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Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Mr. Farrant, I'd like to thank you for appearing before our committee today. As you are no doubt aware, we're discussing the recreational fishery in Canada. We usually allow 10 minutes for our opening presentations, so I'll ask you to try to keep as close to that as possible. I'm just watching the television here because we expect there could be a vote coming. Hopefully we'll try to get your presentation in beforehand.

Any time you're ready, Mr. Farrant, please proceed.

Mr. Greg Farrant (Manager, Government Affairs and Policy, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters): I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of the committee, good morning.

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, one of the largest and oldest conservation-based organizations in the country, with 100,000 members, supporters, and subscribers, and 725 member clubs across the province of Ontario, thank you for the courtesy of inviting me to appear here today.

More than 87 years ago our federation was founded by an alliance of community-based fishing groups concerned about conservation of the resource. Since 1928 the OFAH has participated in all things related to fish and fisheries in Ontario, from restoring its species and their habitats, to advocating on behalf of recreational anglers. Recreational fishing, along with hunting and trapping, are heritage activities and recognized as such in Canada through pieces of federal, provincial, and territorial legislation.

At its beginning, Canada was a staples economy based on fishing, hunting, trapping, and forestry. Participating in these activities defined the country, and it continues to make a critical contribution to the ecological, social, cultural, and economic fabric of our country today. Participation in these activities continues to grow, and the opportunity for future growth is unparalleled.

According to the 2012 Canadian Nature Survey, roughly 21%—or 7.5 million—of Canadians fish, which is more than those who play golf and hockey combined. The number does not include those under 18 and over 65, who in jurisdictions like Ontario do not have to purchase a licence. Almost 300,000 more Canadians bought a fishing licence in 2010 than they did in 2005, an increase of 11.3%.

In 2014-15, for Ontario alone, the number of recreational fishing licences purchased by Canadians was just shy of one million.

According to the most recent figures published by DFO, recreational fishing by itself contributes \$8.3 billion annually to the economy. To put this into context, angler expenditures in 2010 were almost one and a half times the total sales for Tim Hortons in Canada. Angler expenditures consistently rival the amount spent on beer across this country, and in 2010, spending by recreational anglers was one and a half times the GDP of Prince Edward Island.

Fishing, hunting, and trapping generate economic prosperity. The purchase of goods and services associated with these activities impact on many sectors of the economy. This has prompted major retailers like Canadian Tire to invest over \$10 million in expanding their fishing and hunting sections in 170 stores across the country.

For many communities this economic contribution keeps them afloat in hard times. In most jurisdictions the millions of dollars generated by licence and permit sales support conservation programs and projects either through vehicles such as the habitat conservation fund in B.C.; the fish and wildlife development fund in Saskatchewan; or through mechanisms like the special purpose account in Ontario, where licence sales contribute over \$70 million annually, which is two-thirds of the entire fish and wildlife budget for the province.

Recreational fishing also has an enormous upside in terms of tourism-related opportunities. In a 2012 study entitled "Sport Fishing and Game Hunting in Canada", by the Canadian Tourism Commission, they examined the recreational activities and travel habits of Americans. Recreational fishing and hunting tourism alone injects over \$1 billion annually into the economy, provides job opportunities, and supports hundreds of small and medium-sized businesses from coast to coast to coast.

Not surprisingly, it turns out that U.S. tourists have a huge upside when it comes to recreational fishing. For the period 2004-05, 32.1 million Americans took extended fishing trips, with almost six million of them coming to this country, where they also participated in a number of other outdoor activities. In Ontario alone, this translated into the purchase of 432,947 recreational fishing licences. Clearly, Americans recognize what we already know, that this country is home to some of the best outdoor opportunities available anywhere.

This in turn opens the door for significant revenue generation and employment opportunities for a wide range of businesses and communities across the country that cater to the outdoor community, if marketed and supported properly.

Recreational anglers are among the leaders in conserving our natural resources. In fact, they, along with hunters and trappers, were among the first recognized conservationists in North America. At a time when commercialization of fish and wildlife was destroying species at an unprecedented rate in the late 1800s, anglers and their outdoor partners demanded that governments take action. They threw their support behind leaders like Laurier and Roosevelt who viewed conservation not only as a matter of national concern, but as a matter of national relevance.

Anglers, hunters, and trappers sought to improve the worth of the two countries and recognized that prudent, wise use of natural resources and the conservation of fish and wildlife were signatures of progressive leadership. Their initiatives formed the basis for conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources in North America, and resulted in the creation of government fish and wildlife management standards, creel and bag limits, professional academic training, and public ownership of natural resources. It also led to the creation of the North American model for wildlife conservation that continues to govern the management of our resources to this day.

Organizations that represent recreational anglers and others are at the forefront of conservation in Canada. Take, for instance, my own organization. Over the last 20 years, the OFAH has been engaged in the restoration of several species, including Atlantic salmon. Our invasive species program is the largest non-governmental program of its kind in Canada, and works with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, DFO, and Environment Canada to prevent or control the spread of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.

