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Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1115)

[English]

The Chair (Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.)): Colleagues, we're back. We're now in public. We can continue our consideration of the first version of the report on the review of the Fisheries Act.

As usual, the analysts may ask for clarifications to make sure they understand the requested changes as we review the report.

I see that Mr. Gunn has his hand up.

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to move that the committee proceed to the consideration of my motion regarding the production order on aquaculture.

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

Is there agreement from the committee on that?

Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): I request a recorded vote.

The Chair: Okay, we'll have a recorded division.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

The Chair: The clerk and I are going to keep a speaking list.

I'm going to start with Mr. Gunn, and then go to Mr. Cormier, who I see has his hand up.

Mr. Gunn, go ahead.

Aaron Gunn: Thank you, Chair.

We obviously brought this production order up last week. We sat here for about 40 minutes while the government filibustered it. This is a super important issue for thousands of workers in my riding and for first nations chiefs who support aquaculture.

It's not even necessarily a question about the industry itself. It's a question about transparency and about what's going to happen. Thousands of people do not know if they're going to have a job a couple of years from now and if they're going to have an income to pay their rent or their mortgage. Billions of dollars of potential investment are stalled because no one wants to invest in British Columbia.

At the end of the day, for me, this is about transparency and accountability. It's about asking for a report that the minister admitted to this committee was finished and was sitting on her desk—the minister who promised an answer in the fall, who promised an an-

swer in the winter and who promised an answer in the spring. Here we are at the end of April, and still we have no answer.

I would welcome the government providing an answer on this issue instead of reading from a report from 16 years ago. The people of this country and the people of my riding deserve a lot better.

I'd like to proceed to a vote so we can get the documents and see what they have to say. Then we can hopefully advise the department on an appropriate course of action moving forward.

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

Next on the speaking list I have Mr. Cormier.

[Translation]

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

I have a great deal of respect for my colleague Mr. Gunn, and I fully understand the concerns he has just outlined, but what I find a little bit disappointing about all this is that, in my humble opinion, he's trying to undermine years of official consultation and concrete work on aquaculture and wild salmon by requesting documents related to a report that has not yet been finalized or published—and he's likely doing this just to get a few clicks on his social media.

That's perfectly understandable, but what's disappointing about all this, once again, is that it directly undermines consultations with the industry and with first nations. These consultations have been ongoing for quite some time now.

For my part, I'd be pleased to read, for you and for those following our work, an excerpt from the draft salmon aquaculture transition plan for British Columbia and from what has been done so far regarding that plan.

The Government of Canada's salmon aquaculture transition plan for British Columbia lays out a responsible approach to transform the marine salmon aquaculture sector in B.C., while working with First Nations, workers, communities, and Canadians throughout the transition.

This Plan outlines a path forward in four key areas:

- support for First Nations, workers, and communities through this transition—which my colleague just discussed in the preamble to his motion
- identifying economic supports for the adoption of innovative and clean aquaculture technology
- milestones, principles, and criteria for the phase down of salmon open net-pen aquaculture
- management of open net-pen salmon aquaculture until the ban is fully implemented

This salmon aquaculture transition plan for British Columbia (B.C.) lays out the next steps toward a future sustainable, innovative, and thriving aquaculture sector for B.C. The Plan provides a basis for engagement with coastal communities, stakeholders, and First Nations on the transition to closed containment and other innovative aquaculture technology adoption, while collaboratively fostering development of the aquaculture sector—creating jobs, and safeguarding the environment for future generations. The Plan aims to enhance food security for Canadians by promoting the production of healthy, nutritious and local food through the use of innovative and clean technologies that generate new business opportunities for Canadians.

Innovation, as you know, is very important.

Innovation, coupled with traditional knowledge and practices, will need to be supported by strategic interventions from all levels of government working together. This will foster the growth and development of a sustainable and innovative aquaculture sector while supporting coastal communities and First Nations.

That's what my colleague mentioned earlier.

First Nations are at the core of this transition

First Nations place significant cultural importance on wild Pacific salmon and its linkages to environmental health. First Nations also highlight the need to support their rights to make decisions associated with development in their territories and to benefit from natural resource use. With respect to the Transition Plan, First Nations are united in their concerns about potential negative economic impacts on Indigenous communities and business owners as the sector transitions away from open net-pen technologies, and stress the importance of ensuring that the Transition Plan provides for collaboration, engagement and opportunities for First Nations to develop approaches that address their unique circumstances within the framework of the broader intergovernmental approach to transition.

I think you can see that this plan, once again, is intended to address some of the concerns my colleague just mentioned earlier.

The transition plan is about protecting ecosystems and wild Pacific salmon

It builds upon and nests within a broad framework of collaborative efforts to conserve and rebuild wild Pacific salmon populations. Over the past five years, the Government of Canada has invested \$686 million in the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative.

