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# Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

EVIDENCE

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Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald





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• (1505)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 12 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on May 26, 2020, Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on June 1, 2020, the committee is resuming its study of the state of Pacific salmon, with a focus today on the Big Bar landslide.

Today's meeting is taking place by video conference. The proceedings are public and are made available via the House of Commons website. So you are aware, the webcast will show the person speaking, rather than the entire committee.

Regular members know this by now, but for the benefit of our witnesses who are participating in a House of Commons virtual committee meeting for the first time, I should remind you all of a few rules to follow.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much like in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French. As you are speaking, if you plan to alternate from one language to the other, you will also need to switch the interpretation channel so that it aligns with the language you are speaking. You may want to allow for a short pause when switching languages. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike.

Should members have a point of order, they should activate their mike and state that they have a point of order. If a member wishes to intervene on a point of order that has been raised by another member, I encourage him or her to use the “raise hand” function. In order to do so, you should click on “participants” at the bottom of the screen. When the list pops up, you will see, next to your name, that you can click “raise hand”. This will signal to the chair your interest to speak and will keep the names in chronological order.

When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. The use of headsets is strongly encouraged. Finally, when speaking, please speak slowly and clearly.

Should any technical challenge arise, for example in relation to interpretation, or a problem with your audio, please advise the chair immediately, and the technical team will work to resolve it. Please

note that we may need to suspend during these times, as we need to ensure that all members are able to participate fully.

Before we get started, could everyone click on their screen in the top right-hand corner and ensure you are on gallery view. With this view, you should be able to see all of the participants in a grid view. It will ensure that all video participants can see each another.

I would like to welcome our witnesses today. With us, from the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat, is Greg Witzky, operations manager. From the Fraser Salmon Management Council, we have Darren Haskell, president. From Peter Kiewit Sons ULC, we have Ryan Tones, senior vice-president and western Canada district manager, and Patrick Wilson, western Canada project sponsor and Big Bar landslide project manager. And of course, from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation, we have Chief Patrick Harry.

We will now go to Mr. Witzky, for six minutes or less.

I understand that you will be making your opening remarks in your own indigenous language and translating for our interpreters. I would remind you that you will still have six minutes only, and I would ask you to speak loudly and clearly. Of course, if you run out of time or go a little bit over, I will interrupt to stop you in order to enable everybody else to get in their time.

While I'm welcoming people, I would, as well, like to welcome Ms. May, member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. It's good to see you here at committee again. I hope you can join in as we go forward.

We'll now start with Mr. Witzky.

The time is yours.

• (1510)

**Mr. Greg Witzky (Operations Manager, Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat):** *[Witness spoke in Secwepemctsin and provided the following text:]*

Weyt-kp xwexéytep. Greg Witzky ren Skweskwst. Quelmuc te Secwepepmcul'ecw.

*[Witness provided the following translation:]*

Hello, everyone. My name is Greg Witzky. I'm indigenous from the Shuswap Nation.

[English]

I wish to express my gratitude to the standing committee for blessing me today with this opportunity to openly discuss the state of the salmon and the impacts of the Big Bar landslide.

My role over the past year with the government-to-government-to-government landslide remediation efforts has been to offer traditional knowledge, cultural protocols and perspectives and to make sure that indigenous roles and voices are not lost in the efforts to help salmon get past the landslide.

Mr. Chair, I trust that the information you are about to hear today will convince the standing committee that now is the right time to utilize the committee's political influence to persuade government decision-makers to take significant measures to protect salmon for generations to come.

Pacific salmon have been impacted by natural disasters and man-made dangers since time immemorial, yet they have shown their resilience to endure. However, at no other time in history have salmon suffered a more imminent threat to their existence than that of today. There are no simple answers, of course, to address all the different complex impacts and cumulative effects surrounding the current poor state of the Pacific salmon. My witness appearance here today is intended to provide, from my ancestral wisdom, a viable solution to our growing problem.

I was asked to appear today to give my opinion on the state of the salmon and the impacts of the Big Bar landslide. My opinion will come from ancestral traditional knowledge, which has taught me that when our Mother Earth is hurting, then we are hurting, and if we are hurting, we hurt others. If we don't do something to stop that hurt when we have the opportunity to do so, then we're not living up to our natural laws to protect and preserve our Mother Earth for seven generations to come.

Mr. Chair and distinguished committee members, I ask that you sincerely consider what I'm going to now address.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has stated that even without any fishery impacts at all, some of the already endangered salmon stocks will not be able to rebuild without us undertaking significant actions to protect them throughout their entire life cycle. The Big Bar landslide occurred at quite possibly the worst time in history, as while the 2019 forecast was moderate, the salmon return turned out to be the lowest in recorded history. Unfortunately, this year's salmon returns are expected to be even poorer than last year. Back-to-back historically low returns are certainly not a good thing.

These unnatural low returns, compounded with the 2020 higher than average snow packs, increased rainfall and runoff, have exacerbated migration issues for the already dire straits of the Pacific salmon. Add in the Big Bar landslide migration obstruction issue and once again we have a complete recipe for disaster. We know something big and bad is happening, and you're likely thinking, what can we collectively do about it?

I was shown at a very young age that indigenous people were put here to ensure that all food and natural materials from our Mother Earth are for the continued survival of our way of life. Nowadays, we have rights entrenched in the Canadian Constitution that provide us with the priority access to fish, but more importantly, we have the responsibility to uphold those rights for all of humankind. We can't maintain those responsibilities if we can't participate in the process to safeguard these rights.

Many indigenous peoples in these contemporary times now have the skills and capacity to effectively co-manage salmon fisheries alongside our DFO counterparts. What we don't have with those rights and capacities are the same levels of funding, jurisdiction and decision-making authorities that our partners in the different government departments possess. Meanwhile, indigenous people are anticipated to play an instrumental role in the protection, management and preservation of Pacific salmon, so steps must be taken to embed this responsibility into the policies, regulations and laws that impact Pacific salmon throughout their life cycle.

● (1515)

Therefore, I am asking the committee to please provide direction to DFO in the form of the following recommendation: Utilize your strong political influence to persuade the powers that be to deliver equitable A-based permanent funding support to indigenous fisheries organizations, like the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat, which has just recently blended with the Fraser Salmon Management Council, so that we can effectively collaborate with DFO to ignite a culture change as stated in DFO's 2019 reconciliation strategy.

DFO was created to police Indian fisheries over 100 years ago in order to provide the non-Indian commercial fishery with increased, unobstructed opportunities. As a result, systematic paternalistic values have been ingrained in DFO that need to be reconciled directly if we are to work together to protect Pacific salmon. If DFO desires to build renewed nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown and government-to-government relations with indigenous peoples, based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership, then they must prove it by putting concrete actions to these words.

That said, I wish to applaud DFO for recently attempting to acknowledge this divide by signing the historic Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement on July 5, 2019. To date we have a signed agreement, but we have yet to obtain permanent government funding support to co-design, co-develop and co-implement the decision-making, co-management and administrative processes.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Witzky, we've gone over the time. I know you submitted notes of your opening remarks. They'll be distributed to the members, and anything else will hopefully come out in the questioning.

We'll now go to Mr. Haskell from the Fraser Salmon Management Council for six minutes or less, sir.

**Mr. Darren Haskell (President, Fraser Salmon Management Council):** Good morning, everybody.

My name is Darren Haskell. I am natural resources director from Tl'azt'en Nation, located in the headwaters of the early Stuart sockeye run. I am also president of the Fraser Salmon Management Council, which currently has 76 member nations from along the Fraser River and approach areas in B.C.

First off, I'd like to thank the standing committee for inviting me to speak today on the state of the salmon.