Our classroom hatchery program, which is in 125 schools across southern Ontario, including five at the Toronto Zoo, teaches kids about fish habitat and how important it is to preserve and protect our resources. Our community hatchery program, which we deliver on behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources, provides funding for 41 of 50 volunteer hatcheries, involving 900 volunteers who spent 70,000 person hours in 2014 stocking 9.5 million fish into Ontario's public waters. Similar restoration programs are undertaken by every one of our affiliates and other organizations across the country.

In 2012, the OFAH, along with our colleagues at a number of the largest conservation-based organizations in both Canada and the U. S., hosted the National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Congress. It brought together 500 scientists; academics; federal, state, and provincial government representatives from major ministries and departments; conservation groups; and others who attended four days of seminars and presentations touching on every aspect of fish and wildlife conservation.

The results of that congress are still being acted upon today, including through the hunting and angling advisory panel, which was established shortly after. The panel includes the 25 largest conservation-based organizations in Canada and reports to the Minister of the Environment, who, along with her counterpart at Fisheries and Oceans, chairs the meeting. It acts as a sounding board for government policies and programs impacting upon fish and

wildlife, and makes recommendations that focus on conservation and biodiversity, among other issues. Representatives of the HAAP also recently appeared before a meeting of the federal-provincial-territorial environmental ministers to speak on some of the issues before this committee.

I want to speak briefly about the role of science. The role of scientific research in fish and wildlife management is paramount. One of the major tenets of the North American model is the use of science as the basis of management decisions impacting on fish and wildlife. Policy-makers must integrate the best available scientific data with social and economic factors when developing policy. This requires collaboration between scientists and policy-makers like yourselves. Get the science right first then discuss the political and policy implications.

Governments at all levels, and of all political stripes, like to say that they are for science-based decision-making when it comes to natural resources, until the consensus leads to a politically inconvenient conclusion. Then governments resort to a backup plan based more upon popular opinion and emotion rather than science and facts. The management of natural resources is a highly dynamic and chaotic system, where science can provide the best possible basis for public policy.

For hundreds of years, Canada's fisheries have supported commercial and subsistence fisheries that were the building blocks of this country. For the large majority of anglers, we no longer fish to live, but still live to fish. For many, fishing may no longer be a matter of subsistence, but rather an escape from the busyness of life, enjoying time in the outdoors or spending time with family and friends. Whatever the reasons, recreational fishing improves the quality of life for millions of Canadians.

Like any industry, recreational fishing requires ongoing investment, support, and promotion to reach its potential. At the OFAH, we take this seriously and continue to invest in the future of fishing through our curriculum-based education programs: our "Get Outdoors" youth conservation and leadership initiatives, the OFAH-Ontario Power Generation tackle share program, classroom hatcheries, Ontario family fishing events, and new Canadian days where we seek to introduce new residents of Canada to the joys of fishing.

Fish and wildlife do not exist in a vacuum, nor do they occur and thrive by accident. The recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program is an excellent example of how the Government of Canada has invested in recreational fishing. We would like to see this program continue and expand. It is an investment in fisheries habitat, an investment in community groups and volunteers who champion local conservation initiatives, and evidence that the federal government recognizes the enormous value of recreational fishing in Canada.

• (1115)

The promotion of recreational fishing is an investment in our future and a recognition of what recreational fishing has meant in terms of our national identity, our cultural heritage, and our economic wealth.

Given the fact that anglers, like hunters and trappers, put their money where their mouth is when it comes to on-the-ground conservation of our resources, I'm pleased that this committee has taken the time to look at this important issue.

Once again, Mr. Chair, I wish to thank you and the members of the committee for inviting us to appear this morning. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Farrant. We appreciate your presentation and appreciate your delivery in a very timely fashion. Thank you.

We'll start with a 10-minute round, with Mr. Chisholm leading off with questions.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Thank you very much to the witness for appearing and for your presentation. It's an important organization that does important work in the province of Ontario, there's no doubt about it.

Of your apparently—is it 100,000 members?

Mr. Greg Farrant: That's correct.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: How many would be...or do you distinguish between hunters and anglers?

Mr. Greg Farrant: We don't distinguish, but if I were to take an educated guess, I would say that three-quarters of them are anglers first, hunters second.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Are the anglers more concentrated around the Great Lakes?

Mr. Greg Farrant: No.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Not necessarily.

Mr. Greg Farrant: No, not necessarily at all. They are both urban, rural, north, south—they are all over the province.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: What kind of budget does your organization have annually?

• (1120)

Mr. Greg Farrant: It's \$12 million.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Where does that money come from?

Mr. Greg Farrant: Money comes from our membership. It comes also from funding for various programs from government and private sources, but primarily from membership.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: One thing happening in the province I'm from, for example, Nova Scotia—and I believe it happens elsewhere—is that DFO has the power to require offsetting for damage to fish habitat.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Yes.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: It used to be in the ratio of 3:1. It's now down to about, in some cases 1:1 and maybe as much as 2:1. It's seen as a really important avenue for conservation, for those groups that are involved in containing the damage from development of rivers and streams and lakes.

Is your organization experiencing the same kinds of issues, in terms of those offsets?

