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Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald



Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. 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 Standing Order 108(2) the committee is studying the subject matter of supplementary estimates (C) 2021-22, votes 1c, 5c and 10c, under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The committee will also resume its study of the traceability of fish and seafood products in its second panel today.

This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021.

Interpretation services are available for this meeting. Please inform me immediately if interpretation is lost and we will ensure it is restored before resuming. The “raise hand” feature at the bottom of the screen can be used at any time if you wish to speak or to alert the chair. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking and speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your microphone should be on mute. All comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair. I will remind all participants that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

Our guests for the first hour will be the Honourable Joyce Murray, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and her officials. I'm not going to introduce all of her officials. We can see their names, and if anybody has questions—

Yes, Madame Desbiens?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Chair, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but although I am very familiar with the rules mentioned at the beginning of the committee's meeting, I just want to let you know that I am not hearing the interpretation.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Is it corrected now with the interpretation?

Madame Desbiens, are you still not hearing me in French?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I am not hearing the interpretation, even though I chose the interpretation channel in French. I don't understand what is happening.

[English]

The Chair: It's translating the French, but not translating the English to French.

Can we ask our interpreters to check on that before we start the actual committee?

Someone has their hand up down at the back—

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I am being told that my assistant has no access to the interpretation in French, either. So at least two of us are having this issue.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, but if I say something now in English, as I'm doing, is it being translated into French?

It's working here in the room. The translation is taking place for members in the room.

Madame Desbiens, are you hearing it on your end?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: No.

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): I can't hear it either, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Me neither.

[English]

The Chair: We'll get that checked. We'll pause for a moment to see what's going on.

• (1105)

(Pause)

• (1110)

The Chair: Just to let everyone know, the technicians are working to get this resolved. We'll resume as soon as we get the go-ahead from them.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Yes, it is working, thank you very much. This is great.

[English]

The Chair: By that super comment, I take it you're getting the proper translation. I see thumbs-up, so we have that resolved. We are back.

One thing I want to bring up before we get into the actual presentation today is that we did have a Liaison Committee meeting yesterday, and I want to remind everyone that we had a presentation from interpretation services. They're having a lot of problems doing their job, and the effect on them is very impressive—or not impressive. It shouldn't be happening. People are not wearing the proper equipment.

Whether you are on Zoom or not, it is recommended that you wear the House-issued headphones. If that is not the case, going forward you will not be able to take part in a meeting. You'll be able to listen, but you will not be able to speak whatsoever, because we have to enforce that for the health and safety of the people providing interpretation services.

We'll continue now with today's meeting.

As we all know, we have Minister Joyce Murray and her staff here this morning.

The floor is yours, Minister, for your opening remarks.

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard): Thank you, Chair. I'm happy to be here again.

[Translation]

It is a pleasure to be joining you today here on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe peoples, alongside senior officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

[English]

They are Tim Sargent, deputy minister; Mario Pelletier, Coast Guard commissioner; and their senior teams.

I'll start by providing a brief overview of my department's 2021-22 supplementary estimates (C) before speaking about some of the high-level items in more detail. Following my remarks, I'll be happy to answer, of course, any questions you have about these proposed expenditures.

Through this supplementary estimates (C) exercise, I'm seeking \$243.2 million. These funds will be used for three key initiatives: first, \$148.4 million for the small craft harbours program; second, \$36.8 million for the Pacific salmon strategy initiative; and third, \$31.3 million to offset costs associated with the Blich Island marine pollution incident.

Mr. Chair, last week I attended Seafood Expo North America, which may be referred to as the “Boston seafood show”. I met stakeholders, discussed our growing blue economy, and promoted Canada's world-class fish and seafood sectors. The fish and seafood sector is critical to our country's economy, and is by and large in excellent shape thanks to the stewardship of harvesters and industry.

In 2021 Canada exported \$8.7 billion worth of fish and seafood to 119 countries. In 2020 the commercial fishing, aquaculture and processing sectors employed over 68,000 people. That's very significant.

Harvesters depend on small craft harbours. In fact, 90% of Canada's fish and seafood moves through DFO's national network of small craft harbours.

