritimes don't have to fill out a logbook is unfair. Why?

**Normand Déraspe:** Initially, at the local Fisheries and Oceans Canada office, we were told that it was an obligation. However, when we did some research, we realized that it wasn't an obligation for everyone. We were the only ones who had to meet that obligation.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Mr. Déraspe, I want to address one last point with you.

You talked about the cod fishery that's allowed in Newfoundland in the fall. You said that this was creating a sense of unfairness among fishers in the Îles de la Madeleine.

Could you give us a little bit of your perspective on that?

**Normand Déraspe:** Today, we buy cod that comes from Newfoundland. We fish in roughly the same waters. We go almost as far as Newfoundland. As for Newfoundland fishers, they come almost as close to the Îles de la Madeleine most of the time. They fish cod in the fall, when we can't. I don't see why. They say that cod is endangered, but if some people are allowed to fish cod for subsistence or other purposes, the regulations should be the same for everyone.

I'll give you an example. Recreational fishers are allowed to catch five cod a day. If there are 10 people on board, that's 50 cod. They have small boats, rowboats. In our case, we have commercial fishing vessels. We have to travel a certain distance at sea, 15 to 20 miles, to fish for cod in this area. There are costs associated with that, if only those associated with fuel. It's not profitable for us if we have to go that far to catch five cod.

As commercial fishers who pay for licences, we would like to have the right to go cod fishing for a day. If we're entitled to a quota of 200 pounds, we'll go fishing in that area. When we return, we would simply report our catch to Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

It's not a boat that we get out for a day of fishing, but a boat designed for commercial fishing. That's a whole other thing.

**Alexis Deschênes:** If I understand you correctly, Mr. Déraspe, when it comes to granting new fishing rights, as happened for cod, you would like a process to include all fishers in the areas adjacent to the new fishing area.

Is that correct?

**Normand Déraspe:** Yes, it would be something like that.

At the moment, it's not really accessible for fishers in the Îles de la Madeleine who engage in commercial fishing.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Déraspe.

Mr. O'Rielly, you suggested amending section 2.5 of the act. This section sets out a list of criteria that the minister may consider in making decisions. You suggested changing the word "may" to the word "must".

Did I understand correctly?

• (0900)

[English]

**Alastair O'Rielly:** Yes. Thanks for the question.

There are a number of considerations in section 2.5. They're all high level and very vague. I do not see how they are of any benefit to the minister in arriving at any decision. They're of that nature.

What we're proposing is that those core principles of adjacency, historical dependence and economic benefits be mandatory, and that the minister must require them and explain how they were applied. This does not fetter the minister's authority. The minister may make other decisions but, at least, will have to consider those core elements and advise how they were applied in each case.

[Translation]

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

[English]

That finishes the first round of questioning.

We'll start the second round with Mr. Arnold.

You have five minutes.

**Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll turn to Mr. O'Rielly again to further follow up on a previous question from Mr. Deschênes.

You mentioned that you would recommend that the principle of adjacency of access be added to the requirements. I believe I just heard you say that these are things you feel must be done, so the terminology in the legislation would be that the minister "shall consider", not "may consider". Is that correct?

**Alastair O'Rielly:** [Inaudible—Editor]

**Mel Arnold:** Okay. Would this mean that the criteria that are there would all be that the minister "shall", or should there be different sections saying what the minister "shall" consider and then another section saying what she "may" consider?

**Alastair O'Rielly:** Essentially, the proposal is that those three elements be mandatory, but on your question and the question of Mr. Deschênes, it really doesn't matter if all the others are "shall" or "may". They are of such a nature that it's really difficult to understand how they will have any influence.

They just say that you should consider this and you should consider that, but there is no specificity or clarity as to what that actually means. For the consistency in the legislation, it could be easily "shall" for everything, just so there is consistency.

**Mel Arnold:** You mentioned the rationale for a decision. Do you feel there's any transparency in the decisions on allocations? We heard recently from the DFO official who was here—I believe you mentioned this as well—that the TAC allocation process is more of an art than a science.

Do you feel there is enough transparency in those decisions, or should that also be in the act? Should we have a requirement of disclosure of rationale for decisions?

**Alastair O'Rielly:** There is no clarity right now about how these principles are applied. There's no transparency or reporting. Our request is that it be mandatory, but also that the minister be required to explain how they were applied.

We're being careful not to propose any fettering of the minister's authority. The minister can still choose to do something other than attending to any of those principles, but they must be considered, in our view. Any explanation thereafter would offer greater transparency, accountability and clarity because it would impose some process on the department and the minister to identify what those factors are, how they are applied and what weighting is assigned, etc.

**Mel Arnold:** Thank you.

I want to turn now to Mr. Campbell. You spoke about the difficulties with ownership, controlling agreements and so on. Did the changes to the legislation and the regulations that followed improve the issues we've heard about at this committee with controlling agreements and owner-operator policy?

**Andrew Campbell:** They have improved them, based on the legislative amendments. The problem with them is that there's an impediment that.... I'm mainly consulted when a husband or wife dies, and they have a fishing fleet. It's become very difficult for succession planning to move that licence over to a son or daughter, or whoever the new entrant is in the family. That's where we're having the issue.

As far as giving us a regime or structure is concerned, I think the legislative amendments did exactly what we requested in 2020, but there's a small amendment required. The problem with what DFO has stated with the structures it's proposing is that we're back to bare trusts or controlling agreements and declarations of trust, which is the wrong way to go.

● (0905)

**Mel Arnold:** Thank you. I'll stop you while I have 10 seconds left.

Would the changes that have been made on the east coast be of benefit to small harvesters on the west coast?

**Andrew Campbell:** Definitely. It's all about income tax. Either you're paying 15% income tax in a corporation, or you're paying 52% income tax individually. It would be very beneficial if their income was greater than, say, \$50,000. That's a generalization.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Arnold.

Next, we'll go to Mr. Earle.

Welcome to the committee. You have the floor for five minutes.

**Philip Earle (Labrador, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

My questions this morning will be directed toward Mr. Best and, if time permits, Monsieur Déraspe.

*Ulaakut, Garry. Atelihai.*

I'm being guided by the recommendations in the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and call to action number 92, in particular, on corporate reconciliation. I represent Labrador. The Nunatsiavut Government is in its 20th year of self-government.