Fraser River salmon have faced both environmental and human-caused obstacles during their migration to successfully spawn in their natal streams over the past probably two decades now. First nations and DFO have had numerous discussions to make the best decision possible to ensure that the salmon make it home. After over 10 years of discussions and negotiations, as Greg mentioned, we have signed a historic comprehensive management agreement that commits both first nations along the Fraser and DFO to work together to make these important decisions and provide a great example of good co-management. We're working on implementing that agreement right now.

The salmon have been in trouble for many years, with many stocks of both chinook and sockeye in danger of extinction. First nations have had to bear the brunt of many of these impacts on a yearly basis. For instance, in the island and approach areas, many nations that would like to access Fraser-bound sockeye and chinook stocks are not permitted to fish while these stocks are passing through their respective territories. Once an opening is decided upon, the bulk of the stocks have already passed and their chance to get their food has passed with it.

Our lower Fraser families have had to push back their community fisheries year after year. Once, these families were preparing for fishing in April on the river; now they are pushed back to late June or even July before they can even get a net in the water.

In the mid-Fraser, they have a mixture of stocks that are doing well and some that are not, and trying to decipher which stocks they can access is always in issue. In some areas, the fishing is by dip netting only. When dip netting, the water levels have to be a certain height. In low-water years, they can't reach the river with their dip nets, and then in high-water years, the fishing grounds may be too dangerous and the water too swift to fish safely.

In the upper Fraser, we have to wait and hope that the upper Fraser stocks have made the sometimes 1,000 kilometre journey from the mouth of the Fraser in order for our people to have access to them. And, we only have access to them if we know the stock is in a healthy abundance.

These are issues that we were already facing, and then Big Bar landslide happened. Some of the direct effects from the landslide have devastated community fisheries. We have elders who are worried right now that they won't remember the taste of salmon. Our people already have many social issues, including a high poverty rate. A lot of families depend on these traditional foods, not only as their healthy source of food but as a way to keep their culture practices alive.

I'd like to give more technical numbers here. Some hard numbers to think about are the sockeye returns for some stock above the landslide.

With the early 2019 Stuart return, we only had 89 sockeye return, out of a brood year of 10,096. That's 1% of that brood year, 2015. The early summer aggregate was only 33% of the 2015 brood year, and within that aggregate, the Bowron River run had only 20 sockeye return out of a brood year of 3,868. That's less than 1% of a return.

The summer run aggregate is 25% of the brood year. The largest run, usually in the summer, is the Chilko run. That run had 168,000 return. That sounds like a lot, but not when you compare it with the expected return of over 600,000, which is 25% of the brood year.

With our chinook for 2019, we're facing, for the upper and middle Fraser River spring chinook, an 85% to 90% loss of the run, and a 50% loss for the mid-Fraser summer chinook.

If the Big Bar landslide is not cleared to be passable for the salmon stocks, many of these runs will definitely face extinction. I know from last year's cycle runs that many of them already face that risk.

I would like to recommend overall decreased fisheries impacts for 2020 across all fisheries. Even prior to Big Bar, the Fraser stocks faced pressure on all fronts—from commercial and recreational fisheries, and even from first nations. Due to their poor biological status, no fisheries impacts should be inflicted on any of these stocks from above or below Big Bar unless the data shows strong returns to their natal streams. In this case, priority fisheries should be considered.

- (1520)

Recovery plans, which include enhancement plans, need to be developed for these at-risk stocks of chinook, sockeye and steelhead to ensure their survival. The Fraser Salmon Management Council has developed a board and the technical structure to facilitate the development of these plans.

Furthermore, any proposals, such as the mass marking and selective marking of fisheries that have been present previously should be vetted through this structure in order to ensure that conservation and FSMC interests are addressed.

I'd like to reiterate my opening remark that our people are scared and worried that our salmon will not survive this ordeal. Our practices and techniques are not being passed to our future generations. I would like my children and their children's children to be able to go down to the smokehouse and prepare sockeye the way our grandparents did. I want them to learn that salmon is a part of our culture and a way of life. I want them to know that salmon comes from lakes and rivers and not from the back of a truck.

Those are my closing comments.

*Tube cho mussi.* Thank you very much for having me.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Haskell. You were spot on with the time.

Now we'll go to Peter Kiewit Sons.

I don't know, Mr. Tones, if you're doing the speaking or if Mr. Wilson is or if you're sharing it, but you have six minutes between you.

The floor is yours.

**Mr. Ryan Tones (Senior Vice-President and Western Canada District Manager, Peter Kiewit Sons ULC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. On behalf of Peter Kiewit Sons ULC, we appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about our role in this very important project.

As Mr. Chair mentioned, my name is Ryan Tones. I am a senior vice-president with Peter Kiewit Sons ULC and also the western Canada district manager.

I was born in B.C. and I'm still proud to call it home. Big Bar is a very important project to me and my family. I grew up in Maple Ridge. Living so close to the Fraser, I inherently understand how iconic salmon is to the Canadian culture in general and B.C. in particular. B.C.'s ecosystem and fisheries rely on salmon abundance, while wildlife depend on them for survival. First nations have a special relationship with salmon, and a healthy salmon population contributes greatly to their communities' livelihoods.

Kiewit has completed many projects to help support B.C.'s ecosystem since we started doing business in Canada in 1941. Some of these key projects include the Massey tunnel, the Sea to Sky highway, the Port Mann bridge and numerous hydroelectric projects.

Additionally, Kiewit has supported the Pacific Salmon Foundation for over 10 years now, not only through financial contributions, but more importantly by involving local streamkeeper groups that are supported by the foundation on some of our marquee projects. In fact, these groups were consulted during the development of the compensation and restoration designs on the Port Mann project, resulting in improved fish passage and fish habitat at Brunette and Como Creeks in Coquitlam, B.C.

I reviewed the June 9 briefing on the government's response to the Big Bar landslide and would like to use my remaining time as an opportunity to summarize work completed to date and future work as it relates to cost, scope and schedule.

On December 31, 2019, Kiewit was awarded the winter work contract for \$17.6 million by Public Works and Government Services Canada to remediate fish passage through the slide area. The contract called for us to remove as much of the slide debris as was safely possible and to widen the narrowest point of the channel by drilling and blasting an outcrop known as the "East Toe". This all had to be planned and executed before water levels rose in the spring freshet.

Understanding the impact that the slide debris had on the 2019 salmon run, failure to execute was not an option for Kiewit. We were confident that we had the right plan, personnel and equipment to successfully remove the slide debris. However, we also carried out three parallel backup approaches to ensure success.

Through the execution of our plan, we successfully gained equipment access to the slide debris and were able to address 14,000 cubic metres of rock within the channel, more than twice the projected scope in the bid documents. For scale, that's the equivalent of filling a hockey rink 10 metres high.

Following this work, Kiewit was awarded additional scope to continue work through the spring and summer to design and build the bulk of the components to support the pneumatic fish transport system. The scope included building a work platform, reinforcing the access road, flattening road grades, designing and installing additional rockfall protection to support the long-term use of the work area, constructing a lock-block fish ladder, and the design and construction of the mechanical, electrical, structural and communications systems to support the fish ladder and the pneumatic fish transport system.

Despite flood water delays, we completed the work for the pneumatic fish transport system on July 16, and I'm happy to report that the system is operational, with the first fish running through the system on July 18.

The additional work performed during the slide debris removal and the additional scope of the implementation of the fish transport system brought the \$17-million price to \$56 million.

Kiewit has recently been awarded additional scope to maintain the overall site management into October, as well as to provide site services and other deliverables to support DFO as it monitors and assists the fish passage during the 2020 salmon run. This additional scope increases the contract amount to an estimated \$64 million.

I'm extremely proud of what Kiewit and our subcontractors safely accomplished in such a short time. This feat would not have been possible without the engagement of all the partners on the project, including the High Bar and Canoe Creek First Nations and the multiple federal and provincial bodies, as well as the local communities.