Mr. Greg Farrant: We have 17 biologists on staff for fish, wildlife, land use, etc., who are better able to speak to that. It's not an issue that comes up with us very often, to be quite frank.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Okay.

Mr. Greg Farrant: I would be more than happy, though, to get you more information on that by speaking to staff and I would certainly provide it to you after the fact.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: That would be great. I would be interested in it, because I know that in the past it has been an important source of revenue for organizations that are doing conservation work.

I was interested in the point you made in your presentation about science. "Governments at all levels, and of all political stripes, like to say that they are for science-based decision-making when it comes to"—

The Chair: Mr. Chisholm, I have to interrupt you at this point in time. There has been a vote called in the House.

We'll suspend here now, and we'll return—

Mr. Robert Chisholm: I'll come back at that one.

The Chair: —after the vote.

• (1120)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1210)

The Chair: All right, I'll call this meeting back to order.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your patience.

Mr. Kristianson, I believe you're going to start off with a presentation, and then Mr. Bird, you're going to finish out the time allotted.

Anytime you're ready and you want to proceed, please, the floor is yours.

Dr. Gerald Kristianson (Chair, Sport Fishing Advisory Board): Fine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

It's our pleasure to be here. I'm here in my capacity as chair of what's called the sport fishing advisory board in British Columbia, which is an official advisory body to Fisheries and Oceans Canada composed of both local members and organizational members, one of which is the Sport Fishing Institute, which represents the service providers to the recreational sector, such as lodges, resorts, tackle manufacturers, and so forth.

I should prop that in biographical terms. I'm a political scientist by training and was a sometime diplomat, sometime lobbyist, but I carry a business card that says— and some of you know this —“Gerry Kristianson, fisheries politician”. Since I retired from active business life 20 years ago, I've devoted my time almost exclusively to fisheries issues. I chose my title, because I believe being a politician is an honourable thing, despite what criticism there may be. While I have had some partisan activity in the past, my life is all about fisheries. At this point in my life, people who do the right things for fisheries have my support, so that's the capacity in which I'm here, and delighted to be so.

My last appearance before a fisheries committee was in a much more adversarial situation where recreational and commercial fishermen were fighting with each other, and the committee, I have to say, was almost entirely composed of members of Parliament who were only interested in commercial fishing. I'm delighted that this committee has undertaken this look at recreational fishing.

As an introductory statement, I thought it would be helpful just to refer, from our context, to the four key elements that are part of the charge of the committee. First is the economic and cultural context, of course. In the context of British Columbia, particularly the tidal fishery but also the freshwater fishery are enormously important. If you Google my name, you'll find a link to a study called “The Evolution of Recreational Salmon Fishing in British Columbia”, which I prepared for the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, and it actually does give a comprehensive look at the history.

The very first Europeans arriving in British Columbia were amazed at the fact that you could go out and catch fish for dinner, although the British were distressed that the salmon didn't take a fly like the Atlantic salmon did. We've since shown that's not true, but it is key to the British Columbia environment. The recreational fishery in British Columbia accounts for 40% of the gross domestic product value of all fisheries in British Columbia, including aquaculture. Based on 10% of the salmon harvest and 15% of the halibut harvest, we account for 40% of all the economic value of fisheries. I think that speaks for itself in importance.

In terms of participation, I'm here representing 300,000 tidal water anglers, who each year buy licences to go fishing. I don't represent the freshwater anglers directly, but there is another equally large number of people interested in recreational fishing. In our case, the SFAB, I represent 24 local committees and two regional committees, and a main board. We have a bottom-up process by which we give advice to government on the importance and needs of the recreational fishery.

In terms of management of fish stocks, which is another of the items you've highlighted, I have to say in our case, because the department is often maligned, the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans deserves a gold star for its consultation process on the west coast. The reality is that within the sport fishing advisory board process, but also the commercial, and a series of other bodies like the integrated harvest planning committee, the halibut advisory board, no angler, commercial fisherman, or environmentalist can complain that they don't have an opportunity for consultation with DFO. Does everybody get what they want? Of course, not. But the fact is that it is a process that is well established and has worked under different governments, continues to work, and it is one that I applaud in my capacity.

I should add the SFAB is entirely a voluntary process; none of us are compensated for what we do. We get expenses covered when we travel to meetings and so forth, but we volunteer our time because we believe in the recreational fishery.

●(1215)

On the final of the four points in the charge of the committee, the potential to improve recreational fishing, I wanted to highlight an issue that I would hope your committee will embrace and include in your report. The fishery in British Columbia, between ourselves, Fisheries and Oceans, and the provincial government, developed a recreational fisheries vision. I have a copy of the document here. It's in both official languages and it's a DFO document. The copy I have is only in English but you can obtain it in both languages. It's called “Guiding a collaborative vision: a vibrant & sustainable recreational fishery in BC”. We think it's a landmark agreement between private interests and government on what recreational fishing is all about. The challenge, of course, is to turn a policy document into reality.