I'm wondering if you could talk to this committee about corporate reconciliation in the context of the Fisheries Act. What do you see that gives you comfort that the government is serious about corporate reconciliation with indigenous peoples and setting quotas that promote and allow economic development in indigenous communities?

**Garry Best (Board Member, Northern Coalition Corporation):** *Qujannamiik*, Mr. Earle.

Thank you, Chair and committee, for allowing me to share some thoughts this morning.

I am a beneficiary of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement. I am also a member of the Northern Coalition and president and CEO of the Nunatsiavut Group of Companies. Coincidentally, I am the national chair of the Inuit Development Corporation Association. A lot of what we're talking about applies across the north route to Inuit Nunangat.

Regarding our area in particular, I would like to focus on one alarming point that is not just an irritant; it upsets a lot of local people along the coast. In shrimp fishing areas 4 and 5, which are adjacent to Nunatsiavut waters, our access is only 32% within shrimp fishing area 4 and less than 29% for shrimp fishing area 5, notwithstanding 20 years of a land claim agreement. We find that not necessarily of benefit to us. We find that's a very low share of resources adjacent to our coast and, frankly, offensive.

I do not speak on behalf of the Government of Nunatsiavut even though I'm a beneficiary. There have been many discussions with DFO over the years. Within the Nunatsiavut Group of Companies, we have nine companies that are wholly owned and majority-owned and 10 partnerships. I would say that the most connected company of all is Nuluak, which is our fishing entity. We don't have enough quota to purchase a vessel to compete with the big players, and that's problematic.

I will say that the dividends and royalties we get now we plow back into growing profitable and sustainable companies in areas that may not be as profitable, such as construction on the coast and other elements where we can support our people socio-economically speaking.

Again, while there's talk of truth and reconciliation in particular, it is a fact that we aren't getting fair access to our resources. It's certainly something we'd like folks to consider on a go-forward basis, something that's a bit more fair, a bit more just. We'd like folks to understand the adjacency principle and historical dependency as well, because they really allow for increased economic benefits to many of our coastal communities that are still suffering poverty in many respects.

*Qujannamiik.* Thanks.

● (0910)

[*Translation*]

**Philip Earle:** Mr. Déraspe, I'd like to ask you a question.

[*English*]

It relates to your earlier testimony related to fishers from the province of Newfoundland and Labrador fishing near your geographic area. I didn't quite understand that. I understand your geographic area to be in NAFO area 4R, a closed area.

Could you expand on your testimony to give us more insights into how Newfoundland and Labrador fishers are harvesting in that perceived to be closed zone?

[*Translation*]

**Normand Déraspe:** It's not really in our area, but we travel 100 to 150 miles north. They travel about the same distance in their area. If they can fish cod in their area, then we should be able to fish cod near that area.

[*English*]

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

We're going to finish our second round.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deschênes, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

Mr. O'Rielly, I want to continue my line of questioning on the proposed amendment to section 2.5. It would change just one word, but it would have a significant impact. It would further define the discretionary power of the minister, who would have to take into consideration all the principles listed in section 2.5, and there are a number of them.

Would that address the main concern that you and Mr. Best expressed, which is that new fishing quotas aren't always allocated to inshore fishers who live near the fishing area?

In particular, you said that 10% to 15% of the quota is fished by Labrador fishers, so there are fishers who come from outside the area.

Would those criteria be sufficient to protect inshore fishers?

Should a criterion be added stating that priority must be given to fishers who live near fishing areas?

[*English*]

**Alastair O'Rielly:** Thank you for the question.

I like the thought, because it depends on how one defines adjacency and historical dependence. How it's been articulated over time would suggest that, in line with your question, those living adjacent to the resource would be the primary beneficiaries. That's what we seek to achieve. Could the language be strengthened and could it be more definitive? Yes, to the extent that's necessary.

You have to strike a balance in a legislative requirement. The minister can't be completely tied and removed from any discretion in making decisions. In that context, what we propose allows for that but still accords the priority to adjacency, which ought to, over time, provide fair and equitable access and deal with the issues such as Mr. Best described, where it's 30% instead of what it should be.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Deschênes:** Mr. Best, you said that you were assigned a shrimp quota of 22% of the total allowable catch and that it wasn't enough. As I understand it, you want to increase that quota. That's normal.

What is your basis for saying that you should have a larger share of the quotas?

**Garry Best:** Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

It was actually 32% of SFA 4 and less than 29% for SFA 5. If you were to look across the region, Atlantic Canada and, indeed, both coasts, I don't think you'd see that elsewhere. Other indigenous populations have used litigation to make that point known to the Government of Canada. I don't believe the Nunatsiavut Government has gone there yet, but it certainly is impinging on our ability to plan for future investments. As I said earlier, I've had many individuals from different regions look at partnering. Everybody looks at, obviously, a quota or what could be emerging in groundfish, for example.

Unless and until we see a fair recognition, if you will, of our rights under the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement for a more fair and just pathway to achieving an equitable share of what we consider our natural and adjacent resource, then we're not going to get there, and we will not be in a position to create better and more favourable economic conditions for the people we serve. Our company is owned by the 7,000 Nunatsiavut beneficiaries, who are my stakeholders and shareholders, so we're obligated to not just operate profitable, sustainable companies. We're looking at, in this particular case, a resource that's been with us that we've harvested for years and years, way before the other foreign fleets, and we're going to be here for millennia.

That's—

• (0915)

[*Translation*]

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

Your time is up, Mr. Deschênes.

[*English*]

Given we got started a little bit late, I want to give an opportunity to both a Conservative and a Liberal to ask one question each of the witnesses before we go to the second panel.

I understand, Mr. Gunn, you're next on the list here, so I want to give you that opportunity, and then I'll give the same to a Liberal member.

**Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC):** Thank you, Chair. I have a question for Mr. O'Rielly.

Do you support the ENGO submission to change section 6.1 of the Fisheries Act to essentially close Canadian fisheries that aren't in the healthy zone?

**Alastair O'Rielly:** We haven't spent a lot of time focusing on that amendment yet, but I am quite confident in saying we do not agree that ought to be imposed at this time.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I want to give the same opportunity to a Liberal member to ask one last question before we move to the next round.