[Translation]

Keeping almost 1,000 commercial harbours safe, accessible and in good repair requires considerable time, effort and money. The funding I am requesting today will speed up repair and maintenance of Fisheries and Oceans Canada's core small craft harbours in communities across the country. It will also be used to divest non-core harbours and close inactive harbours that are unsafe but can't be divested

• (1115)

[English]

Mr. Chair, as I mentioned during my last appearance, our government is making a generational investment to stabilize and restore Pacific salmon and salmon habitat for the communities, the people and the ecosystems that depend on their sustainability. The funding I'm requesting today will go towards the Pacific salmon strategy initiative, which uses a collaborative approach to address Pacific salmon declines and ensure that federal investments are focused on the areas of the greatest importance.

Some of the areas we're targeting are the implementation of key activities across all four of the PSSI pillars. These activities include creating a habitat restoration centre of expertise, climate science and ecosystem planning; an enhanced fisheries monitoring process; and a commercial licence retirement support program for harvesters, as well as the allocation of capital funding to build and retrofit both DFO and community hatcheries.

The department's continuing work will ensure that new and ongoing investments in Pacific salmon are appropriately aligned in response to these unfortunate and historic declines, along with the development of conservation approaches and plans to support the recovery of prioritized salmon populations. With this funding, we will provide sustainable harvest opportunities for the indigenous, commercial and recreational sectors through effective stewardship and integrated ecosystem planning.

Mr. Chair, between December 2020 and July 2021, the Canadian Coast Guard led a unified response to a petroleum leak stemming from a historic shipwreck near Blich Island in British Columbia. By the time this environmental response had concluded, 60 tonnes of pollutants were removed from the ship and surrounding waters at a cost of \$31.3 million.

Our government funded this environmental response operation given the urgency of the situation and because the shipwreck occurred in 1968, which exceeds the time limitation to claim response expenses against the vessel owner under Canada's Marine Liability Act.

[Translation]

My department is well positioned to deliver on our government's priorities.

The funding I am seeking today will allow Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard to continue carrying out their important work on behalf of the people we serve.

I am happy to answer any questions related to this work, with the help of the officials who are joining me.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that, Minister.

I don't know if either one of the staff has an opening statement. I didn't ask at the beginning. I apologize if they do.

We'll go right to rounds of questioning.

To start off, of course, we'll go to Mr. Perkins for six minutes or less, please.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for coming.

I'd like to follow up on my question to you in the House yesterday about the the expropriation of the crab and elver quota that you recently announced. It's important, obviously. I appreciate that reconciliation occurs and that fisheries play an important part in it. You mentioned that the department was working with industry to find solutions. Those two industries have told me that the DFO approach has been to tell them what was going to happen, not actually to consult.

On January 5, you wrote to me regarding entrance to the elver fishery. I quote from that letter, which said, "Access to the elver fishery can currently be obtained through a private arrangement". You rejected the idea of opening up new licences for the elver fishery.

Again, on February 24, in response to another letter to me dealing with the elver reallocation of the 14% or more shift of the quota, the department wrote that "this reallocation would occur without the provision of any financial assistance to licence holders."

Expropriation of quota now has all fishers of all species worried, and their investors worried, that you are going to continue to take this arbitrary approach to reallocating quota. Hundreds of millions of dollars of debt and businesses are at stake.

I'd like to know why you, as minister, have abandoned—which your letters confirm to me—the long-held policy as established under the Marshall response that the approach of the department is that indigenous acquisition of quota and effort will be done through a willing buyer/willing seller process only.

Why have you abandoned that?

• (1120)

Hon. Joyce Murray: Thank you for that question, Mr. Perkins, because it gives me a chance to confirm that no decisions have been made and implemented on either the Area E crab fishery or the elver fishery at this point. We are in discussion with both the indigenous communities and the fish harvester communities on these matters.

The reality is that first nations have a treaty-affirmed right to fish for a moderate livelihood on the east coast. DFO is working on a nation-to-nation basis to further implement that right. In Area E, a court ruling granted the Nuu-chah-nulth communities additional rights over the crab fishery. We are working to implement that as well.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I appreciate that, but the court didn't say to remove 50% of the existing quota and transfer it to other fishers. That was your decision. You have communicated that directly to those fishers, both in letter and in meeting.

I going to ask you a question on another issue.

We have an obligation to pay our dues to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. That money pays to help control invasive species, as you know. Through five Ministers of Fisheries in six years under this government, not one minister has paid our full dues to that commission.