We have, as of late January, presented to Minister Shea what we're calling the recreational fisheries vision implementation initiative. It's a request to the department for dedicated program development to advance recreational fisheries in the west coast context. We've costed it at about \$2.5 million per year for five years. We think it would add dramatically to the value, the involvement, all of the things that make the recreational fishery important. Again, because I was only invited to appear before the committee late last week, I do not have the document in both official languages but it's an official document in the sense that it's part of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' files. I will leave a my copy in English with the committee to deal with as it wishes.

Our hope was, frankly, to have this program approved by government in the near term. It has costs associated with it, but I have to tell you that we have suggested that we think the recreational fishing licence in British Columbia, the tidal water licence, is highly undervalued. I should tell you that as a senior citizen for \$17.85 a year I get access to all of the marine resources of tidal waters in British Columbia. It's the best bargain anyone could ever hope for. Owen pays more because he has to pay \$28 because he's not a senior citizen, but we think that anglers are actually prepared to help share these costs with government. We think that's the right approach.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to move forward much on that because of something that many may be aware of called the User Fees Act. The User Fees Act was a private member's bill but it's the adopted law of Canada and has become an impediment to changing user fees. It's frustrating to us that we want to have our participants pay more for the benefits they get from the things they harvest from the ocean but we haven't been able to move there.

I'll leave you with that. We think that it would be—if this committee were to give its support to the initiative—a big boost in making sure that this particular direction moves forward in the near future.

With that I'll turn the microphone over to Owen, who is the executive director of the Sport Fishing Institute.

● (1220)

Mr. Owen Bird (Executive Director, Sport Fishing Institute of British Columbia): Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak to the committee. I will be brief, as I think Gerry covered it fairly concisely. I'll just add a couple of points regarding the genesis of the initiative, the proposal that Gerry and the SFAB have put forward and that we're optimistic will be accepted.

It's a creation not only of our trying to see how we can elevate licence prices in order to help facilitate work that is, as we understand from working with DFO collaboratively over the years, not quite desperately required but I'd say critically required to ensure that we can carry on with a sustainable recreational fishery, particularly in tidal waters. A number of programs that are operating now provide really excellent information about the recreational fishery regarding catch monitoring, the collection of data about recreational catch.

As it stands now, we aren't able, and DFO isn't able, to do everything that's required to paint a good picture of recreational fishing in B.C. We have some excellent information, some good historical information, but it could be improved upon. This could help enhance the opportunities that are available to the recreational fishery. It would also help defray any objection from other sectors that may believe we are harvesting more fish than we believe we are.

We have a very diverse and rich history of fisheries in B.C., in tidal waters particularly. We keep saying, as Gerry pointed out, that a very active freshwater community enjoys very significant benefits in terms of the B.C. economy, but we're talking about salt water here. What we're keen to do here in a lot of respects is to make clear the social and economic benefits of recreational fisheries—not to say that they are greater than commercial or first nations interests in fisheries in B.C., but just to treat them in a commensurate fashion. The funding dedicated to recreational fisheries management is very low in comparison with what's provided to commercial and first nations fisheries. The hope here is to not only have the strategy approved and to move forward and provide the funding, but also, as I said, to point out the values, both social and economic, and to allow us to do the things we can do to enhance and just provide better opportunities for recreational fishing in British Columbia.

I think I'll leave it at that.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bird and Mr. Kristianson.

We'll go to a 10-minute round, starting with Mr. Chisholm.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much, folks, for being here, the three of you. As a member of this committee, I can't tell you how disappointed I am that this hearing has been interrupted and that we're not going to have as much time as we need to discuss the important work that you and your organizations do in your respective jurisdictions.

I asked a couple of questions of Mr. Farrant and I left off with one, but I'm going to leave it unanswered, because I only have a couple of minutes and I'm going to try to squeeze in my colleagues here for questions.

Mr. Kristianson, you mentioned that the last time you were before the committee there was a huge tussle going on between the commercial and the recreational fishery over quota allocation.

What I'd like to say is that I don't think there's any member on this committee who doesn't recognize what an important place the recreational fishery has. You've already talked about its economic value being 40%; however, we have to find a way to have discussions to sort out how best to allocate the resource. I would very much like to see those happen more often.

I want to ask you, though, a question about something that's happening in other jurisdictions around habitat protection and restoration. DFO has the authority to impose offsets when there is damage to fish habitat as a result of development, whether from culverts or other types of developments, in rivers in particular and on the coastline. In some jurisdictions, their tenacity in enforcing that authority has dropped. The offset used to be 3:1, and it has now dropped down to 1:1 in many cases.

It's an incredibly important source of funding for some organizations to help repair damage done to fish habitat.

I'd like your comment on that, Mr. Bird and Mr. Kristianson, from your experience in British Columbia.

Dr. Gerald Kristianson: Thank you.

I have to say at the outset that I'm not an expert on that side of the fishery; however, I am of course very familiar with the "no net loss" policy of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I've been involved in a couple of projects—one in particular—to try to prove out closed-containment salmon farming, a successful project helped by government. I vividly remember that we had to spend a lot of money replanting eelgrass so that the shadow cast by our device was not reducing the productivity of the seabed.