**Philip Earle:** My question is for Mr. O'Rielly.

As we look at the Fisheries Act and the changes that are forthcoming and we look at the newer harvester that will be coming into the fishery, can you talk to us a little bit, drawing on your vast experience—I know you well, and I know you have that—about what that new harvester will look like vis-à-vis what the new Fisheries Act may look like?

**Alastair O'Rielly:** Thank you for the question.

Like most sectors, we are dealing with a huge demographic challenge in the fishing industry, and we have to provide an industry environment that offers a greater level of sustainability, confidence, profitability and viability. We need predictability, security, fairness and equity in terms of access. That's not there in the current legislation, and it creates a volatile and uncertain environment, which is really not conducive to inducing and encouraging youth to participate in the industry and have confidence in their futures.

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

That will complete our first panel. I want to thank our witnesses for being here, both in person and by video conference, and for sharing their testimony. This will be very helpful as we put together our report and recommendations on the review of the Fisheries Act.

I'd like to briefly suspend while we welcome our next group of witnesses to the table.

• (0915) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (0920)

**The Chair:** I want to make a few comments for the benefit of our new witnesses.

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. Please mute yourself when you're not speaking.

[*Translation*]

For interpretation, those on Zoom have the choice, at the bottom of their screen, between floor, English or French.

For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

[*English*]

I would like to welcome our witnesses for the second panel.

[*Translation*]

We have Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci, professor at the University of Moncton. She is joining us by video conference.

[*English*]

In person, we have Mr. Jason McLinton, president, Fisheries Council of Canada; and by video conference, Mr. Colin McMillan, chair.

I know it's early, so thank you for participating.

I'd also like to welcome Ms. Kim Elmslie, the senior campaign director for Oceana Canada. She is here in person.

[*Translation*]

We're going to get started.

Each witness will have five minutes for their opening remarks.

Ms. Chadillon-Farinacci, you have the floor.

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci (Associate Professor of Criminology, University of Moncton, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you.

My name is Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci. I am an associate professor of criminology at the University of Moncton. Before becoming a professor, I worked in the policing field in analysis and intelligence, a career that has been recognized with a number of awards. I developed and tested, in real time, analytical tools that helped advance difficult investigations. Those innovations modernized the analytical practices used to support investigations, and that experience has taught me to identify courses of action in complex systems.

That interest in navigating complex rules led me to become interested in the commercial fisheries in Canada's maritime provinces, where I'm now based. Fishing structures coastal life, and it engages fishers and control officers in a complex system of rules where everyone can be a target, an offender or a steward of resources. My research aims to better understand those roles and propose fairer solutions based on dialogue between communities and authorities.

In recent years, I have studied the discrepancies in reporting of lobster-related offences between officers and citizens, the internal Fisheries and Oceans Canada exchanges on illegal elver fishing that led to the 2023 fishing season closure, and the ways fishers organize themselves when the regulatory authority is absent or discredited.

My current research suggests two ways to build trust and improve the system.

My first recommendation is to create a code of conduct for people in positions of authority with major discretionary power. Fishery officers have major powers, but there is no binding code of conduct enforced by an independent entity to regulate their work. Such a framework would clarify the officers' roles and responsibilities. It would help protect the public in the event of a breach and support officers in the performance of their duties as a way to limit the influence of external pressures.

In developing such a code and, more broadly, in managing the conservation and protection program, it's important not to simply copy police approaches, since those are ill suited to the specific realities of the work that fishery officers do.

A similar framework should also be considered for resource managers, since their discretionary power directly affects how decisions are perceived. That can undermine public confidence in the system.

My second recommendation is to clarify the rules, implement an effective reporting mechanism and tailor sanctions. The rules need to better reflect the realities on the ground. For example, theft of in-season equipment can compromise fishers' activities and contribute to illegal fishing. It isn't like stealing a lawnmower. When an offence involves both the Criminal Code and the Fisheries Act, it can cause confusion and leave situations unresolved.

In addition, implementing an appropriate reporting mechanism should enable a timely response when an offence is in progress or a situation is at risk of getting worse. A clear distinction between the roles of Fisheries and Oceans Canada officers and those of Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers is also essential to ensure an appropriate response.

Finally, some species attract more crime because of their value or conservation status. The act could recognize a special status for species vulnerable to illegal markets, which would make it possible to add a tailored sanction that would be comparable to a victim surcharge.

In closing, I would add that the Fisheries Act should provide a framework not only for resources, but also for relations. Effective legislation also depends on the legitimacy of those who enforce it, the trust of those who live with it and the clarity of the principles that guide it.

Thank you.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Professor.

[*English*]

We will now go to Mr. McLinton.

You have the floor for five minutes or less for opening remarks.

[*Translation*]

**Jason McLinton (President, Fisheries Council of Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the committee members for the opportunity to speak to this review of the Fisheries Act.

The Fisheries Council of Canada, or FCC, and its members believe that changes to the Fisheries Act are not necessary at this time. Rather, they believe that the Government of Canada should prioritize the most effective use of existing regulatory and policy tools.

FCC is the voice of the Canadian fish and seafood industry. FCC members include small, medium and large businesses, which create jobs in coastal communities and provide an economic base that supports and creates other local businesses.

[*English*]

FCC and its members do not recommend reopening the Fisheries Act at this time. New legislative and regulatory requirements would

add challenges and administrative burdens at a time when industry is already working to adapt to numerous challenges, including global market uncertainties and tariffs. The sector doesn't need additional change as it wrestles with these challenges. This includes provisions around fish stock provisions, which allow the Minister of Fisheries to tailor fish stock assessment recommendations specific to each fishery. This also includes the provisions surrounding licensing policy, which currently and correctly are adapted to meet the needs of the unique circumstances of the Pacific.

Instead of reopening the act, FCC and its members recommend, first, that the Government of Canada make the most efficient use of tools, both in regulation and policy, that are already in place to address the most critical issues facing our sector. These issues are the need for stability of access and allocation of Canada's fishing resources, as predictability and stability are key to investment and long-term growth in the fisheries sector, as it is with any sector.

Second, we are calling on the Government of Canada to work with FCC and its members on marine conservation and take socio-economic considerations into equal account to avoid the negative and completely avoidable impacts that well-intentioned but misinformed closures have on our sector.

The third is the need for the Government of Canada to conduct robust core fisheries science, which is essential for sustainable fisheries management.