This year, the Americans expect us to be putting in \$19.4 million in funding, but we have only allocated, in your estimates, \$10.6 million. That's an \$8.8 million shortfall. The U.S. expressed their desire, obviously, for us to pay our full resources to protect from invasive species, but they are now talking about not continuing to pay our share of those.

Will you commit that you will return the government to paying its full obligation?

Hon. Joyce Murray: Thanks for the question on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

I just want to acknowledge the great work they do and their effectiveness with the sea lamprey control activities they've been leading, backed by science—

Mr. Rick Perkins: And pay the bills—

Hon. Joyce Murray: —over all of these years. I know the commission is advocating for a government change. We are working closely with interested parties to make sure we make the best decision for Canadians—

Mr. Rick Perkins: Well, the best decision is to pay the bills.

Hon. Joyce Murray: —and I'm going to make sure that the good work they're doing is not adversely affected during this period.

Mr. Rick Perkins: The best decision is to pay the bills and to not allow that invasive species to overtake the Great Lakes, and to live up to our obligation.

Hon. Joyce Murray: Yes.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Now, to the Avon River, summer dust storms have been wreaking havoc in the town of Windsor. You sign the order every two weeks to allow that river to stay dry. Once spring is over the riverbed dries up and it's sand. We have these terrible sandstorms in the town of Windsor.

The Liberal member of Parliament for Kings-Hants has written to you many times and has been very public, asking for you to alter that order so that at least in the summer some water is kept in that pond so that we don't get these environmentally hazardous and health-hazard sandstorms in the town of Windsor. Personally I'd like you to alter the order to return the pond.

Will you commit to look at altering that order when the time comes?

Hon. Joyce Murray: What I will commit to is what we are doing, which is working with the town, and working with the province that is responsible for the highway that is part of this challenge, and working with local community members who have been using the recreational facilities in the past in that area to find, with them, a way forward that also respects and protects the habitat that is important in that area for our fisheries.

We're very constructively engaged with all the partners on this, and I'm confident that we'll find a way forward that's mutually acceptable to all.

• (1125)

Mr. Rick Perkins: So the dust storms will continue.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins. We've gone a little bit over time.

We'll now go to Mr. Morrissey, who I understand may be sharing his time. I'll leave it up to him to decide when it is.

I will remind committee members to direct your comments through the chair when somebody says "you". That would be me, and I have no intent of responding. I hear the Speaker in the House say that many times. I've been waiting a long while to say it.

We go on to you, Mr. Morrissey, for six minutes or less.

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

I'm sharing my time with Mr. Cormier.

Welcome, Minister. I have to pass on a compliment that was given to you in an earlier committee meeting when we were studying issues on the west coast. One of the witnesses said you are "the lone voice" in defending salmon", Madam Minister.

My question is on small craft harbours. You identified in the supplementaries the additional money. Our government has committed significant additional dollars in the capital budget for small craft harbours, which are so important, as you identified, to our coastal rural communities. Could you give us some information on how fast your department is able to transfer it from a budget decision to actual piles being driven at these harbours across Atlantic Canada, or any place else?

Could you just give us a brief overview on the timeline it takes to get it from budget to actual projects, and then that work actually happening for the benefit of fishers?

Hon. Joyce Murray: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, this earpiece is cutting in and out. I don't know whether the technical staff can do anything about that, but in terms of amplification, it's not working very well.

Yes, I can talk about that, and then I will turn it over to the deputy for the more precise timing. For those who are interested in small craft harbours, which are many people across Canada—this is almost 1,000 small craft harbours—there was a lack of funding for 10 years into this program, and so there was a lot of backed-up maintenance that was needed when we were elected.

Since 2016, we've announced \$784 million to invest in the small craft harbours program, and in this recent 2021 budget, there is \$300 million. As I mentioned, there is a significant amount in the supplementary estimates.

What it takes to get from a budget to actually getting shovels in the ground are a set of steps. We want to do this on a needs basis, and there are almost a thousand of them. The first step is that staff in the regional offices collect information to evaluate the variety of proposed projects to do upgrades or replacements. They have a uniform set of criteria across all the regions.

The second step is that they make their evaluations on the safety and security as well as level of activity and value of catch. They feed that information in, and then the department conducts a national peer review of all the proposals across the country to determine which ones should be prioritized in a master five-year plan. Unfortunately, this does not mean there are going to be weeks between the funding and the action, and I know that people are very keen to get the job done.