Obviously, I support that approach to things. I think you need to do that, but I have to confess that I can't speak with any authority. In our case, the people who could best answer that sort of question would be someone from the Pacific Salmon Foundation, for example, which, funded by money from the licence fee—in this case, the salmon stamp part of the licence fee—undertakes rehabilitation projects in cooperation with government and private people.

● (1230)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Thank you.

Does Mr. Bird have anything specifically to add on that?

Mr. Owen Bird: I don't think I could add. I think the Pacific Salmon Foundation is probably a good suggestion.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: I'll ask Mr. Cleary to...

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Welcome to our witnesses. I have two questions. I'm going to put them both out there and then I'll leave it, because I'm going to move on to my counterpart here. We have only limited time.

The first question is for Mr. Farrant.

You mentioned in your opening remarks, Mr. Farrant, an 11.3% increase in fishing licences in Ontario between 2005 and 2010. In other words, 300,000 more Canadians were fishing over that period of time. That would create, I should think, an increased pressure on recreational fish stocks—that, combined with politics. Science is one thing, but often, as you point out in your remarks, the politics overrides the science.

When you combine the increased pressure on the stock with politics overriding science, basically, where does that leave the stocks and fear for how well they're doing? Maybe both groups could answer that.

The other question I have is for you, Mr. Kristianson.

I'm from Newfoundland and Labrador. When it comes to our recreational cod fishery, for example, also known as the food fishery, there are no licences. You're not charged. There are limitations—five fish a day and that sort of thing—but no charge.

Can you elaborate on how the \$17 fishing licence works and what stocks it covers—what fish you can fish with it? Is it good for the whole season? Is there a catch limit? I'm asking about those sorts of things.

Thank you.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Thank you for the question; I appreciate it. I'll address your first part, obviously.

Sure, you would think that increasing the number of recreational anglers would, quid pro quo, put pressure on the resources. Obviously fish and wildlife management are managed on the basis of science, on the basis of populations and of a whole bunch of complicated factors that biologists at the Ministry of Natural Resources undertake to manage in every one of those resources.

What our problem is in Ontario—and I'll speak specifically to Ontario—is that we see a tendency, in terms of both fishing and hunting, for the government's answer concerning regulating the sustainable use of any particular species to be always to look at the recreational sector. When a species becomes a little bit dodgy, the first thing they do is cut tags, quotas, licences for recreational fishing or recreational hunting.

This is going on in Ontario on both fronts right now. On Lake Nipissing, which is one of the biggest tourism walleye fisheries in Canada, the recreational tags have been cut back so that people now are down to two fish, and the slot sizes are so ridiculous—

Mr. Ryan Cleary: I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Farrant, but that's not the question I asked. I appreciate the point you're making about going after quota cuts between recreational and commercial

fisherman; I understand that. But my question concerns the delicate balance between science and the politics—the decision-making—and whether or not there is a fear, at the end of the day, for the state of the stock.

Mr. Greg Farrant: Well, the politics dictates that recreational anglers are the targets. The politics does not dictate that commercial fishing—in particular unregulated commercial harvest—is a target in Ontario. That's where the pressure on the resource is, and that's a political decision that governments are unwilling to take thus far.

● (1235)

Dr. Gerald Kristianson: Let me offer a brief comment on that side of things. The way we try to deal in British Columbia with those issues is that—again, in tribute to DFO—the consultative process.... Last week I was in a process aimed at rehabilitating chinook salmon in southern British Columbia. I was there alongside representatives of the commercial sector and representatives of the environmental sector, and decisions generally were being reached by consensus in an effort to ensure that you're not playing off the interests of the total fish against the interests of individual groups of harvesters.

It's the same as with the mention of quota earlier. These adversarial quota fights aren't happening in British Columbia, with one exception that I can come back to later. Recently, because we went through a period when we developed, in the case of salmon, an allocation policy—which all of us signed off on, literally—we negotiated an agreement such that recreational and commercial fisherman felt they were getting their fair share, from the way in which the fish were being allocated.

On the second part of the question—limits—you pay for your annual tidal waters licence. That gives you access to tidal waters for a 12-month period commencing April 1—it's the government's fiscal year. You can then fish for all of the species that are available for harvest. The limits you can take are carefully dictated. In chinook salmon, it's a maximum of two a day, and four in your total possession—

Mr. Ryan Cleary: That's fishing from the shore, is it, sir?

Dr. Gerald Kristianson: This is fishing in tidal waters, either from a boat or from shore.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: What's the definition of tidal waters?

Dr. Gerald Kristianson: The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, in the British Columbia case, regulates only fisheries in tidal waters. That is where the tide affects it, so it's in the ocean plus the Fraser River up to the point where salt water meets fresh water and the rise and fall of the tide. The federal government gave British Columbia the jurisdiction over the fisheries in fresh water.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: So for a \$17 licence you can fish for 12 months.

Dr. Gerald Kristianson: Absolutely. You may not be able to keep all species for 12 months. In the case of halibut our allocation of 15% has meant that we've actually reduced what individuals can keep at a limit of six halibut per year, for example, in order to ensure that the fishery does stay open all year without exceeding our quota allocation.

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

Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Thank you.