There are, of course, other issues facing our sector today, including market access and tariffs, as well as the need to attract skilled labour, often in remote areas. The issues I have outlined above are most directly linked to the committee and its mandate.

In short, FCC and its members do not feel that amendments to the Fisheries Act need to be prioritized at this time, but rather that the Government of Canada should prioritize the most efficient use of existing regulatory and policy tools to address the most pressing issues facing the industry today.

Thank you once again. I would be pleased to take your questions.

• (0930)

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

To complete our opening statements, I'll hand the floor over to Ms. Elmslie for five minutes or less.

**Kim Elmslie (Senior Campaign Director, Oceana Canada):** Thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I am the senior campaign director for Oceana in Canada. Our top priority is the rebuilding of healthy fish populations and resilient fisheries. We believe the oceans are essential to help feed the nine billion people projected to be on earth by 2050.

Oceana wants the same things that a lot of people in this room want: robust, healthy, wild fisheries and all the cultural and economic benefits that come with them.

Canada's fish stocks have been severely overfished in past decades, with devastating consequences for communities. Today, only a third of Canada's fish stocks is considered healthy. We are at a turning point in fisheries management in Canada, which, if done well, can restore Canada's depleted fish populations. This can be done and achieved only by a strong Fisheries Act.

In 2019, new fish stock provisions created by this committee were added to the Fisheries Act. These new provisions, supported by regulations, required that the minister implement measures to maintain major fish stocks at sustainable levels and to develop and implement rebuilding plans when stocks fell into the critical zone.

This historic change brought Canada in line with other leading fish nations, including our biggest trade partners. We're just beginning to see the results. In the last year, 12 rebuilding plans for fish stocks in the critical zone were created and published. That is more than one-third of all critical zones.

This is proof of what is possible when policy, science and stakeholder input align, but overall, Canada's fish stocks have stagnated over the past nine years, as outlined in our fishery audit. Canada is still hovering around only 35% of fish stocks in the healthy zone. The rest are depleted below healthy levels or have an uncertain status.

To successfully rebuild the fish stocks, the government must fully implement the amendments made in 2019, combined with some additional improvements, to truly set the legal foundation for recovery.

Our first recommendation would be to end overfishing by requiring fish stocks to be managed in a healthy zone. This change provides clarity and consistency to fisheries management plans and decisions, bringing us in line with other fishing nations. It is entirely consistent with existing DFO policy and will ensure we get the maximum benefit from stocks without overfishing them to the point of collapse. Without this clarity, Canadian harvesters are missing out on the rewards of rebuilding. Since 2000, the United States has rebuilt 50 fish stocks using this approach, producing an average of 50% more revenue, as outlined in the report to Congress.

Our second recommendation is to ensure the rebuilding provisions apply to all federally managed fish stocks by setting a firm date to list all stocks. The fish stock provisions of the Fisheries Act apply to major stocks listed under regulation. This was done to allow DFO to better manage their workload. Since 2019, only 30 out of almost 200 major fish stocks have been added. This scenario creates an uneven playing field for fish harvesters where the law applies differently to different stocks. This creates confusion and mistrust in annual fisheries processes and delays the full benefits of effectively managing healthy stocks.

The third recommendation is to require accountability by DFO through an annual report to Parliament on the status and trends of all federally managed fish stocks. In most progressive fishing nations around the world, management authorities are required to report to their legislatures on the status of commercial fish stocks and the effectiveness of measures to conserve them. Notable examples are the United States, Australia and the European Union. Canada is a global laggard in this area. Canadians, including the members of this committee, have no regular and systematic access to information about the status of all federally managed fish stocks, how management decisions have been made or how scientific information and other forms of evidence have been used to support these decisions.

Finally, we request that you authorize the minister, when entering into comanagement agreements with indigenous governments, to support the pairing of indigenous knowledge systems and western-based science and decision-making. This amendment would help advance the Government of Canada's action plan on UNDRIP, which includes a requirement to respect and include indigenous knowledge systems.

More detail on these amendments is available in our brief, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

● (0935)

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

With that, we'll go into our first round of questioning, the six-minute round, starting with Mr. Small.

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

I welcome the witnesses.

Mr. McLinton, we have a very comprehensive submission here from a group of ENGOs from across Canada, many of whom receive the majority of their funding from the United States of America and individuals in that country.

Would you say that groups like this having influence on fisheries-related management decisions amounts to foreign interference in our fishing industry?

**Jason McLinton:** Thank you for your question, Mr. Small.

Given my experience working with the NGO community and now the ENGO community, both personally and from what I've observed in other areas, I have found that some of the most effective ways to effect change are when industry, NGOs and governments work together. I think there's a lot of opportunity in the fisheries space for greater collaboration in that area. I would like to see more of it so that we can come to ways to work together that actually make sense for the fishing industry. I see a lot of opportunity there.

**Clifford Small:** We have a recommendation from Oceana and others to modify subsection 6.1(1) so that basically fish stocks won't be fished unless they're in the healthy zone. Only 35% are in the healthy zone, based on the best fisheries science. Many of our species haven't been properly assessed in five, six or 10 years. Where does that leave opportunity for the people you represent in terms of accessing growing fish stocks that haven't even been recognized as now being in the healthy zone?

If you make an investment in a fishery that's in the healthy zone and all of a sudden slips out of the healthy zone and back into the lower zone, what does that do to stability in your operations?

**Jason McLinton:** I think there are two parts to that. On the first part, you hit the nail on the head when you mentioned, if I understood you correctly, the lack of core fisheries science. I've heard many times from different quarters that if something is not classified in a certain zone or something like that, then we need to do what? Stop fishing.

What we really need, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, is core fisheries science. We don't have a lot of the information we need in order to make healthy assessments.

I should maybe start by saying that our members are leaders in marine conservation and blue technology. Why is that? It's because it's the right thing to do, but it's also that their livelihoods depend entirely on that. They're very active in that area.

To your second point, Mr. Small, the lack of predictability and stability is terrible for any business. If you don't know what's happening next, how can you invest in your employees? How can you invest in new technologies? The more we have predictability and stability through stability of access and allocation and through core fisheries science, the better it is for the industry and the communities it supports.

● (0940)

**Clifford Small:** Let me ask you this quite frankly: Do you consider closing a fishery an appropriate rebuilding measure?