• (1525)

The calibre of the personnel from all these groups assigned to the project and the support provided from higher levels of governments was truly impressive. Everyone had one clear and common goal: restoring fish passage through the Big Bar landslide as safely as possible. This guided their decisions, and that has been the key to the success of the project thus far.

Kiewit is honoured to continue to be involved in this very important project, and I am personally proud as a B.C. resident of what we are collectively doing to protect the salmon migration.

We thank you for this opportunity. I hope you've found the project insights that I've shared with you today beneficial.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that. Again, you're right on time, with just a couple of seconds left to spare.

We'll now go to Chief Patrick Harry for six minutes or less, please.

**Chief Patrick Harry (Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation):**  
[Witness spoke in Secwepemctsin]

[English]

I thank you for taking the opportunity to meet with us here today and for the opportunity to present in front of this standing committee on the Big Bar landslide recovery. I'm coming to you today from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem community on the banks of the Fraser River here.

Stswecem'c Xgat'tem was made aware of the landslide at Big Bar just over a year ago, about 13 months ago. This really hit our community hard. It hit at the heart of our community, or our communities, as we're made up of two communities.

I should introduce the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation territories. We lie on the banks of the Fraser River, west of Clinton, B.C., and south of Wind Lake, B.C. Stswecem'c Xgat'tem has always relied on salmon fisheries. Salmon fisheries have been the most important piece of sustenance for Stswecem'c Xgat'tem people since time immemorial.

When we were first notified of the slide and first engaged by the Crown and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, our message was that the salmon fisheries have provided for Stswecem'c Xgat'tem people since time immemorial, and any impact on those salmon impacts our identity, so our discussion with DFO over the past year has been very productive. As was mentioned by the previous speaker, we knew that we had to work with some synergy on this project and that there wasn't a lot of time for differences here. We have to work with synergy, and this calls for unity.

Over the past year, we've created a relationship with the prime contractor. We've created relationships on a government-to-government level with the joint executive steering committee, with DFO and with the province of British Columbia and have tried to move this recovery ahead as smoothly as possible here, knowing that the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem people's identity relies on this recovery carrying through.

In August of 2019 we had a commitment from the minister around funding, consistent funding, for the recovery project. Over

the past year, I think we've seen a lot of support from government, and we expect that to continue. Minister Jordan has made us aware that this project is of highest importance to the Crown and to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and we're thankful for that.

Our number one priority at Stswecem'c Xgat'tem has been natural fish passage. I think it's something that we can all agree on, whether you work for DFO, or for the province, or for Stswecem'c Xgat'tem or one of our delegated agencies here that are working so hard to make sure that these fish achieve natural passage. I think we can all agree that natural passage is the priority.

We have a long history of fishing, and our identity relies on it. Over the past couple of years, we've had very dismal years as far as fishing goes, and it is impacting our communities. It is impacting our youth. We have missed out on those opportunities to get down on the river and teach our sons and our daughters, and the grandparents have missed that opportunity to be down there making sure that we pass on our culture and our teachings. That's why we're trying so hard to play a significant role in this recovery and to make sure that we achieve natural passage.

It looks like we're going to be placing some infrastructure down at Big Bar, and I wanted to mention that we've been here before, with the Hell's Gate landslide, over a hundred years ago. We've been here before. We found a solution at Hell's Gate, and I think we're heading down that same road, where there's a need for a permanent solution.

• (1530)

Stswecem'c Xgat'tem looks forward to participating through our indigenous benefits plan.

Our message to government, to the Crown, is that this landslide has the ability to affect and impact Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation's title and rights. If there's negligence on behalf of the Crown in properly recovering the Big Bar landslide, it could lead to an impact on Stswecem'c Xgat'tem's right to fish, which we hold dearly. That was the beginning of our discussion about how we wanted to be involved with the Big Bar landslide.

One of the options that were proposed to us from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the federal government was an indigenous benefits plan. Over the past year, we've developed an indigenous benefits plan with DFO and Kiewit. We've made progress. In the past year, we've developed a steady relationship with Kiewit, and we've developed a good relationship through the joint executive steering committee. We've been able to bring capacity on board to have our community involved at all levels with regard to the recovery.

Moving forward, we're looking for consistency and are looking to be further involved through our indigenous benefits plan and through our current relationship, on a government-to-government basis, with the federal Crown.

• (1535)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Chief Patrick Harry. You've gone a bit over your time, but hopefully anything you didn't get to say will come out in the line of questioning that will now follow.

I remind members who are asking questions to please identify who you're posing your question to. It will make for better flow if you name the person you would like to answer the question. If you want everybody to answer it, that's fine as well.

We'll start off with the Conservative Party.

Mr. Arnold, you have six minutes or less, please.

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

I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for being here today. I hear the commitment and the desire to restore our Pacific salmon stocks. I share that desire, and I think every member on this committee shares that desire as well.

I'm going to direct most of my questions to Mr. Haskell, at least to begin with.

Mr. Haskell, you mentioned the Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement and that it has been signed. You're working on the implementation of it. Could you elaborate on what that agreement means to you, your band and the bands that are involved with it and what you see for the future in it?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Well, the future in it is real, true collaborative management. The whole intent of the agreement was to provide first nations a role in the final decision when it comes to the management of salmon. Previously, we had what we called a forum on harvest and conservation planning, and in that forum first nations did provide input, but it was always received as recommendations. It was never received as direct input into a final decision from the minister.

Through the structure in the FSMC, first nations and DFO together would present a final recommendation to the minister on management decisions pertaining to salmon in the Fraser River. That's the role that first nations have been fighting to have for over 10 years, as I mentioned in my speech. It started as a road map in 2009, and it finally came to a head in July 2019, when we signed the agreement with Minister Jonathan Wilkinson.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** So it gives you the co-management responsibilities or a decision process.

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Yes. We feel it does, within the structure.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** As you may know, the Fisheries Act was changed last year to include references to authorities for indigenous governing bodies. Is the Fraser Salmon Management Council considered an indigenous governing body under the Fisheries Act?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Yes. Under the Fisheries Act, I feel that we are, because each of our member nations requires the community's consent to be a member of our nation. We go directly to band councils to get band council resolutions to appoint members from their communities to our organization. Through that, we receive a mandate on their behalf to bring these messages all the way up to the

decision-makers. That is our mandate: to bring their message from the grassroots level all the way to the decision-making level.

• (1540)

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Okay, thank you.

The changes to the act also define bylaws of indigenous governing bodies to be laws under the Fisheries Act. Are you aware of this?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** I think it's something we have begun to discuss at our table, but we haven't had any deep discussions.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Have any of the council's bylaws been put forward to be considered as law or application under the Fisheries Act?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Not that I'm aware of yet, no.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Are you aware of any other indigenous bodies that have been recognized by the government or DFO as an indigenous governing body?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Are there any other organizations in B.C.? Not that I'm aware of.

The agreement we signed is pretty unique in the way it's structured. I think the intent was that we want to make this work so it can be a model for other groups to use in getting to this step.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Since the signing of the collaborative management agreement, has the council been able to work with DFO and co-manage, in your opinion?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Fully? There have been discussions. Where we've hit some bumps in the road is in implementing this, because it is so unique that.... The first nations got organized quite quickly. We assigned our board members and our technical teams, whereas DFO had some troubles in assigning those members until very recently.

In terms of our timeline, we were able to get our members assigned to those seats within the timeline, which was last November, I believe. DFO did not get their members assigned to the Fraser salmon management board and our joint technical committee until, I would say, two or three months ago, earlier this spring. That really put a delay in the collaborative working relationship.

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

Are you able to provide the committee with a copy of the agreement?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** I think so. I'm looking at Greg over there. I think it's public knowledge right now, so I think we can.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** I would ask that it be provided to the committee if possible.