Lastly, the department works with indigenous groups and community leaders in the planning and design of the specific project. At that point, the dollars can flow.

Perhaps the deputy minister can give a bit more—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Actually, Minister, that's fine. If your official can provide the details—

Hon. Joyce Murray: Yes, we can do that in writing.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: —because I want to turn my time to my colleague, Mr. Cormier. If we could get the details submitted to the committee, that would be great.

Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: I thank my colleague Mr. Morrissey.

Minister, I don't have much time left, but I would like to thank you for coming to my riding last week. We had an opportunity to make a very nice announcement at the McGraw Seafood factory along with Jake Augustine. We also met with people from two associations, the Fédération régionale acadienne des pêcheurs professionnels and the Association des crabiers acadiens.

Crab, lobster and shrimp are part of a fishing industry that is very important in my region. Right whales have been present in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in the past five years, as you know. That is especially the case in my riding. That impacts fisheries. In recent years, we have put in place all the resources required for the season to begin as soon as possible, by conducting icebreaking operations, for example.

Could you tell us what you are doing this year to enable us to begin the season as soon as possible, minimize interactions with right whales and have a profitable fishing season across our industry?

Thank you, Minister.

• (1130)

Hon. Joyce Murray: Thank you for the question, Mr. Cormier. I also thank you for giving me the opportunity, last week, to visit people and fishing grounds on the Acadian peninsula.

[English]

As you mentioned, I had conversations with fish harvesters and the Acadian Crabbers Association. I saw how important the crab fishery is to your community and the critical role DFO plays by getting access to the fishery as early as possible in the season.

Thank you for showing me those maps of the ice and how it slowly melts. There are choke points, and so that's the essence of what we're working on. We know that crabbers have to get out into the water as early as possible. There are some areas in the inner harbour where we have small icebreakers heading up to your area—the Coast Guard icebreakers—as we speak. With regard to the amphibious machines that need to go into those tighter channels to move that ice, those contracts are being signed and those will be there soon. Then there will be heavier icebreakers and Canadian Coast Guard hovercrafts.

We're putting in all of our equipment and our forces to help your constituents and fishers get out on the water as soon as possible.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you, Minister, and thanks again for your visit last week.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cormier.

We'll now go to Madame Desbiens for six minutes or less, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also want to thank the minister for joining us. She is being very generous with her time, and we really appreciate that.

An amount of \$148 million was added in this new class of millions, if I may put it that way. In Quebec, we are a bit worried about our small ports that are not necessarily used commercially, but that are used for entertainment and recreational activities at sea.

For example, I am thinking of the port in Verchères, a municipality that is turning 350 years old this year. The federal government owns that port, but it is inaccessible. Barriers have been installed. Verchères is 350 years old, which is older than Canada. People are worried about ending up with a completely obsolete wharf in the middle of beautiful grounds they will have set up for the festivities.

What portion of that \$148 million will be used for small ports like this one, which urgently need repairs and which the municipality is ready to take over again once they have been upgraded? We have a few of those, including on the Îles de la Madeleine and the Île d'Orléans, as well as in a number of coastal villages.

Could you comment on that?

[English]

Hon. Joyce Murray: As I mentioned, the process of making a decision amongst a thousand harbours, especially when there was a big backlog of work facing us in 2016, is a careful one. It's not as fast as people would like, but we are absolutely committed to repairing and transitioning some of these harbours.

Where there is not a core commercial purpose—and that commercial purpose can be things other than fisheries, such as tourism and so on—and there is a community that is interested, we divest the docks, the wharves, to the community. That is a very positive program. I have visited small harbours where the community and the harbour management group have a whole set of community members who are involved with the work they're doing. It is a really strong community-building process. It sounds like a natural for your situation, but I'll turn it over to the deputy to see if there are any specifics we can share.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Timothy Sargent (Deputy Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you for the question.

The Verchères federal wharf is actually a priority for us. We are very aware of the problems you talked about.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: It is indeed an emergency. I am happy to hear you say so. It gives us some hope. People in Verchères will also be happy, as well as my colleague Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval.

On another topic, I would like to talk to you about the Canadian Coast Guard.

In Quebec, it has been brought up that certain emergency services were still not being offered effectively in French. A few facts have been reported on.