The numbers for British Columbia tidewater fisheries are truly remarkable. You only harvest 10% of the salmon, yet you're 49% of the GDP created from all fisheries. I think that's a remarkable number. I can see your point about governments needing to pay more attention, the federal government especially, to the recreational fishing. I hope you're taking the fact that this committee is undertaking the very first study of recreational fishing ever to mean that the process has begun in a very serious way.

I'd like to ask both Ontario and B.C., what is your wish list from the federal government in terms of programming for recreational fishing? What do you want to see out there on the ground for actual programming?

Mr. Farrant.

Mr. Greg Farrant: In a word, the continuation of the recreational conservation partnerships program. As I said in my remarks, it's been an overwhelming success. It allows hundreds of on-the-ground projects to be done in local communities across this country, from coast to coast to coast. Expansion, enhancement, and permanency of that program would be our ideal situation.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay.

Mr. Kristianson.

Dr. Gerald Kristianson: In our case, our immediate and urgent need is for the program that we have put to the government for the implementation of the vision that we've all agreed to. This would mean that we would have more resources to make sure that we pass the red-face test on catch monitoring; to make sure that where additional hatchery activity with chinook and coho can take place, that money is available for it and that we're sharing in that; and to continue the consultative process.

I don't want to belabour this but the fact is that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans spends a lot of money on consulting and that's important to us and we want to be able to ensure that consultation continues to take place. We don't want to be in the situation where we're not part of the game. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, but at least you're being listened to. Frankly I would hope that in the future the House of Commons fisheries committee continues to be interested in recreational fishing.

• (1240)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I had the pleasure this last August of visiting Vancouver Island and I fly-fished for some of your salmon. I was taken on a couple of tours by the Pacific Salmon Foundation of your habitat enhancement projects, primarily coho nursery areas and that Oyster River enhancement project. I met with the club there. Is that the kind of programming that you would like to see significantly expanded in B.C.?

Mr. Owen Bird: Absolutely. Not at the expense of some of the things that Gerry has mentioned, but yes absolutely, in part with these activities. I want to emphasize that from this strategy we hope to have more resources to dedicate to catch monitoring and ultimately to awareness for both DFO and anglers alike. Those would be the main objectives.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Regarding Mr. Farrant's comments about the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program, I think Quebec, Ontario, and B.C. were the largest recipients of those funds and had the most projects. I found it extremely impressive.

Mr. Farrant, there's a lot of talk about the environment in the last little while, but only now are the anglers and hunters finally getting their due in terms of credit for their conservation activities. I'd like to think that our government is responsible in part because of the respect that we pay to this particular community. I'm chair of the Conservative hunting and angling caucus. It's the only one of its kind in any government.

Why is it in the past, Mr. Farrant, that the immense contributions to environmental conservation by the angling and hunting community have been so undervalued in light of the tremendous contributions that community has made?

Mr. Greg Farrant: Unfortunately those activities are generally in large part—and when I say this I mean by all political parties—undervalued in terms of seeing them as economic drivers.

The immense reach of fishing, hunting, and related industries across this country, from some of the figures I indicated during my speech, bring billions of dollars a year to this economy, yet they are marginalized quite often and seen as frivolous activities or activities undertaken by a small cadre of people. Well 7.5 million people fishing is not small. If you add hunting, fishing, trapping, and outfitting together it's \$15.2 billion to the annual economy. That is not chump change, excuse the expression.

In particular in urban centres they're seen as peripheral activities that are engaged upon by people out there, but the fact is that in large part people who hunt and fish in this country live in urban centres.

Most people who moose hunt for instance in northern Ontario live south of the French River. They live in places like Toronto, London, Ottawa, and places like that. They're judges, lawyers, and politicians and they come from all walks of life. They live in a lot of large urban centres, but it's always identified as an out there rural type of activity and not taken seriously.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Right. I couldn't agree more.

Mr. Bird, the other fishery...you know there's the commercial, recreation, and of course there's the aboriginal fishery. I'm curious, are aboriginal people becoming engaged with the recreational fishery through investing in lodges, employees, and so on?

Are we seeing a greater participation by the aboriginal community in this activity?

Mr. Owen Bird: Yes, absolutely.

There's definitely an acknowledgement by the community at large. I would generalize there's tremendous opportunity for smaller communities, coastal communities, and that sort of thing.

Yes, we are seeing first nations becoming involved in both a local manner and investing in lodge operations and that sort of thing. That is a nice bit of cooperative collaborative activity that's occurring and an opportunity being presented.

• (1245)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Farrant, when I was at your convention last week I was astonished to hear that 60% of the recreational fish that are caught are released. One of your researchers pointed that out and that amounts to a 100 million fish being released every year in Canada. As an angler myself I'm proud of our community for that kind of conservation ethic.

Can you talk about the history of catch and release from where it was 20 or 30 years ago? How did it happen that now we have an angling community that is ferociously concerned about conservation to the level that they release most of the fish that they catch?

Mr. Greg Farrant: I don't think that it's any surprise that anglers, and particularly in this case recreational anglers, are any strangers to environmental causes or any strangers to conservation of the resource. That's been the case for well over a century.