What is the time, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** The collaborative management agreement was ratified by 80% of the signatory nations. Can you tell us why 20% of the nations may not have signed on to ratify the agreement?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** At the time, a few of them mentioned... They had hesitations in working with DFO, basically; that was their word back to us. They wanted to see us put the stuff into real work and see results from it before they would step forward.

Some have gone through elections, as you know. Chiefs and councils go through different elections. We've had to go back to some communities to present our agreement again to the new council so they know what they were signed up for.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Thank you, Mr. Arnold.

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

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

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for being here.

What we're detecting is a fairly high degree of success so far on what has been technically a very challenging situation.

One of the issues that came up in some of our earlier hearings had to do with the survivability of the salmon that had been, if you like, mechanically moved from one side of the Big Bar barrier to the other side.

Mr. Tones, given that you've seen some fish movement as recently as a couple of days ago, are we still in a situation where we're going to need fish cannons or helicopters or whatever to try to move the stocks around the barrier?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** I'll do my best to comment.

At this time, water levels are still quite high, so we haven't seen a lot of the migrations coming upriver yet.

I'll pass it over to Pat Wilson, the project manager for our Big Bar work, and maybe Pat could add a bit of colour to help answer that question.

• (1545)

**Mr. Patrick Wilson (Western Canada Project Sponsor and Big Bar Landslide Project Manager, Peter Kiewit Sons ULC):** Thank you, Ryan.

I apologize; I probably can't do a great job of answering the question.

Our mandate as Kiewit on the project was to put the infrastructure in place and to design and build the system and the support systems to feed this proprietary equipment that was provided by Whooshh.

As Mr. Tones mentioned earlier, I think we did successfully remove a lot of the material that was in the river—more than anticipated. We're hoping the work that has been done to date will yield good results, but it's too early to tell with the very low quantities of salmon that have gone through.

As the contractor, we're not really the experts to tell you whether what has been done to date will be a success or not, but we're very hopeful. We'll continue to work with everyone to make sure that we do what we can to get the fish through.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** I appreciate that. Thank you.

Chief Witzky, Chief Haskell or Chief Harry, can you comment on the work that's been done so far and your level of confidence on...? How close are we to allowing a reasonable number of fish to get by the barrier without some of these mechanical means?

Chief Witzky.

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** I'm a chief, but not an elected chief. They call me "the fish chief" back home here. I'm a traditional hereditary chief.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Okay.

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** I'm also the indigenous project manager for the Big Bar landslide indigenous engagement committee, so I can answer your questions.

The more of those salmon get touched by human hands, the less chance they have of getting over the slide. All the scientists we've worked with are trying to get a system in place where we can get them over without touching them, without putting them in buckets or tanks. The pneumatic tubes or the Whooshh trademark system that we have put in place successfully put one chinook over this past weekend. It's the best way we've found to get the salmon over the obstruction.

We don't plan on using any helicopters. Last year, that was a very tough task. The salmon suffered immensely. They were already holding for a month below the slide. Then to be taken on a helicopter ride, which is not normal.... They were falling back. They were dying.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** I guess the major part of my question is this: How close do you think we are to the time when we don't need Whooshh or anything, to the time when the salmon will be able to get up and back again through this obstruction without any human hands or any other means? Is there a fish ladder? Is there something else happening there? How much more work needs to be done before we're ready to say that this is done and that the fish can do what they naturally do?

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** That one I'll definitely answer. There's going to be a fish ladder needed, much like at Hell's Gate. Because of the water levels and the amount of rock deep in the river there, there's no other way there. That decision is already on the table to be hashed over by the parties. We'll be looking to the government for the funding, of course.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** It was interesting to hear some of the comments about the management council. After we finish specifically focusing on the Big Bar situation, this committee is going to segue into a broader discussion about the health of Pacific salmon stocks. Do you see the management council structure as being a good framework for the bigger conversation that we're going to need about how to actually restore the stocks to abundance?

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** I'll try to answer a little bit of that. I might also rely on President Darren to jump in. The Fraser Salmon Management Council is unique. It's never been done in the history of DFO. I talked about DFO as being put in place for policing Indians. Our role is significant. Co-management equals survival. Right now, we're struggling with the long-term funding for the council. Once that's in place.... We have the capacity. We have the expertise. We have the skills. We just don't have the money. We're ready to move forward.

• (1550)

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

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Thank you.

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

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon. Special thanks to those appearing before the committee today. I really enjoyed the presentations you delivered. I especially liked the images Mr. Witzky evoked of the essential connection we have with our natural environment, of which we are humbled to be a part.

I feel what is happening right now are symptoms. We spoke of waters being deeper and the rise in water levels being greater than before.

I would like to hear from the people representing first nations communities about all of the symptoms being observed. Of course, we are talking about Big Bar, but on a larger scale, we are talking about all the salmon in British Columbia.

[*English*]

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** I can start off.

In B.C. as a whole, there is an organization that we work closely with. It's the First Nations Fisheries Council. It's led by executive director Jordan Point. He might have been a witness here in the past.

We're Fraser Basin-specific, the Fraser Salmon Management Council, so we deal with the headwaters out to the ocean area for Fraser salmon only, but we are poised to work with the First Nations Fisheries Council, which is B.C.-wide, and we do work with them closely.

Again, I hate to keep hashing on it, but funding is always an issue. Funding stops first nations from fully participating in our rightful roles to protect the resources for everybody, not just for first nations, but for children of fishermen who angle, commercial fishermen, bears, eagles, etc.

That's all I have to add. Darren might have something else as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Yes. When it comes to the FSMC province-wide, I think that was the intention of our starting up just with the Fraser River. The initial focus was on the management of salmon, but we had plans in terms of developing this agreement and

in developing the organization that our first nations would like to be involved with fully for the rebuilding of the stocks.

As Greg mentioned, we do work with the FNFC, and we are developing an MOU with that organization, as we all like to be on the same page when it comes to doing projects. Because of the limited funding, as Greg mentioned, we all want to be working on the same initiatives; if we are both doing the same thing, we're kind of spinning our wheels and not really utilizing the money to its fullest extent. I think that's the most important thing about us being in B.C., about the first nations organizations in B.C. With that open dialogue, that really happens. It is really important.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** I do not know whether Mr. Harry wanted to say something as well. If not, I will continue.

You talked about funding, and I understand that it is critical to all the work you do. I insisted on knowing what you wanted, because I am interested in what traditional or ancestral knowledge can contribute, and what you can share with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

In terms of funding, could you give us a rough idea? That way, it would be possible to see exactly what work needs to be done and how much money is needed to do it properly. I assume you mean the associations' operating budgets, not the salmon-related work being done in one place or another.

• (1555)

[*English*]

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** I'll answer just quickly before Greg.

The funding we're speaking about right now is part of our Fraser salmon management board and the technical committee itself. We do have some technical experts who are part of those committees, which requires a lot of work. To be honest, biologists aren't cheap, and the work they do is specific to salmon, so it is important to really have that technical expertise as part of this group. In order for us to make the proper decisions, we need those technical people.

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** Do you want me to step in and mention a few comments?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Yes, Greg.

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** My speech was cut off by about 30 seconds because I guess it was too long.

Anyway, the inclusion of our indigenous knowledge is essential to the success of these types of agreements, but that information isn't cheap. It needs to be resourced similar to the acquisition of biologists' scientific knowledge, western knowledge.

That sort of answers where our traditional knowledge component would come into play, because we have to bring it from the elders. It has to be from the communities. It has to be from the language speakers, the resource users and the knowledge holders themselves—the fishers, the hunters, the gatherers. It's not as simple as just asking one person on a committee. You have to involve the whole community.