Budgets and equipment were also discussed. Although we are not talking about accidents like those we have seen on the Pacific side, people have still lost their lives because the Canadian Coast Guard was not equipped to save them. For example, I am thinking of the people who were paddleboarding in the Baie des Rochers.

Is there a budget set aside for the Canadian Coast Guard's equipment on the St. Lawrence River?

[English]

Hon. Joyce Murray: Thank you for that question.

[Translation]

I would first like to say that we are committed to providing services in both official languages everywhere, to the best of our ability.

As for the specific question concerning equipment, I will ask the commissioner to answer it.

Mr. Mario Pelletier (Commissioner, Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you for the question.

Budgets enable us to ensure that equipment is always cutting-edge. We have an equipment review program in place and we ensure that all search and rescue stations have the same type of equipment from coast to coast. No specific sector is prioritized. Equipment is reviewed regularly and replaced as needed.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I know that my colleague Mr. Cormier is also especially interested in the matter of services in French. Given the labour shortage, can we hope for special attention to be given to regions with the highest density of francophones in Canada?

Mr. Mario Pelletier: The reason there is a search and rescue coordination centre in Quebec is to have that francophone capacity. There are also francophone or bilingual search and rescue coordinators in Trenton and Halifax, which cover some of the Quebec sector's extremities.

If you have a specific case in mind, it would be my pleasure to follow up on it. That said, no cases have been brought to my attention.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Desbiens.

We'll now go to Ms. Barron for six minutes or less, please.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, it's so nice to see you back today with us at committee. It was also nice to see you in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith recently. I do hope that we can coordinate future visits. I have many people I'd love to introduce you to.

I did ask about this a bit. I was hoping to get some updates and for you to perhaps expand a little on your answer. We know that in our B.C. waters here on the west coast we're seeing a rapid decline in Pacific wild salmon. We know that in order to protect these wild salmon, we need to get open-net pen fish farms out of our waters. Although we've been seeing steps in the right direction, we're still seeing proposals for massive increases in fish farming in regions like Clayoquot Sound. With many of the fish farming li-

cences up for renewal in the next few weeks, we need a clear plan about how this government will meet its commitment by 2025.

I'm wondering if you can clarify when we will see a clear plan to transition away from open-net fish farms. Will this plan include moving away from in-water salmon farming in British Columbia?

Hon. Joyce Murray: The protection of wild salmon is a total priority for British Columbians and, as we know, any manageable risk needs to be managed, so that's one of the reasons for the transition away from open-net pen salmon farming in coastal British Columbia waters. I would say that the transition has actually begun already with the December 2020 decision not to renew licences in the Discovery Islands area and to have those net-pens removed by summer of 2022.

Yes, we have a critical path for how we will move forward with this program. We're in consultation with the licence-holders, the indigenous communities and others on this so that we move forward in a holistic and skilful way. The decision on the current licences that you mentioned will be occurring over the coming months, so there are no decisions to be made immediately, and those consultations are important to that.

I am committed to a vision that this transition must include economic opportunities for communities to have the jobs and activities they need, so that's really why we need a responsible plan. I think that attracting the capital to create a world-class sustainable technology aquaculture industry is the opportunity here. What are the technologies that don't provide any or absolutely minimal interface or risk? Let's be the destination of choice for some of the sustainable aquaculture that's starting to emerge in other parts of the world today.

● (1140)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you.

You touched on it, but could you expand on whether we will be seeing funds set aside specifically for workers as they transition?

Hon. Joyce Murray: We are in discussion with the provincial government. I had a meeting with the provincial fisheries minister prior to this cabinet shuffle, and I've requested to meet with the new fisheries minister so that we can talk about the set of things that have provincial and federal jurisdictional overlap.

Yes, I'm interested in a just transition in this industry, and on just what the detailed elements of the rest of the transition may be, we are working on that by consulting with the various partners and players who are affected by this.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Minister.

I want to make sure I have time for a third question. I have so many questions to ask.

I wanted to touch on the reallocation of crab fishing quotas to first nations in an effort to reconcile the loss of traditional and constitutionally protected indigenous rights to catch and sell fish on the west coast of British Columbia. While we're seeing that there is agreement that first nations rights must be honoured to correct historical wrongs, there are frustrations on all sides about the lack of consultation with commercial fishers as well as first nations.