**Jason McLinton:** I am hearing consistently from my members, and I've seen consistently, that the most effective way to achieve our mutual objectives of a strong, healthy fishery and strong populations is through effective fisheries management.

**Clifford Small:** Thank you. Has DFO done that? After 10 years of Liberal government and seven fisheries ministers in that period of time, how effective has the management been of our fisheries in the last 10 years?

**Jason McLinton:** I'm not here to talk about the past. I'm here to talk about the present and future. I will say that I have had and our members have had great meetings with the current minister and

with officials at DFO as well as members of this committee. We're optimistic.

**Clifford Small:** I know you might not be here for that, but I'm asking you the question. Do you think the fisheries have been effectively managed, and do you see any considerable optimism going forward?

**Jason McLinton:** I'm optimistic based on the conversations we've had, including with members of this committee, that our priorities have been heard. I'm looking forward to working with you and with the current government.

**Clifford Small:** My next question is for Ms. Elmslie.

I looked at your financials. In 2024, 83% of your deferred funding came from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation out of the United States. What's the purpose of that funding? Is that funding your science program or whatnot?

**Kim Elmslie:** That funds across our campaigns.

Mr. Chair, I want to make a point of clarification on Oceana funding. I can provide our full audited financial statements. In terms of our funding, 90% comes from Canadian foundations, including Donner, Echo, RBC, Nikita, Power Corp, Mark Pathy and Sitka. We are staffed by Canadians, funded in the majority by Canadians.

**Clifford Small:** Ms. Elmslie, define the campaign. What's a campaign to you as it relates to your desire to change subsection 6.1(1)?

What's your campaign? Can you describe your campaign against the livelihoods in the Atlantic Canadian fishery that are 35% in the healthy zone? Do you want the other 35% shut down? Are you using that money to campaign against livelihoods?

**Kim Elmslie:** I want the other—

**The Chair:** Ms. Elmslie, could you give a very brief response? We are over time here.

**Kim Elmslie:** I want the other 35% to be in the healthy zone too, or trending towards the healthy zone. If we get to a point where a fishery has to be closed or there's a moratorium, that is a management failure. That is not a good place to be in.

What we're looking for is clarity in section 6.1, which is changing "sustainability" to "healthy". That would be in line with all of the existing DFO policy that is out there, which is that, when stocks are in the cautious zone approaching critical, management measures should be put in place to trend them back up towards healthy so there are more fish and more fishing.

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

Ms. Elmslie, if you'd like to submit anything else in writing after this meeting, that will be considered as part of the study.

With that, we're moving on to our next questioner.

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

[*Translation*]

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

Good morning, Ms. Chadillon-Farinacci.

Thank you for being here today. I assume you're speaking to us live from Moncton.

I'm the son of a fisherman, and I've seen the fisheries evolve over the past few years, especially the lobster fishery, which has become very lucrative. As you said earlier, we have reasons to wonder about certain regulations and certain acts. People wonder if the legislation is strict enough. Some also wonder about arrests that have been made. You said that there were two ways to improve all that.

I'd like to talk about sanctions first. When offences are committed, Fisheries and Oceans Canada currently publishes the names of individuals, the type of offence and the amount associated with it. I'm sometimes surprised to see that an offender caught catching female lobsters with eggs or catching a large quantity of another prohibited species gets a fine of only \$200.

Do you think the fine amounts set out in the act are high enough to deter those people from starting again, sometimes the next day, or from committing the same offences again?

Should the fine amounts be reviewed to make the regulations stricter? I'm thinking of licences being lost in particular.

Would that deter a lot more people from committing those offences?

• (0945)

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** Thank you for the question. It's very relevant.

Recidivism studies associate two elements with deterrence. Of course, there's the proportionality of the fine amount. It's important to ask whether the amount corresponds to the seriousness of the offence. That can be asked for all fisheries and species.

That said, the element better associated with deterring offences is the risk of getting caught. It's important to think of consequences that will influence this calculation of pros and cons. Fines can be imposed, but there are also other deterrents, such as targeted patrols. The measures to stop or arrest and fine an offender aren't always criminal in nature, but those two elements can work together.

**Serge Cormier:** In your research or in the studies that you've probably read, have you been able to determine whether there are enough fishery officers and Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, officers on the ground to make those arrests?

Are there enough resources? Should there be even more?

Fishing has become very lucrative. We're hearing more and more about how organized crime is now present in the fisheries sector. If I wanted to commit a burglary, I wouldn't go to a bank; I would go to the docks. People are saying that there are an incredible number of money-filled suitcases being exchanged there.

Ms. Chadillon-Farinacci, are you hearing about those things? Are you aware of any such situations?

Have you heard any testimony on that in your studies?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** Yes, I've read Canadian studies from the 1990s that mentioned traces of organized crime as well as situations of violence against fishery officers. This isn't new.

However, criminogenic dynamics may have become more prevalent in recent years. The profession of a fishery officer has changed. There are a number of factors that can lead to changes in the roles and responsibilities of fishery officers. That's why I proposed a recommendation to better define those roles and responsibilities and to frame the authority of fishery officers through a code of conduct.

I noticed a second thing in my studies, which was the degree of knowledge related to fisheries. Fishery officers have a good knowledge of the field. They're conservation experts.

As for RCMP officers, they sometimes lack knowledge about how fisheries work. That can lead to some explosive situations and inhibit their ability to respond. It might be good to work on that. They could be offered training, or partnerships could be created.

It's also important to clarify the roles in grey-area situations, that is to say the situations where it's unknown whether the RCMP officers or the fishery officers are supposed to intervene. Those responsibilities should be clarified in the Fisheries Act and assigned to one agency or another.

**Serge Cormier:** Is it easy for you to use the Fisheries and Oceans Canada website to access information about people who are arrested?

Can you easily access the names of those individuals and the amounts of the fines imposed on them?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** No, it's very difficult to find that kind of information online. Some of it can be found, but it's partial data, and it's only published for a short time. The data is also presented in a very administrative way. I can't use that data in my studies.

• (0950)

**Serge Cormier:** I'd like to ask one last question. It's sensitive, but I have to ask it. The committee needs answers.

When it comes to indigenous fisheries or commercial fisheries, do you find that fishery officers or RCMP officers are more reluctant to arrest members of certain groups when an offence is committed?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** I ask myself that question as well as part of my studies. Those kinds of things can be measured with data.