That's my part about the traditional awareness.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Thank you, Madame Gill.

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

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

Thank you all for your testimony and for your deep commitment to addressing this issue and the issues surrounding the impact that's happening on the Fraser River.

Maybe I'll start with you, Mr. Witzky, because you're on a thread that I wanted to go to.

You talked about indigenous and traditional knowledge and the lack of resources to be able to get that information. The government constantly cites the importance of indigenous and local knowledge. Without those resources, do you feel confident that indigenous and traditional knowledge is being used in this situation and applied to help resolve this situation?

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** Frankly, no. There are not enough funds available to provide full traditional knowledge. We can scrape the top off the butter, but we can't dig in deep with the knife. That's a funny way of putting it, but, yes, seriously, there are not enough funds. For the amount of resources out there, there should be funds available on the resources extracted.

Thank you.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Do you want to add to that, Chief Harry? I think this might be something you might also touch on. You touched on rights and reconciliation, rights and title—I think the government hasn't resolved some of the outstanding issues related to rights and title—and the importance of those outstanding issues with the Crown getting resolved so there are resources to better manage the stocks.

I come from Nuu-Chah-Nulth territory. You're probably aware of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth court case, where the government spent \$19 million just on lawyers fighting the Nuu-Chah-Nulth on rights we know they've already established in the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Can you speak about how that's relevant in terms of resources here?

**Chief Patrick Harry:** Thank you.

I've also taken part in the Fraser Salmon Management Council meetings, and my community is the delegated representative at the Fraser Salmon Management Council meetings. As Darren mentioned, whether or not the Fraser Salmon Management Council is the delegated authority, there's been a lot of commitment from the 190 first nations that rely on the Fraser River salmon. At this point, over a third of them have signed on to the Fraser Salmon Management Council. To have that number of signatories to that agreement

is a huge success. That shows the commitment we have for the B.C. first nations to look to recover the Pacific salmon stocks. It's not an easy task to get that many first nations on board. It shows that first nations are fully committed. I'm sure we'll have more come on board over the next little while.

This conversation we're having really goes back to the Crown's mandate, the nice gestures, the nice words we've been hearing over the past four years from Prime Minister Trudeau around recognition and reconciliation, supporting UNDRIP. You know what? When we speak about implementing UNDRIP, we think about passing on some of that responsibility the Crown and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans have held so dear to their hearts for so long.

If you want to implement the United Nations declaration, or you want to look to implement some of the court decisions, we have an opportunity with the Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement. Those are the fundamental steps that need to happen for us to be able to properly resource the traditional knowledge, title and rights discussion. Some of the responsibility needs to be passed on to the first nation.

That's probably being debated somewhere in Ottawa at this time as to how to do that. But that's what we want. We want responsibility with regard to fisheries within the Fraser River watershed. I think those discussions are coming, and we need to take them seriously. When I look at that Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement, it is a step towards first nations taking on more responsibility for salmon, and it's a long time coming.

We can look to tools such as that agreement to improve our place with regard to the management of the salmon stock, which means so much to our identity, a symbol of the people.

● (1600)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Part of the contract with Kiewit is to hire local indigenous people, ensuring that they're part of that process. Can you speak to the fulfilling of that commitment, Mr. Witzky?

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** Currently, we have two local first nations: Stl'atl'mx, which is part of the Fraser, and Secwepemc, which is the Shuswap part of the Fraser, so it's a collaboration of two nations. Individual bands within those nations have provided contractors, managers, technicians and security. All types of work are needed at the landslide, not just for the landslide itself but for following the monitoring and assessment of the salmon's return to the northern streams in the fall to determine if we're successful or not.

We're also involved in the engagement activities and a committee of first nations, which includes the first nations leadership panel. It's a consortium of leaderships from across the whole Fraser basin that is part of the decision-making process for landslide remediation.

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

That's all your time, Gord. You've gone a bit over.

We'll now go to our second round of questioning, with the Conservative Party.

Mr. Bragdon, you have five minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses and fellow committee members who are on the call today.

Obviously, the issues and challenges we're facing in the fishery sector are huge at this time, particularly as they relate to the depleting salmon stocks from coast to coast. Being from the east coast, I know that the Atlantic salmon stocks and the decline of wild Atlantic salmon are a big concern for us on the east coast. We share that concern, and I thank the witnesses for being a part of the discussion today and bringing much-needed focus to this challenging area.

I want to address my first question to Chief Patrick Harry.

Chief Harry, according to DFO's timeline for the Big Bar project, archeology work at the slide site commenced on December 10. Was your administration consulted on this archeological work?

• (1605)

**Chief Patrick Harry:** Thank you.

The site at Big Bar is a very important and very sensitive site to Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation. For those who have been lucky enough to visit the site, you definitely get a picture of why that site would be so dear to our people. That site down there has shown, through the archeological work, to be a very sensitive archeological area and culturally sensitive area.

I think part of the challenge with this project is definitely the number of players in the game, and the planning portion of this project. It means that sometimes work has to happen quickly. We find at Stswecem'c Xgat'tem that we are toeing the line as far as consultation occurring. We've said that natural fish passages are the number one priority. However, when you're dealing with free, prior and informed consent, there's definitely a path for that too.

Stswecem'c Xgat'tem has put its efforts into playing a very important role with regard to the Big Bar landslide recovery. We have a process in place at Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation with regard to our land use policy and our consultation, accommodation guidelines. We're toeing the line because of timelines, because of Mother Nature.

I don't think it's been mentioned yet how much Mother Nature has played a role in this recovery. When you start to talk about timelines, we should definitely pay attention and be mindful that Mother Nature is in charge here. Mother Nature has definitely impacted this project.

There have been times when Stswecem'c Xgat'tem has made some decisions in a faster manner, quicker manner than we usually work, but we are consulted, definitely. Through the indigenous benefit planning, we've been able to have archeologists on the ground. Through our next period here, we will be renegotiating our indigenous benefits plan, and we plan on including the cultural heritage resource support within that plan.

We plan to continue to build synergy within this project. We can see the number of people on the screen here today, and I'm sure there are another 200 or 300 people behind the scenes who are working with this project. It's important that we have great synergy.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Thank you, Chief.

Obviously, the archeological work is going on. I'm wondering whether you are aware of the outcome of the archeological work. Have there been some conclusive findings from that? Do you feel there's still a pathway forward here, within a timely fashion, to get to the desired solution for everyone?

**Chief Patrick Harry:** Really, we don't have a choice. We have to get this done. My nation's identity relies on this.

That's always been the basis for discussion with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, that my nation lies on the banks of the Fraser for a reason. These salmon have been feeding my people for generations. We wouldn't be here if it weren't for those salmon. We were placed in this part of the world because of the salmon. As far as my nation is concerned, we don't have a choice. We have to get this done, or our identity will be affected.

I can see the path forward. We came to a conclusion recently that we're looking at a permanent solution. Our community has supported the fish passageways, which are probably one of a few options we've had over the past year. The project has moved at a high speed, and at times we could probably tighten up some of those lines of communication and decision-making structures.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bragdon. Your time has gone way over.

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

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

*Kwe Me' Tawulotioq*

[*Member provided the following translation:*]

Hello, how is everyone doing?

[*English*]

I want to say at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with MP May from the Green Party. Before I pass it on to her, I would like to acknowledge the chiefs and technicians for their time.

As a Mi'kmaw from Nova Scotia, I remember studying the Sparrow decision in law school and knowing how important that case was to indigenous fisheries all across Canada, and for that I thank you. I'm also looking forward to hearing more about the culture change, as you call it, that you would like to see within DFO.

At this point, I want to give time to MP May to ask her questions.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** *Wela'in.*

Thank you so much, Jaime. This is so generous of you.