● (1120)

I did say \$686 million. By the way, I'm also very pleased that the government recently made a similar announcement regarding Atlantic salmon, aimed at restoring that population.

This year, a historic Trilateral Declaration and Accord to Address the Decline of Wild Pacific Salmon was signed, committing federal, provincial, and First Nations governments to work together on joint efforts related to wild salmon.

The Transition Plan approach brings together many perspectives and authorities to ensure and facilitate success

The transition for the salmon aquaculture sector and the broader marine economy in coastal B.C. requires all governments to work together to support First Nations and coastal communities in B.C. The Government of Canada will provide a venue for collaborative dialogue and engagement to ensure that the transition is successful.

This Transition Plan represents a transformative shift from the status quo.

Continued engagement will inform the Transition Plan implementation and provide opportunities for those most impacted by the transition to shape what is needed to achieve success.

Of course, as you know, it's probable that some groups might also share my colleague Mr. Gunn's concerns, but in the end, what we want is for all of these groups to be well informed of what's coming up for them.

Through collaboration, the Government of Canada is optimistic that innovation and dedication to environmental values will facilitate a responsible and successful transition. The Transition Plan will honour cultural values, uphold rights, mitigate economic risks, and embrace collaborative solutions. It paves the way for a transition that benefits all—both present and future generations.

A collaborative approach

As part of a whole government approach to this Plan, multiple government departments and agencies will play key roles. Consultation and engagement will be led by an interdepartmental task force, comprised of expertise from across the Government of Canada in reconciliation, economic and community development, green technology, innovation, and aquaculture management.

The Government of British Columbia will be invited to collaborate with the federal government and participate in a joint Federal-Provincial working group to review and expedite requests for new licences. First Nations will be supported in their engagement, allowing them to articulate and customize the way in which they interact with the overarching Transition Plan, based on their unique situations and experience.

Coastal communities will be engaged to discuss their participation in the whole-of-government response.

I think it's also very important that coastal communities be stakeholders in this plan.

Implementation of the Transition Plan will be cooperative, collaborative, and will ensure that all governments come together to provide strong supports for measures as outlined herein.

The approach

On June 19, 2024, the Government of Canada released a Policy Statement (statement) on the future of open net-pen salmon farming in B.C. The statement commits to the implementation of a ban on open net-pen salmon aquaculture in B.C. coastal waters by June 30, 2029. Effective immediately, it requires that new salmon aquaculture licences utilize closed containment technology.

This Transition Plan outlines next steps in the development of a responsible approach to support the transition from open net-pen salmon aquaculture to more sustainable and innovative approaches, a response which will encourage collaboration and partnerships to support long term sustainable economic opportunities in B.C. coastal communities.

What are we doing

The Transition Plan has four themes:

- support for First Nations, workers, and communities in this transition

This is very important, like my colleague Mr. Gunn mentioned.

• (1125)

identifying economic supports for the adoption of innovative and clean aquaculture technology
 milestones, principles, and criteria for the phase down of open net-pen salmon aquaculture
 management of open net-pen salmon aquaculture until the ban is fully implemented

How will we get there

Transition will be achieved through collaboration amongst federal, provincial, municipal and First Nations' governments acting together. Collectively, governments, impacted British Columbians, and First Nations in particular, will consider what supports are required for a responsible transition. This approach will enable coastal communities to plan for a successful transition and will allow First Nations to develop, tailor and implement unique transition approaches.

I think you can see clearly that the concerns raised earlier by my colleague Mr. Gunn have been taken into account in this transition plan.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to remind those listening to us and those concerned of what it is we're doing, but I move to adjourn the debate.

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

Mr. Cormier moved to adjourn the debate. It's a dilatory motion, so we have to put it to a vote.

[*English*]

Robert Morrissey: Mr. Chair, the motion is to adjourn debate on the current motion. Is that right?

The Chair: That's correct. The motion that was moved was to adjourn debate on the motion of Mr. Gunn, so we'll be voting on that. It's a dilatory motion, so it's not debatable.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

The Chair: Mr. Morrissey, go ahead.

• (1130)

Robert Morrissey: Mr. Chair, I move that we move in camera.

The Chair: That's another dilatory motion, so we will be voting on returning in camera.

Serge Cormier: Are we using the same line, Mr. Chair, for the in camera meeting?

The Chair: We first need to agree on whether we're going to do that.

Serge Cormier: Okay. I'm sorry.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0)

The Chair: We've agreed to move back in camera.

To answer Mr. Cormier's question, we will be using the same link that was used for the initial meeting.

With that, we're going to briefly suspend and then return through the initial link that was sent for the Zoom meeting. We'll resume in probably 10 minutes or so, or maybe less.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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