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

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

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

Ms. Elmslie, there was discussion earlier about section 2.5 of the Fisheries Act. It says that the minister “may”, in any decision she makes, take certain things into consideration.

We've proposed limiting the minister's discretionary power by amending section 2.5. Instead of using the verb “may”, the statement should use the verb “must” so that the minister is required to take those factors into consideration. One factor is the application of a precautionary approach.

How does your group view this idea of making it mandatory to take into account the factors set out in section 2.5?

[*English*]

**Kim Elmslie:** Yes. Now they must look at indigenous knowledge systems, so I think clarity around what that means.... How are you safeguarding that information? How are you getting that information? Yes, we do think that the minister should be required to take that in, but also more clarity needs to be provided on what happens to that information once the minister has that information.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Deschênes:** Thank you, Ms. Elmslie.

Ms. Chadillon-Farinacci, I'd like to come back to some of the questions that my colleague Mr. Cormier asked.

What do you think is the problem with enforcing the act in the fisheries sector?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** There are a number of them. The fact that fishery officers' roles and responsibilities aren't clearly defined and enforceable leaves things unclear. That can lead to officers allowing situations to deteriorate to the point where they become criminal. The file is then handed over to the RCMP. To address that kind of grey area, fishery officers' roles and responsibilities need to be better defined.

It's also important to have a look at the separation of powers. There should be a clear hierarchy of the people to whom fishery officers report. Could the officers be influenced by managers? Fishery officers should be protected from these potential influences. That could repair or improve the relationship with the communities that are likely to report offences and problematic situations.

**Alexis Deschênes:** The first observation is that the powers of fishery officers aren't necessarily clear. Several sections of the Fisheries Act address this issue, starting in section 49, entitled, “Powers of Fishery Officers and Fishery Guardians”. The various powers given to those people are listed.

What's missing from the act?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** It isn't necessarily about adding powers. In some ways, fishery officers have broader powers than RCMP officers. They can intervene without a warrant, for example.

Instead, it's important to clarify when those powers can be used and depoliticize the actions of fishery officers when they undertake

initiatives. For that to happen, it would be necessary to better define the situations in which they have an obligation, not an opportunity, to intervene.

**Alexis Deschênes:** What do you mean by “depoliticize the actions of fishery officers”?

Are there currently any fishery officers who, despite their powers under the act, won't exercise them for political reasons?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** I've presented my work to a number of fishery officers in recent years. When I invited them to speak confidentially, most of them told me that they were terrified of their employer or their managers.

I think that's an indicator that the act isn't being applied neutrally. There seems to be a connection with external interests.

• (0955)

**Alexis Deschênes:** I think what you just said is extremely important. Fishery officers said they were terrified by their superiors.

Is that correct?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** I can't name anyone in particular, but I don't think names are important. I'm talking more about the structure.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Are they afraid of being slapped on the wrist by a superior if they exercise their powers?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** Yes, that's what's been said in some cases.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Based on the various testimonies you have gathered, officers are therefore under pressure. My colleague's question concerned control over first nations people's fishing, among others.

Is the pressure only about first nations people's fishing? Is it also about fishing practices in general?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** I don't have any details on that. Until now, I haven't had the opportunity to explore everything related to the fishery officers' practices in my research.

Unfortunately, I can't provide any more details on that subject.

**Alexis Deschênes:** You did speak to fishery officers who have powers under the act. Their job is to enforce the regulations. They told you they were afraid to exercise their powers for fear of being rapped on the knuckles by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Isn't that right?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** I think there's another way of looking at this.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Did I understand what you said correctly?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** I don't have any specifics as to whose knuckles are getting rapped by whom.

**Alexis Deschênes:** I understand, but you said the officers were terrified. I want to make sure I understand what you said.

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** There is a generalized fear of hierarchical authority, but I can't tell you what level in the hierarchy creates that fear.

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

That concludes the first round of questions.

[*English*]

We're going to move into a second round, and we're going to get an almost full second round.

We'll start with Mr. Arnold for five minutes.

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

I'll carry on with Ms. Chadillon-Farinacci.

Do you feel that the current Fisheries Act and resultant regulations are sufficient for effective enforcement and for the legal system to protect the resource and local economies?

[*Translation*]

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** The Fisheries Act contains a number of elements, including the broad powers of officers, as I mentioned earlier.

That said, the question concerns the context in which those powers are exercised and the means used by officers. An assessment of support and training needs could determine whether the resources are adequate.

[*English*]

**Mel Arnold:** The legislation and regulations are there, but it's uncertain whether they're being used as effectively as they should be. Is that correct? Is that what you're saying?

[*Translation*]

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** That's correct. That's why I add the need to clearly define and identify the roles and responsibilities of officers to protect the public and to protect the officers themselves when they are exercising their powers.

[*English*]

**Mel Arnold:** Thank you.

Now I'll turn to Mr. McLinton.

When the department, DFO, fails to deliver some of the core functions such as catch monitoring and stock assessments, what are the impacts on your members?

**Jason McLinton:** Thank you, Mr. Arnold.

We need to prioritize core fisheries science. I think we're making a lot of this stuff more complicated than it needs to be, and I mean "we" collectively. Canada as a country is making this more complicated than it needs to be. We talk about things like closures, the precautionary approach and things like that, but these are backstops. When we don't have core fisheries science to know what's happening, we wouldn't even need to go to that spot. It is an absolute priority for us. We've had positive conversations with members of this committee and with the current government on that. We have to, as a country, prioritize core fisheries science.

Lack of predictability and unnecessary closures are not good for business. Just like any business, not being able to do business is not good.

**Mel Arnold:** How is the current act not doing that? What would need to be changed?

If we're reviewing the act and the core functions of the department are basically in the act, what's not working?

• (1000)

**Jason McLinton:** Now is not the time. Now is not the time to be reopening the act.

**Mel Arnold:** The act currently provides the provisions that those core functions should be done, but they're not being done.

**Jason McLinton:** The current policies, regulations and powers are in place to ensure stability of access and allocation, to prioritize core fisheries science and to partner with industry on marine conservation objectives, taking socio-economic considerations into account. We can do all of those things now.

**Mel Arnold:** I've also just picked up on a few pieces of the act where the minister can basically take—I wouldn't call them emergency measures—immediate measures to close fisheries in cases of stock concern.