I'm on the traditional territory, I acknowledge, of the WSANEC people and the Coast Salish peoples of the Saanich Peninsula.

I'm going to try to focus my question and ask it of Mr. Tones, but I want to preface it and make sure that I understood key points from Mr. Witzky and from Chief Patrick Harry.

What I've heard from you is that we need a permanent solution like Hell's Gate, which means that we're looking at fish ladders at this point, more than removal of rock. Hell's Gate happened in what, 1915? It took until the 1960s to develop a permanent solution with fish ladders and fishways, and that did end up working.

I just want to know, from Chief Harry and from Mr. Witzky, have I properly understood the key points you made about what it will take to recover—if we can recover—from this disastrous slide?

I'll go to Mr. Witzky first.

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** Thank you.

That was a key point. The work to remove rock will take decades. Fish ladders can take a year to two years. The fish don't have the time.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Chief Harry, is that your position as well?

**Chief Patrick Harry:** As I mentioned, it's a challenge. We have Mother Nature, who is playing a serious role in this project.

I believe that the permanent solution.... I rely on the professionals who have been giving us the ideas here, and I believe that the fishways can be a solution, but I also want to make sure that we don't forget about that rock recovery, because ultimately that rock recovery is going to be fundamental to a long-term solution here. There were 75,000 cubic metres on the floor of the river, and there's still a lot there. I don't want to see that rock recovery taken off the table, but yes, a permanent solution would be the fishways, and we're relying on that.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you so very much. *Haishka*.

I want to turn to our engineer with the Kiewit Corporation.

Mr. Tones, I know that you've been a recipient of \$17 million initially, and that the cost has skyrocketed to \$52 million. I'm wondering. Is the mandate—the terms of work, the scope of work that your company has right now—restricted to removal of rock? Or is any portion of it designated for how now is the time to start figuring out how to build fishways?

I hear you, Chief Harry. We don't want to abandon getting the rock out of the river, but it seems to me that we had better start figuring out how to build those fishways, because it's urgent.

What does your contract ask you to do?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** Thank you for the question.

The contract has evolved over time. When it first started and we won the contract for the 17 million dollars' worth of scope, as you mentioned, it was for removal of a portion of the rock in the river. We were able to successfully execute that and remove more than anticipated. I believe I mentioned that approximately 14,000 cubic metres was addressed in the river, of the total rock that's down there. Then, as you understand from the Mother Nature comments, water levels were coming up and that rock removal operation was paused at that time.

Then we were asked to price and build additional scope around what was described as the Whooshh system. That was an approximately \$30-million scope to do the mechanical transportation over the remaining rock. The third piece that I mentioned in my opening

remarks is really about follow-on site management to help as we collaborate and discuss what the next step is.

We do not have any scope to do a permanent fish ladder at this point, or to do some of the other things that are being brainstormed. I'd just like to say on behalf of the company that if those things are of interest to the committee and to DFO down the road, we are absolutely open to discussing them to help the situation.

● (1615)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you all very much for your hard work to help our salmon. It's critical. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. May.

Go ahead, Mr. Calkins, for five minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to put my questions to the gentlemen from Kiewit.

In your opening comments, Mr. Tones, you said that you were building infrastructure to support long-term operations. If you're not building fish ladders, is the Whooshh system considered to be one of the long-term operational aspects that you have been asked to design infrastructure to support?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** No, I don't believe the Whooshh system is a long-term solution—

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** If that's the case, then what was the long-term stuff you were talking about?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** There are two elements that I believe are long term that are being completed on the site.

One is the rockfall protection. It's an active slide area. To protect workers, the people who are down in that area, we have hung a series of rockfall mesh protections that will be able to last and stay for the long term.

In addition, when we were working our way back out of the riverbed as the water levels rose, we were able to build a portion of a natural fish ladder on one bank of the river that would stay for the long term.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I'll get back to the fish ladder thing in a second. The next question I have for you is about hydrology.

Did you have a before-and-after picture of the hydrology of the river after you removed, I believe, 14,000 cubic metres of rock, which I think was a number that you said exceeded the original expectation?

Obviously, from an engineering perspective, you would have looked at the hydrology to maximize.... Whether it's blasting out the East Toe or the larger chunks of rock, did you strategically go after specific areas of the river, or did you just go with the easiest stuff to get at? Did you have a before picture of the hydrology, and an after picture? Was there a target of the hydrology of the current you were looking for in order to enable fish passage, and were you able to achieve that, if that was indeed what you were trying to do?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** Kiewit's contract was an execution at the start, not a design contract. The initial design hydrology was done through the client. There were targets set of certain boulders, of certain portions of the rock in the river that needed to be removed. Absolutely, there were targets to go and get those key pieces that the group felt would make the most impact to the hydrology.

Once that was achieved and while the water level was still low enough, the group collaborated on next areas to focus on, and removed as much rock as possible before levels came up. Hydrology work was then done to map out how much rock had been removed.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I suspect we would have to get the answers for fish passage from the department, so I'll wait for the department to get back before the committee for that type of question.

Have you guys built any fish ladders before, in any of your previous work in British Columbia?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** In British Columbia, we do fish ladder work around hydroelectric operations. We've been involved with independent power, etc.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** In those particular scenarios, there's usually a fairly defined water level at the bottom, and a fairly defined water level at the top. In this particular case, you don't know what the water level is going to be, based on the freshet, runoff, melts, rainfall, and so on. What kinds of unique issues like these are you able to create solutions for? How are you going to create a solution, not knowing how high the water level is going to be at the bottom of the ladder and not knowing where the water is going to be at the top of the ladder? How are you going to manage that?

• (1620)

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** That is not currently part of our scope. We haven't been asked to be part of the design or to build a permanent fish ladder.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Have there been no conversations or discussions about that at all?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** Not for a permanent fix at this time, but given the opportunity by the committee, DFO, etc., we'd be happy to collaborate with the group here, or the first nations involved, to find that design and solution.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Then the only two solutions, really, that the department has invested money in through you are, one, removal of the rock structures, and two, setting up the infrastructure to support the pneumatic system. Is that correct?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** That's mostly correct. As I mentioned, we had also done some work on the permanent rockfall protection as well as a portion of the natural ladder.

I'm happy to pass it over to Pat Wilson, the project manager, if there's more scope that I'm missing.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Calkins; your time is up.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** You're welcome.

Now we'll go to Mr. Hardie for five minutes or less, please.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to get back to our indigenous folks. It's really good to have you guys here, because we're getting a glimpse of things, and not just with the current situation. My focus and my interest is in what goes beyond this particular project.

The management council, the collaborative management council, is a great title. It would be nice to think that this structure would survive beyond the permanent resolution of the Big Bar issue into work that we need to have done to come up with more permanent solutions to the greater issues, the habitat and all of the things that are affecting the health of the salmon stocks in British Columbia.

You mentioned that resources were a big thing. Our government has invested a lot of money back into DFO, into science and everything else, but in some of our earlier studies we also recognized that the people who live on the ground in the community are a resource that we have not marshalled, not mobilized.

You talked about the resources necessary to get the current work done and then perhaps the resources necessary to keep moving forward. Can you put dollars and cents to that? It all comes down to that, obviously, and the kind of investment that's necessary to make sure that the effort we've seen so far works in the current project, first of all, but can also translate into future work to help us restore the stocks.

Can you put a dollar figure on what you think it will take on an ongoing basis, not just a one-time hit?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** I can provide an example. This year's proposed budget was to include our Fraser salmon management board, our joint technical committee, as well as our Fraser Salmon Management Council main table directors. Combined, it was worth \$757,000. That was just to work on the management piece of it. Looking at some of the correspondence from our executive director, I think we're about \$200,000 short of that.

When it comes to habitat and rebuilding and large infrastructure projects like that, you can easily get into long-term projects that can surpass millions, potentially. To really say that any specific amount...