Commercial fishers shouldn't be bearing the costs of this decision. Will the government act quickly to fully compensate the impacted crab fishers for economic losses and invest in transitional supports so they may pursue other options for their livelihoods?

Hon. Joyce Murray: The answer is yes. We are working with the various parties. We have every intention of mitigating some of the impacts on the commercial harvesters. My understanding is that this will be a graduated transition, which provides time for us to really understand the full impact and elements and to provide some mitigation support.

What is non-negotiable is that the local indigenous communities have a right to fish for crab. We cannot undermine our conservation values by just adding that on to existing authorizations and licences. This transition will be done carefully, in discussion with all parties and as fairly as possible.

The deputy may have something to add to that.

• (1145)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Do I have time for one—

The Chair: No, actually, you've gone over.

I'd like to remind members that if you're having a conversation with the person seated next to you, try to do it as quietly as possible. For some reason it was very easy to hear it here at the head of the table. It was the same for some staff sitting close by. I just want to remind members of that.

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

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

Thank you to the minister for appearing again today with members from your department.

Minister, in your opening remarks you noted \$36.8 million for the Pacific salmon strategic initiative. I would take it that this is a priority for your department.

In this committee's study of the flooding in B.C., the committee heard that the PSSI would be the delivery program to address the impacts of the flooding, yet the committee has also heard that PSSI was being built from the ground up and is not yet operational. It baffles me as to why a program that is non-operational, or not fully operational, would be designated as a delivery program for actions that are needed now and not months down the road.

Can you tell us today quickly where the process of the Pacific salmon strategic initiative development is at? How much of the \$647 million has already been committed and to what?

If the answer is lengthy, we can take that answer in writing, but I would appreciate a brief breakdown today, please.

Hon. Joyce Murray: Thank you for that question. I'm sure we can provide more detail in a written response.

However, the \$36.8 million is what is available through the supplementary estimates (C) when that gets voted on. That's not a fifth of the total amount, which is closer to \$750 million. The important thing is to set things up in year one. That's what year one is about.

The flood response is not waiting for us to set up the PSSI to respond. In fact, I've been part of the emergency committee that was set up and made up of provincial and federal cabinet ministers just days after the flood happened so that we could work together and really identify all of the various impacts of those terrible floods on people, on their businesses, on farms and on habitat.

My part of that is to make sure that the salmon habitat is considered, that our hatcheries are repaired—

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

I'll wait for the full response on how much has been committed already.

Recently, I put out an invitation for fish harvesters and others to provide me with questions they would like asked.

Justen from Falkland in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap, sent me this. He asked, "When will you implement UN-DRIP and reinstate jurisdiction over fisheries and waterways to first nations?"

Hon. Joyce Murray: I would tell Justen that is an ongoing process of looking at the rights that indigenous peoples have, and ensuring that they are involved in the fisheries and the economic opportunities they bring, as well as the processing sector. We're very involved in that process on all three coasts.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Reconciliation is a big part of that. It's also a concern that's being raised by British Columbian harvesters. They support reconciliation, but one identified that it is a national obligation.

You've announced decisions under the auspices of reconciliation, and some of these have profound impacts on the harvesters. If you can agree that reconciliation is a national responsibility, do you think it's fair and appropriate that one group of Canadians, like the crab harvesters in B.C., or the elver harvesters in the Maritimes, are responsible for bearing the cost of that reconciliation?

Hon. Joyce Murray: You're right. I agree that reconciliation is a national responsibility, and we're doing that on all three coasts.

We are working with the industry on the transition of some of the licences to indigenous communities. Those licences are not properly owned by the current harvesters. However, we want to make sure that we provide for the costs, and we're having those conversations on each of these matters.

Perhaps the deputy has more to offer on that.

• (1150)

Mr. Mel Arnold: I will move on to my next question.

Aquatic invasive species are very important to me and my riding in the interior of British Columbia. In 2019, the Prime Minister issued the fisheries minister a mandate to make new investments to fight invasive species. Apart from adding a single full-time FTE at DFO Pacific, your previous Minister Jordan failed to deliver on her mandate.

When will you, as fisheries minister, stand up for British Columbians and other provinces and finally deliver new investments to fight against aquatic invasive species in B.C.?

The Chair: If we could get an answer in writing, that would be great. We've gone well over the five-minute allotment, unfortunately.

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

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Madam Minister, for being here this morning.