Do you feel that the appropriate pieces are in place to allow the minister to also make decisions in the short term if increased or unexpected abundance of stocks returns?

**Jason McLinton:** I would actually invite, if I may, Mr. Arnold, my colleague Mr. McMillan to comment on that in terms of the immediacy of being able to be flexible based on new information.

**Mel Arnold:** Thank you.

**Colin McMillan (Council Chair, Fisheries Council of Canada):** Thank you, Jason. That's a very important topic.

I can give you a black and white example of where the science has failed us. Some years ago, the Pacific salmon fishery had MSC certification. I'm sure everyone's familiar with the Marine Stewardship Council and their work around the world certifying fisheries to the benefit of customers, heavily the European and U.K. retailers. The market has spoken. These days you must have certification in a number of markets to be successful.

Several years ago, our science was lacking, and the Marine Stewardship Certification process is relentless. The lack of science led us to have to abandon that certification. At the time, it was livable. Now, fast-forward to today's environment. Certification by some body, not necessarily Marine Stewardship, needs to be sanctioned by the GSSI-UN, the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative. Without that, we're locked out of markets.

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

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

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

Thank you to all of the witnesses.

It's very obviously quite a balancing act between preserving the fisheries and the fish in the ocean and looking after the harvesters.

I'm going to turn to Ms. Elmslie and ask the same question that Mr. Small asked of Mr. McLinton.

How effective would you say that fisheries management has been based on the act as it reads today?

**Kim Elmslie:** There are some bright spots, like the 12 new rebuilding plans for stocks in the critical zone. That is a bright spot. That is where it's working.

However, the act hasn't been fully implemented. We have approximately 200 commercial stocks and the act applies to only 30 of them. They're batching them in slowly. It's a very slow process, and if it continues at the speed it's currently going, we predict it will take about 16 years to fully batch and have the law apply to all of those stocks. That is concerning to us.

We're just coming out with our ninth fishery audit. We audit the DFO on various management measures. Again, I'll provide the audit to this group for everyone to see it when it's published. Over the nine years, we haven't seen the numbers change all that much. Things have been resorted a little, but we still have only one-third of the stocks that is healthy, while another one-third is uncertain. That gets to the science question. There are probably healthy stocks in there, but we don't know. We haven't done the science. The other one-third fits into both the cautious zone and the critical zone. Those are the depleted stocks. Those in the critical zone are really depleted. There's a range.

We haven't yet seen the change that we would like to see, with more stocks trending toward healthiness. We want to see more biomass in our oceans. We want to see more fish and more fishing.

It really comes down to the implementation and getting those stocks batched.

• (1005)

**Ernie Klassen:** On the science base that we all want—the people looking at conservation, as well as the harvesters—how would you see us improving the science that we could base these kinds of scenarios on?

**Kim Elmslie:** Most simply, it's funding. Funding is needed for science.

**Ernie Klassen:** Thank you.

Mr. McLinton, I'll ask you the same question because you also alluded to the improvement of the science these questions on are based on. How would you say the science has been used to make these kinds of decisions? How would you see us improving that?

**Jason McLinton:** I would agree with the witness here beside me. It is about funding.

Additionally, it's about prioritizing core fisheries science, because it's at the very core of the mandate of the department, but it's also at the very core of what the Fisheries Act is about and what the

Government of Canada's role is. It's a benefit to everybody in all parts of the system—harvesters, the stocks, everything. We have to prioritize core fisheries science.

**Ernie Klassen:** Thank you.

I have a question for Ms. Chadillon-Farinacci. The minister has often talked about rebuilding trust. I noticed in your opening statement that you used the same phrase—rebuilding trust—and that you said policing approaches don't work.

I've often been involved in conflict situations. I'm wondering how you see us resolving these kinds of issues, which are often in the grey zone. I think you alluded to that. Is there room for compromise? Once we tighten up the act, is there still room left to compromise or look at situations individually?

**The Chair:** Give a very brief answer, please.

[*Translation*]

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** I'm optimistic. If the act is reviewed, it will still be possible to restore that trust.

That said, it requires action as well as dialogue with not only people in the industry, but also coastal communities. They can collaborate in terms of reporting infractions. They would therefore contribute to Fisheries and Oceans Canada's mission.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deschênes, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

Ms. Chadillon-Farinacci, I'd like to come back to what you said earlier. I find your testimony quite disturbing.

I can't imagine, for example, a police officer telling me that they are reluctant to enforce the law for fear of being pressured to some extent by Public Safety Canada.

As I understand it, the idea of establishing a code of conduct would be specifically to protect fishery officers. They could refuse to give in to political pressure from their superiors, saying that they are required to act in accordance with their code of conduct.

Did I understand correctly?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** Yes, you understood correctly.

Conversely, a code of conduct could protect the public in the event of non-compliance, such as when a fishery officer refuses to carry out their duties.

The RCMP has a code of conduct enshrined in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act. They drew up a list of reasons that frame situations in which officers must exercise their powers or intervene. Failure to perform their duties is a violation of that code. In a criminal situation where the police refuse to act, there would be grounds to file a complaint. There's disciplinary action associated with that.

In summary, a code of conduct would protect both the public and fishery officers.

**Alexis Deschênes:** When you've interviewed people, you've been told that sometimes fishery officers don't respond to reports that come in.

Is that what I'm hearing you say?

• (1010)

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** Yes, that's correct.

Furthermore, these situations were presented to the committee during its studies. As a result of access to information requests, emails containing dozens and dozens of reports from fishing businesses can be consulted. They saw people engaged in illegal fishing, and they called out the apparent inaction by fishery officers. This undermines the relationship between the public and fishery officers.

**Alexis Deschênes:** I agree with that.

How do you explain them doing nothing in these cases?

Was it a directive from their superiors?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** I can't answer that. I can only observe behaviours and document them.

**Alexis Deschênes:** Okay.

According to your observations, illegal behaviour was reported several times to fishery officers, but the officers did not intervene.

Is it a lack of resources? Is it related to restricted freedom to operate?

**Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci:** An independent body could investigate complaints related to a code of conduct. It could determine whether it was failure to allocate resources or misuse of discretion by officers, in the event of a refusal to intervene, for example. That would be part of their mandate and it would be part of the code of conduct.

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

[English]

For the last two questions we'll go with four minutes, so I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Gunn for four minutes.