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** I appreciate that.

Mr. Witzky or Chief Harry, do you have any additional comments?

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** I was going to let the chief go first, but I could add one additional comment.

By the time we're finished with Big Bar landslide, we'll probably end up at close to \$100 million. If it's an equal and equity-based partnership, 33% should be for first nations involvement in the future for other reasons—habitat and traditional knowledge and political engagement and everything.

• (1625)

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Okay.

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** That's my personal point of view, but I think a lot of other people would support it.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Chief Harry, is there any comment from you?

**Chief Patrick Harry:** Yes, I will comment. As mentioned earlier, I'm part of the delegation with the Fraser Salmon Management Council. Our nation has been very supportive of the Fraser Salmon Management Council and the level of work that has been taking place.

The challenge we face in B.C. is that we have a large number of first nations. I think we have over 200 first nations. Part of the challenge is having consensus decision-making and power. Maybe one of the biggest positives with the organization is to have the number of first nations on board with the organization so that we can hash these things out and figure out what the dollar figures are. It's a challenge to put dollar figures to some of these, but we collaborate as first nations with the Crown.

We do our best to come up with solutions at the Fraser Salmon Management Council, the first nations on board and the Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance. These various bodies are looking to find those answers. We may not have them right now, but we're challenged to come together and find those answers. I'm sure we can do it.

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

Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

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

[*Translation*]

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

I have a question for Mr. Haskell. We have spoken at length about funding, cultural identity and the importance of salmon to the first nations, but the landslide at Big Bar has had economic impacts too.

What is the impact on band council budgets? In turn, I imagine it also affects the budget of your association, the Fraser Salmon Management Council?

[*English*]

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** In terms of the budgets, when a landslide like this happens, we instantly have to go and find money, basically, to bring food to our community. It's happened for us some three out of the last four years. It's money that's not dedicated funding. We have to search in other different areas to try to raise funds to go out of the community to bring fish to our people. That's why I was mentioning in my speech that I don't want our kids to know that salmon comes out of the back of a truck rather than from fishing on the lake. That's a big hit.

For our community here—we have about 600 people—we can easily spend close to \$20,000 on a load of salmon just to feed our people. That's if we find people who have access to salmon. In the past, we've worked with the first nations on the Skeena to make an agreement with them to provide salmon for our people, but even on the Skeena they're facing some really tough times with their runs kind of starting to diminish as well.

We don't have any dedicated funding for any kind of additional food. We usually have to go looking for donations and for any kind

of surpluses. We need permissions from our funders, as well, to use some of those funds.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Gill. There are only three seconds left, hardly enough time for a question.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Thank you.

[*English*]

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

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Tones, we talked about the need for fish ladders and a fish passage. Can you speak about—and I know it's kind of hard to have a broad conversation—how quickly you could get a fish ladder or fish passage mechanisms in place at the site?

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** Mr. Johns, are you referring to a permanent solution or something more temporary?

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Yes, or even for this season and then beyond.

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** For this season, as I mentioned, the Whooshh system is in place. I've been to the site and have seen it on a practical basis. I think that starting a fish ladder right now, a permanent one, would be a real challenge because of water levels. I think you'd have to do a design starting immediately, and then get to a position where you could start construction when low water happens later this year and through the winter.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Okay.

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** I would be encouraging a design starting pretty quickly.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you.

Mr. Haskell, thinking beyond Big Bar and regarding the state of Pacific wild salmon, we hear that the need for restoration and habitat protection is upwards of \$250 million just over the next five years, and the BCSRIF, the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund, is not even.... Well, it's just over half of that, which they've allocated for the next five years for the whole coast of British Columbia. We know that the Cohen commission has recommended removing open-net salmon farms on migration routes for juvenile salmon and migrating salmon because of PRV, sea lice and die-offs. We know that foreign fishing licences and the concentration of quota with commercial fleets in foreign hands is having an impact on conservation.

Can you speak about these issues and about how important it is that the government address these issues?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** I think it's hugely important.

Speaking on the Cohen commission, there's not one single smoking gun on the issues of salmon.

One of the things we've always wanted was to have more monitoring of our migrating species to take place further out. We know that our fish go past Haida Gwaii, and they access them through fisheries there. They hit landfall up in Alaska, and we don't know whether Alaska is being truthful on the amounts that they catch from us.

Another thing is the habitat portion of it. We've been pushing for habitat dollars for years and years. A lot of the proposals we submit are sent back because they're not approved or they're not considered a priority, so we scratch our heads, thinking....

That was one of the things we started prior to the landslide. We finally got approval after about four or five years of lobbying for small-scale enhancement projects in some of the small streams in the upper Fraser. We finally had approval for that prior to the Big Bar landslide. We were making small steps in that direction, but a lot more is needed.

Those are the questions that our chiefs and our councils are asking: Are we going to have to step toward hatcheries and other enhancement means to even achieve getting our fish back?

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

Thank you, Mr. Johns. Your time is up.

Committee members, we have a few minutes left. We can probably do one question to each party, with a minute for the question and a minute for the answer. We have to be strict on our time to make sure everybody gets in before we go into some committee business.

Mr. Arnold, would you like to go first, for a one-minute question and a one-minute answer?

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to keep this really quick.

Mr. Haskell, again I'll go back to you.

Under the management agreement, what role does your organization provide in the management decisions for salmon on the entire Fraser River? Are they able to provide input and be part of the decision-making process for operations in other geographical areas, and on decisions such as selective fishing gear, season openings, predator management and other stressors that the fish may encounter that migrate into your territories?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** Not right at the moment. We're focused more on the management in the river right now. Parts of the agreement point out that things like the Fraser River panel need to require at least 50% first nations members, which the minister agreed to, but those are areas where we're looking to broaden our scope once we have this management side of things down. We didn't want to bite off too much at once. We want to focus on one thing and do it really well, and then expand to other areas within the fisheries.

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

• (1635)

**The Chair:** Mr. Hardie is next, please.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We've seen this slide, and I want to check on who can speak to the risk of further slides, either at this location or at other locations, given the geography of that particular area. Are we going to have to be more vigilant and maybe pre-emptive when it comes to the possibility of future slides?

We'll start with Kiewit and then perhaps go to one of our first nations.

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** I think the area is currently an active slide, so we have to be very cognizant in the current area.

I'll ask Pat Wilson to jump in quickly on whether there's any adjacent site that we're aware of.

**Mr. Patrick Wilson:** Again, Ryan, it's not really in our purview or expertise to look at that or be able to comment on it.

However, yes, it is a very deep canyon with significantly high rock walls, and we do observe rockfall in the general area along the canyon as we're working.

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** I have one comment to provide for that.

It's funny that they ask, because the executive steering committee from the Fraser Basin Council was just approached about partnering on an assessment of possible slide sites along the Fraser River. We're researching it. We think we know of a university study that identified 75 possible further sites along the canyons on the Fraser River.

The only thing about doing that is you have to look at it for every river in the province. However, it is being looked at.

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

Now we'll go to Madame Gill for a very short question.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to ask Mr. Tones a question for clarification.

Mr. Tones, when you spoke earlier of salmon, you were asked whether it usually worked well, and you said you were not experts. That surprised me, so I would like to know what the exact context was and understand what you wanted to say.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Tones:** Our contract scope to date has all been about construction means and methods, about how to remove rock from the river and install this Whooshh system. The Whooshh system is what we were referring to. We've brought in an expert who's proprietary to that system in order to make sure it's operated properly.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Gill.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** All right. Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** We will go to Mr. Johns for a short question.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'm going to ask Mr. Witzky a question. I'm going to try to keep it to 20 seconds to give him more time to answer.

He cited that last year was half of the lowest return in the recorded history of the Fraser River sockeye. I will also ask a similar question to Mr. Haskell about the need for restoration, enhancement dollars, and habitat protection.