Madam Minister, since 2015, as you know I have worked almost daily with colleagues and stakeholders to advance the government's Great Lakes agenda. You've been a part of that dialogue, your staff has, and I want to thank you for that.

To be blunt, our government made several Great Lakes platform promises in both 2015 as well as 2019 that would be quite impactful on the basin, and I am anxious to move these commitments ahead, as you know.

Your department, as I've said earlier, has played and continues to play a big role. I'm pleased to hear in your opening remarks that you are well positioned, Madam Minister, to advance the government's agenda. I would like to drill down on precisely what that means for the Great Lakes and would like to know more about your Great Lakes plan.

The reason I want to get into the weeds on this is that DFO has not always focused on the Great Lakes. In fact, many Great Lakes stakeholders call the Great Lakes Canada's "forgotten coast". The Great Lakes rarely factor in government strategies on water and fisheries. As just one example, when you appeared at the committee on the topic of your mandate letter, the subject never even came up by you or your staff or members of the committee. Not one of the members from any party asked about your Great Lakes role.

Of course, some of this stems from the fact that despite the Great Lakes being home to an \$8-billion fishery—that's a "b"—there is not one MP from Ontario on the committee, which is unfortunate, and hence one of the reasons I am here today.

This missing link means that there are policy and knowledge gaps in what is raised around the table with respect to the Great Lakes. For example, when the blue economy strategy was first devised, it failed to account for anything other than Canada's coastal fisheries, and as I have raised with your department many times, not all fish swim in salt water.

Ignoring the economic output of the Great Lakes is to ignore billions' worth of untapped potential, and I was certainly pleased to see that you've fixed that shortcoming in the most recent incarnation of the strategy. I am hopeful that this awareness is foreshadowing what is to come. We spoke about this on many occasions. Once again, I want to thank you for that.

I say this all as a former mayor who sat, and continues to sit, on the Great Lakes...as an MP and who knows the triple bottom line implications of the Great Lakes, that being the economic, environmental and socio-cultural. Thirty-five hundred species of plants and animals, drinking water for millions, 238,000 jobs and fifty billion dollars' worth of economic output should at the very least warrant serious consideration in this upcoming federal budget. The Great Lakes fishery alone is worth \$8 billion—once again with a "b"—annually, yet Canada has for 40 years fallen short on our promises to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, something that I hope will be fully addressed once again in the upcoming budget.

Minister, with all this as context, I have two simple questions.

First, of the \$243.2 million in new authorizations before us today, how much will be specifically allocated to Great Lakes projects and programming, and how will these new resources specifically advance your promise to advance the government's Great Lakes agenda?

Secondly, can you point to the line in the supplementary estimates (C) or in any financial document brought before the committee that specifies the exact amount of our allocation to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to support that binational organization and the work they do to protect the \$8-billion Great Lakes Fishery?

Hon. Joyce Murray: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the member for his tireless championing of the Great Lakes area, its people, its economy and its environment. He's truly a champion for the Great Lakes. I'm pleased that we as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are involved in the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to address the invasive species of sea lamprey, and in a successful way over many decades.

I've talked about that already, so if there are specific answers to the quantitative requests that the member has, we will provide that.

What I do want to say is that freshwater fisheries across Canada are delegated to the provinces. I was in provincial government, for example, many years ago, and I was the delegated authority by DFO to do activities and management in the land aspect of the fisheries. My guess is that the provinces that are involved with the Great Lakes, such as Ontario, have fisheries officers and others who are active in that regard. We do look after small craft harbours, so there are harbours in some of our freshwater fisheries.

I will draw attention to our government's new national water strategy that Parliamentary Secretary Terry Duguid has announced recently, which is a very timely and important way to look more holistically at Canada's fresh water, its environment, its use, its protection, its importance economically and to have a framework for moving forward to have healthy, abundant fresh water as a nation, as we're known to have.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Badawey. That went a little bit over time, but I want to make sure we get answers on the record when somebody starts to answer a question.

We'll now go to Madame Desbiens.

You have two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will begin by bringing the minister's attention to my little fish, the capelin in the St. Lawrence River. We are not giving up on the fish. We have two capelin fisheries to save, two fisheries that are part of intangible heritage. To ensure their survival, we need the opening date for those fisheries to be set for April 1. So I want the minister and her colleague to know that we will not give up on the capelin. There is a substantial file showing that the St. Lawrence capelin, according to DNA tests, has nothing to do with the Newfoundland and Labrador capelin.