At the Ministry of Natural Resources in Ontario we now have two forms of licensing. We have a sport fishing licence and we have a conservation fishing licence, which we strongly support. With the conservation fishing licence you take less, you put back more, and it's something that anglers and hunters strongly supported and pushed for. We recognize that the resources are finite. There is a limit to it and as conservationists we want to make sure that resource is sustainable today and for the future.

That's why catch and release has become such a growing phenomenon, if you want to call it that, because everybody recognizes that if you want those species there for the future you better start protecting them now.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I think you make a very important point, Mr. Farrant, that with angling and hunting there is often an artificial rural-urban split. I read somewhere that of the 922,000 angling licenses that are sold in Ontario, give or take, about 40% of them are sold in the GTA. It always bothers me when angling and hunting are referred to as rural activities.

They are because much of it takes place out there but many people live in cities. The term recreation can be broken down to "recreation" and so people get out there to re-create themselves.

Can you talk about OFAH's urban affiliates and chapters, how many you have in the GTA, and how active they are?

Mr. Greg Farrant: I can't tell you the exact number, but one of the most prolific organizations or clubs that is part of OFAH is the Chinese Anglers Association in Toronto. It's based in Toronto. All its members are in Toronto, and it is an enormous organization. It's very vocal and active, and it's very proud of being an OFAH affiliate. Obviously this brings into the sphere new Canadians. It brings new cultures into recreational fishing and we're very proud of its success.

Organizations like that exist in most municipalities across southern Ontario. That's just one in particular that I cite as being a great success in terms of recreational fishing and its contribution to the field.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I welcome the witnesses to committee.

I must say I'm very pleased we were able to convince the government of the importance of this study, because I think it's very important. The big thing was to get it off the ground but we finally got it off the ground.

It's great that you're here, but it's unfortunate that we have such a short time for questions.

Mr. Farrant, you mentioned monitoring and the catch and release. Is there enough monitoring? How is it handled? Does the government support some of this, or is it all done by your organization?

Also, Mr. Kristianson, could you just give us a little rundown on the lodges? We've talked a number of times before about the lodges and the quotas, and there's always an issue over quotas for halibut, but even for salmon or anything else. Do you feel there is some way a program could be put in place? There is always that pull between the recreational fishery and the commercial fishery. Could there be a way of renting quotas, or could something along those lines be done to appease both sides? Or is there just going to be a continual battle? I think we've had this discussion before.

As well, Mr. Bird—because they're apt to cut me off if I don't get all the questions in—you mentioned that DFO could improve in some areas in the recreational fishery. The only thing I'm sure the committee would want to know is what areas you feel it could improve in, because Mr. Farrant indicated that there is between \$15 billion and \$16 billion involved in this. It's worth that kind of money. It's a lot of money. Are there things we should recommend to the government in order to improve this fishery and to make it larger?

Mr. Kristianson, where do you see the lodges going? Is there just going to be endless expansion? With the endless expansion, will there be an endless tug between both fisheries? I'd like you to address it that way.

Thank you very much.

• (1250)

Mr. Greg Farrant: I'll address the monitoring question, Mr. MacAulay.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for monitoring in Ontario. We do, however, have what are called FMZs—fisheries management zones—which are cooperative efforts between the ministry and local on-the-ground organizations like OFAH, local fish clubs, and whatnot, that meet regularly and define policies and programs in specific fisheries management zones across the province. They address monitoring issues. Obviously, the ministry, through conservation officers, undertakes creel surveys across the province during recreational fishing seasons on an ad hoc basis.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Are there many problems?

Mr. Greg Farrant: Clearly more of them could be done. Give or take, there are about 300 boots on the ground—if you will—or conservation officers in Ontario, which is not very many for a very large stretch of land. You could probably double or triple the number of COs out there, which would certainly enhance monitoring and enforcement of quotas and regulations, and monitoring of all species.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you.

Dr. Gerald Kristianson: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

I will speak to this issue. Your question implies, as some people suggest, that there are two different recreational fisheries, that there's an ordinary tin boat anglers recreational fishery, and there's a "commercial" recreational fishery, in the sense that one goes to a lodge or charter boat and someone takes you fishing. I have to say that I categorically reject that approach.

The reality is that the fish are owned by the people of Canada. The government, through the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, has an allocation authority, and it needs to make a choice, after making sure there are adequate fish to sustain the future, between those people who wish to catch those fish for sale for direct economic gain, the commercial fishery, and those who wish to catch fish for personal use, which could include the pleasure of releasing a fish. But most tidal water anglers are fishing because they like to eat fish.

The fact is that we have worked against any suggestion that you create some new category that in effect then puts the service providers, such as lodges, in the same position as the holders of halibut quota now, where we've reached the situation where most of the commercial halibut quota is held by people who don't fish.

A voice: That's right.

Dr. Gerald Kristianson: They are in fact commodity brokers, who annually broker this commodity to the remaining members of the fleet who still go out and catch fish.

I understand all the reasons why it got there. It's a very difficult problem for government. No party can take blame or claim for it, but we want to stay out of that.