Can you talk about how much is flowing right now, and what is actually needed, especially in light of the very few stocks that are going to make it through the slide? How critical is it that we get started on that work immediately?

**Mr. Greg Witzky:** If you're talking about how much funding is needed, it's almost a bottomless bucket right now, or we're looking at extinction. It's never been this low. We've never had such a run on record. I can't put a specific dollar amount on it, but what's worth more, money or salmon?

Darren, do you have anything to add?

**Mr. Darren Haskell:** As I mentioned, it's going to take millions. Basically, that's it. The number of projects proposed around the province adds up quickly. Hard labour is what it's going to take out there.

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

I also want to thank our witnesses who appeared today. Thank you for sharing your expertise and your knowledge on the issue that's taking place at Big Bar. We're delighted that you were able to join us.

We're going to take a minute now for our witnesses to sign off as we go into a very short bit of committee business.

● (1640)

Now, as we know, the committee agreed in June that we would meet twice in July and twice in August. We know that in August the schedule is Tuesday the 11th and Thursday the 13th. As a committee, we have to decide now which studies will be done in these two meetings.

I don't know if anyone would like to make a suggestion to the committee on what the committee should do for these two meetings in August. I will just add that for the Pacific salmon study, the motion indicated no fewer than six meetings. Once we have Thursday's meeting done, we will have had four of those six meetings.

I would like to receive some direction so that the analysts and clerk can start planning for witnesses going forward, and not leave it to the last minute.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** I wouldn't count the Big Bar sessions as part of the Pacific salmon study, Mr. Chair. We set aside a specific number of meetings to handle Big Bar, and then it was my thought that we would segue into the Pacific salmon study, because it's far bigger in scope than the Big Bar issue.

**The Chair:** I believe the original motion did say that the Big Bar was part of the salmon issue as well, unless the committee is going to change its timelines going forward. We did indicate, when discussing it at the time, that the Big Bar issue was part of the whole salmon issue on the west coast.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Certainly what we heard on the Big Bar could help inform or could be added to the Pacific salmon study, but based on a rough calculation, we would have two more meetings to deal only with the rest of the salmon issue. I don't think that's quite enough.

**The Chair:** Okay, but going back, we said it would be no fewer than six, so it can be more than that. That's the decision of the committee. The committee didn't limit the number of meetings it would hold on Pacific salmon; it just said it would be no fewer than six. All I'm saying is that if, for example, we dedicated the next two meetings here, we would have reached six. That's not saying we have to cut it off at that point.

Go ahead, Mr. Johns.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you.

It was my understanding that we were doing two sessions on Big Bar and were going to come back with recommendations to the department, and then that we were doing six separately on Pacific salmon. That was my understanding. It was that these studies were going to be separate and that we needed to hurry and get back to getting Big Bar out of the way and getting something back in terms of suggestions to the department to get moving on Big Bar.

We just heard from Mr. Tones about the need to get started on fish ladders now if we're thinking about next year. I don't think we can wait until we finish the salmon study. I actually saw them as very different. That was my understanding.

**The Chair:** Okay. Again I will say that the committee didn't handcuff itself with six meetings. It said we would have no fewer than six meetings. We can certainly add meetings for the Pacific salmon study. That's no problem.

My intent here today is to find out what we want to do for the next two meetings, which will be held in August, on August 11 and August 13. Do we continue on with Pacific salmon or do we go to something else? It will be the will of the committee.

Go ahead, Mr. Arnold.

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

I would support continuing with the Pacific salmon study for the next two meetings in August, and between now and then we can possibly have some discussions or email exchange to guide where we go from there.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Morrissey.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, have we exhausted the list of witnesses on salmon?

**The Chair:** No.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Okay, so we have some witnesses who are currently available for the next scheduled meetings.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Therefore, if members are going to require more meetings—and I hear opinion from Mr. Hardie and Mr. Johns—we probably should consider additional witnesses.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Am I hearing consensus that we continue on with at least the next two meetings on Pacific salmon? That way, if people have witnesses whose names they want to submit, they can get them in to the clerk and we can start lining up those witnesses for those two meetings.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Agreed.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** All right. I'm hearing consensus, so that's what we'll do for the next two meetings.

Nancy, I don't know if there's anything else from the clerk's end that you want to mention.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl):** Yes. From a procedural standpoint, in order to respect the order of the House, decisions have to be taken by recorded vote. If it's all right with you, we'll proceed with a recorded vote.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll have a recorded vote on the idea that we continue on with the study on Pacific salmon for the next two meetings, one to be held on August 11 and the second to be held on August 13.

Nancy, I'll ask you to call the recorded vote.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** I would also like to state that after this Thursday I believe we still need three meetings on Pacific salmon to satisfy the study motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Arnold, I'm sorry. We're into a vote on a motion.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Okay. I agree with the two August meetings being on salmon, then, and I'll speak afterwards. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Nancy.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

Mr. Arnold, did you want to raise an issue?

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

From my calculations, after this Thursday's meeting, it looks like we would still require three more meetings on Pacific salmon in order to meet the study requirements, but we can confirm that off-line as well.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'll ask the clerk to check back to see exactly how many meetings we've had and report back to the committee. We have time. If it's deemed to be only five up to that Thursday, we'll know that we have to have one more at least, but as I said ear-

lier, we're not handcuffed to just six meetings. We can extend it beyond that if we find it necessary.

Nancy, would you check into that for us when we come back, or report to committee on Thursday the exact intent of the motion and how many days we've dedicated to Pacific salmon?

**The Clerk:** We've already had one meeting with the officials, and that was mostly on Big Bar. Then we had two meetings on Big Bar, including today. Tomorrow will be a meeting on Pacific salmon more generally, and at the end of that meeting, time will be taken in camera so that you can suggest drafting instructions to the analysts, because Big Bar, according to the motion, requires an interim report before the final report.

After that, we go back to witnesses on Pacific salmon. Then, because there's no official limitation for meetings on Pacific salmon, there can be more than that. It can be more than two, it can be more than three. The committee technically said at least six meetings, but no maximum.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Okay, but I think, for the committee, Nancy, we'd like to know at that time how many meetings we have dedicated to Pacific salmon so that we would know if we've had five, or six, or four, or whatever the number is, just so the committee knows where we are. Then if there are any committee meetings still left to be scheduled after that time frame, we can deal with them at that point.

**The Clerk:** I'm sorry; the sound is a bit bad for me right now, but what I hear and understand from the question is that there will be witnesses on Pacific salmon Thursday, and then two more meetings in August. Then, we do not have dates in September. The motion adopted by the House is that the committee can meet for scheduling until September 21, but the committee has not adopted details to meet in September at this time.

**The Chair:** I suggest we move forward with knowing that we're going to have two more meetings on Pacific salmon. There may be more, but at least we have time now to get our witness list in so the clerk can get in touch with those witnesses and have them lined up for those dates as well.

Is there other committee business? I'm hearing nothing.

I thank everyone for your participation today—

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair—

**The Chair:** Yes, Nancy.

**The Clerk:** I'm sorry for the delay. It's because of my technical issues.

To answer Mr. Morrissey, he asked if we still had witnesses. I still have witnesses from most parties, but some parties are running low. I suggest, for example, that the Liberals are running low, and if they wanted to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] some parties still have a lot of witnesses, and some of the parties have a lot fewer.

**The Chair:** You were broken up a bit in what you were saying, Nancy, but I think it was to encourage members, if they still know of any witnesses they would like to see appear before committee, to

by all means send them in to the clerk as soon as possible so she can start making contact with those individuals and setting them up on the days they're available.

Hearing nothing else, I'll thank everybody for their participation today. We'll see you all here and well, hopefully, on Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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