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

Ms. Elmslie, this is a question for you. Do you believe that it's legitimate or should be permitted for environmental or other political activist groups to launch fundraising campaigns in the United States to shut down industries here in Canada?

**Kim Elmslie:** I'm not sure I completely understand the question.

**Aaron Gunn:** Do you think it is legitimate or should be permitted for environmental or other political activist groups to launch

fundraising campaigns in the United States to shut down industries here in Canada?

**Kim Elmslie:** I think, yes. We're a global world. These are global fisheries, global oceans, global environments, so I think there are people who are looking at these issues. As far as Oceana is concerned, we have a Canadian board. We work in Canada. As I said, 90% of our funding comes from Canada. We don't campaign to shut down fisheries.

**Aaron Gunn:** You're not concerned at all about the influence of American money on environmental and other political activist groups here in Canada and the impact that American money could have on Canadian industry and Canadian jobs?

**Kim Elmslie:** Specifically to Oceana, what we're calling for is more fish and more fishing and to expand the fisheries. A fishery's collapse is a failure—

**Aaron Gunn:** You're not calling for closures at all anywhere.

**Kim Elmslie:** If a stock is in the critical zone, we call for a rebuilding plan—

**Aaron Gunn:** How about marine planning areas or underwater parks? Do you support those?

**Kim Elmslie:** Marine-protected areas, yes....

**Aaron Gunn:** Well, use whatever language you want, but those are effectively closures—are they not? They could affect fisheries that aren't in the critical zone.

**Kim Elmslie:** They're not closed to all fishing. It's to bottom contact, so there is—

**Aaron Gunn:** They're not clear. They haven't specified what they're going to be closed to. In my province of British Columbia, they're closing massive swaths of marine areas to different fisheries, including prawns, including trawl, and the fisheries that aren't deemed critical in any way whatsoever are being closed to reach an arbitrary 30-by-30 target, even though more than 30% of British Columbia's coast is already closed to fisheries.

To get back to my main point, you mentioned it's a global issue, so you don't think there's an issue with environmental groups here in Canada accepting money from the United States. Would you say the same thing for accepting money from China?

**Kim Elmslie:** I haven't seen groups that have accepted money from China.

**Aaron Gunn:** As a general principle, speaking for myself, we should all be in this together.

**Kim Elmslie:** There are groups in Canada that give money to organizations in China. There is an exchange when people see problems in different parts of the world that they want to identify. It's up to the organization where they accept their money from and to publicly report it.

When we accept our money, we publicly report everything. We're completely transparent about where our funds come from. The important thing to me is the transparency about where the money comes from.

**Aaron Gunn:** You mentioned some foundations that you received money from. Some of those foundations—I think you mentioned Donner—also have foundational arms in the United States. Can you confirm that the Canadian foundation arms don't receive money transferred from their U.S. counterparts before then giving it out to groups here in Canada?

• (1015)

**Kim Elmslie:** Ours comes from the Donner Canadian Foundation. I don't know the inner workings of Donner.

**Aaron Gunn:** You can't confirm that Donner Canada doesn't get money from—

**Kim Elmslie:** You would have to confirm with Donner how their—

**Aaron Gunn:** This is what happened when they tried to shut down the energy industry. Tides in the United States transferred huge amounts of American money to Tides Canada, and they then disbursed it to a whole bunch of environmental groups that launched a well-funded campaign to shut down Canada's oil industry and keep Canada's fossil fuels and hydrocarbons in the ground.

Do you view that as concerning at all?

**The Chair:** Ms. Elmslie, we're over time. Give a very brief response, and then we're going to our last questioner.

**Kim Elmslie:** I would like to focus on Oceana and what we work on, which is rebuilding fisheries. As we've seen, using the model that we're talking about, the United States has rebuilt 50 of their fisheries, and they are getting 50% more income. I would like to see that in Canada, and that is what we use our funding for.

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

We're going to finish with Mr. Connors for four minutes.

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

Mr. McLinton, a lot of times we hear that the core science doesn't agree among fishermen or harvesters, the Government of Canada and organizations like Oceana. Do you think that's the reality? If it is, how do we fix that?

**Jason McLinton:** Thank you, Mr. Connors.

What I have seen in my brief time with the Fisheries Council of Canada is that some of the most effective fisheries management decisions have been taken when the ministry has partnered with industry and taken industry science into account. I've seen a couple of examples of that. I believe one recently was with the Bay of Fundy herring. Our members do a lot of science. I don't know that a lot of Canadians know this, though I'm sure many of the people around

this table know this: Industry funds a lot of the science that is undertaken by the department. Why is that? It's because it's the right thing to do, but also their livelihoods depend upon good, sound science. They contribute in many instances to doing independent science.

The way I see it working best is when there's a partnership between industry and government and when government takes industry science into account.

**Paul Connors:** Thank you.

Ms. Elmslie, sometimes organizations like yours are not seen as friends to the fishing industry.

Can you give me some examples of how you have been friendly or how you've helped the industry?

**Kim Elmslie:** Sure. It is interesting, because we do sit on different advisory and assessment boards. I sit on the boards for the North Atlantic right whale. There is so much positivity and collaboration in those rooms. It's one of those areas where I think we work really well together with the fishing industry. We've found that fishing and right whales can coexist. We've been doing a lot of work on advancing ropeless gear so that fishermen can access closed areas and continue to fish and get their catch. That is one of the areas.

The other is that we put out recommendations on the different fish stocks that are there. We are transparent in that. We put that forward. Our fishery audit, in which we provide a comprehensive, transparent overview of what's happening with Canada's fish stocks and analyze all DFO data, is another way we've been able to be helpful and supportive.

**Paul Connors:** I think I have about 30 seconds left.

Mr. McLinton, in terms of core fisheries science, is there a way that can be improved from our development perspective?

• (1020)

**Jason McLinton:** I mentioned investment earlier. There seems to be a lot of agreement that the funding needs to be there and that it needs to be prioritized as an absolutely top priority of DFO and of the Government of Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Connors. That completes our second panel.

I would like to thank our witnesses for joining in person and, early in the morning, by video conference as well. Your testimony has been very helpful for the study that we're working on and the recommendations that will flow from it.

Our next meeting is going to be on Tuesday, October 28, when we're going to continue the review of the Fisheries Act.

With that, we have completed business for today. The meeting is adjourned.





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