In fact, we reject the notion that one way to advance the recreational fishery is that anglers would have to go and buy quota from commercial fishermen who somehow have been given, then, what amounts to a property right that the Supreme Court of Canada says does not exist. It was for that reason that the Sport Fishing Institute and the B.C. Wildlife Federation joined with the Government of Canada in a court case called the Malcolm case, in which we argued that the government had the right to allocate and that the transfer of three percentage points by the current government to the recreational fishery did not require that the commercial sector be paid the commercial lease rate or purchase rate for those fish.

●(1255)

Mr. Owen Bird: I know that you asked Gerry the question about the lodges, but I wouldn't want to emphasize this idea that the people catching the fish are anglers. They're licence-holders. This is an idea that's very widely supported by the recreational community. The B. C. Wildlife Federation, the SFAB, and the lodge operators all work quite harmoniously, as a general and fair statement. There isn't any

kind of conflict between the lodge operation or guides and that sort of thing in the recreational community at large.

To address your question regarding how DFO may improve, they could improve by, one, adopting the strategy that Gerry and the SFAB have put forward. The easy and quick answer, really, would be to dedicate commensurate resources with what are the social and economic values of the recreational fishery, in B.C. in particular, to recognize that and then adjust how expenditures are allocated accordingly.

On the particular items, again, catch monitoring is quite important for understanding the impacts and managing the resources from the recreational fishery and how it relates to the other fisheries and those impacts. We're also very interested in what tools are available to the recreational fishery and recreational anglers. I think improvements could be made by DFO in terms of these tools. The—

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: What tools do you mean?

Mr. Owen Bird: As it stands, just last year, in tidal waters in British Columbia, the DFO has gone to electronic licensing. Everybody must acquire a licence by electronic means. There are currently no ways to actually have the licence be electronic, to have it on a smartphone or some sort of device. This is not a big deal, but this would be quite helpful for an electronic age.

The tools include making regulations, area information, species identification, ideas about resource management, fisheries notices, and that sort of thing more readily available to recreational anglers and the public generally. The feeling is that you can do that and put this information into the hands of the recreational anglers. They have a greater appreciation and are obviously able to abide by the rules and regulations of the day.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: What is the mortality rate on catch and release?

Mr. Owen Bird: It is quite low.

It depends on the species and there are definitely allowances for that, or there's an appreciation for those mortalities. On the catch and release of large salmon, for example, it's in the order of 10%. On halibut, it's probably more in the order of 2%—very low—but those numbers are inputted into harvest rates as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Davidson, you get to finish up here today.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thanks, gentlemen, for being with us today.

My riding is on Lake Huron, on the St. Clair River in the Great Lakes area.

I have a quick question that I'd like to ask Mr. Farrant.

We talk about restocking and keeping the fish stocks vibrant and at a suitable level, but we know that fish stocking can also cause some problems, with the introduction of aquatic invasive species and so on.

Could you talk a bit about fish stocking and how your organization might be involved with that, and maybe talk about any particular concerns you might have? What are the negative interactions between fish stocking and the native fish communities that we have?

Mr. Greg Farrant: Thank you very much for the question, Ms. Davidson.

You will be aware, given the riding that you represent, that there is an ongoing issue between.... There are nine provincial hatcheries in Ontario, and there are 50 volunteer hatcheries that supplement the efforts of the nine provincial hatcheries stocking fish across Ontario. Lake Huron is one of those areas where fish are stocked. There are a number of volunteer hatcheries on Lake Huron that stock a number of species.

The first nations community, Saugeen Ojibway First Nation, has commercial licences on Lake Huron out of Owen Sound, Colpoys Bay, and areas like that, for whitefish. They do not support the stocking of other species, such as brown, rainbow trout, and salmon because they feel they are an impediment to the whitefish fishery, the commercial fishery. It's been a long-standing point of contention between the recreational fishing community and the first nations in that particular community about stocking.

In general, if you look at the bass fishery in Ontario, it's a huge and very productive fishery, but bass in many lakes are actually an invasive species. They were put there. They were not originally in those lakes.

Having said that, stocking per se is not so much the problem in terms of invasive species; it is the introduction through other means. That's everything from people dumping aquarium plants into lakes and rivers to dumping things like round goby into rivers when they're mistaken for minnows.

Of course, the biggest threat we are facing right now is the potential for Asian carp getting into the Great Lakes through the Chicago sanitary canal. If they ever get into Lake Ontario or Lake Erie, they will spread rapidly, and the recreational fishery, to say nothing of the commercial fishery, will end because they will wipe out species across the five Great Lakes in unprecedented numbers.

It's not so much the introduction through stocking that we see invasive species, but other means, whether it be ballast water or people putting species in where they shouldn't be. However, in terms of stocking pressures, there are some pressures between commercial, particularly aboriginal commercial interests, and stocking of recreational species in Ontario. It's an ongoing debate that has no particular end in sight.

● (1300)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, gentlemen, for taking the time to be here today. We certainly do appreciate your coming before this committee and sharing your vast knowledge of the recreational fisheries in Canada.

Once again, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much for being here.

This committee stands adjourned.

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