I just wanted to mention all this. I am not asking for an answer right away, but I wanted to tell them that we will remain very active in this file. On April 1, our deadline, I will bring the minister a little fish.

I would like to hear the minister's or her assistant's comments on the way the \$5.5 million will be broken down to advance the reconciliation of indigenous rights and issues related to fishing.

I would also like to know what the minister considers subsistence fishing.

Hon. Joyce Murray: I thank the member for her question.

I will ask the deputy minister to answer the question on the \$5.5 million.

As for the effective date of April 1, we use the best scientific data available, in consultation with the industry, to determine the opening of our fishing seasons. We are looking at the scientific data. It is important for this review to be done to inform any decision on the opening date.

That said, we do understand the importance for fishers in your riding to have a date soon.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Actually, we're just over time, so if we could get a written response on the numbers part of that question and answer, that would be great. I'm trying to get in everything I can in this round.

Ms. Barron, go ahead for two and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Chair.

Looking toward the upcoming budget, I want to ask how the minister will move forward to ensure that commercial fishing licences are benefiting coastal communities and not foreign corporations. In the upcoming budget, will west coast commercial fishers see a renewed commitment to ensuring that beneficial ownership in our fishery remains in Canada, and see support for our west coast owner-operator licensing model?

• (1200)

Hon. Joyce Murray: Well, I do support economically viable and sustainable fisheries on all coasts. I want to thank the committee—I know that MP Hardie had a big hand in this—for having a study of the ownership structure of our fisheries on the west coast. Our department is analyzing the various aspects of ownership structures so that we can look at what changes, if any, might be needed going forward. We want to make sure that any future policy takes into consideration the needs, rights and views of indigenous groups and that the policy solutions work for all British Columbians.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you.

I wanted to reiterate the timeliness of the second part of the question I was asking about before. We're hearing from the B.C. crab association, and they're repeatedly explaining their frustration. Unfortunately, what we're hearing is that it is landing on deaf ears—that we're having their fishery access cut in half, with no timely compensation or mitigation, and no proper framework for consultation, or table to negotiate a fair compensatory mechanism in place.

We don't want to have families going bankrupt as a result of the inaction that is occurring or the decisions that are resulting. When will this be addressed? We know that this allocation will come into effect on April 1. It's creating unnecessary division. Could you please speak to this and to this very timely issue?

Hon. Joyce Murray: I would say to the member that sometimes with court decisions, the timing of that is not in our control. It might not give us as much time as we would like, but we have to do this right. That's what we're engaged with now.

The deputy may have some details to offer on that.

Mr. Timothy Sargent: Mr. Chair, we've been meeting with the crab association. We've met with them many times since December. We've also met with the first nations. In fact, the crab association and the first nations have also had their own bilateral meeting.

We are trying to work this issue out. It is certainly not true that we're not talking to people. We are talking to everybody here.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barron.

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

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

I gave you these questions that I'm going to ask ahead of the committee meeting, so I'll begin. The south coast recreational salmon fishery is dying due to an exceedingly severe chinook salmon management regime. Chinook non-retention regulations have been imposed across almost 100% of the Salish Sea, in inside and approach waters, during the four peak fishing months for the past three years.

As the Minister of Fisheries, you have a mandate to sustain fisheries where reasonable. Data-supported and precautionary opportunities exist. Public salmon fisheries are the most economically important fisheries in B.C. Chinook salmon are the fundamental driver for these fisheries.

During the 2021-22 integrated fishery management plans consultation process, DFO withheld concerns over certain salmon stocks in Howe Sound and the Salish Sea from the sport fishing advisory board. As a result, the modest SFAB proposals that would have provided much-needed socio-economic relief for southern B.C. in 2021, as well as alignment with the blue economy, were not supported and not approved due to undisclosed concerns. These previously undisclosed new concerns were finally made known to the sport fishery advisory board *post facto*.

Through very recent meetings with your staff, proposals have been put forward that address those new concerns in Howe Sound, Pacific fisheries management area 28, and southeast Vancouver Island PFMA's 17, 18 and 19, as I previously asked you. These amended proposals, which were already ranked as low risk, provide even more protection for local and Fraser River stocks of concern.

Minister Murray, when I previously asked you here at the standing committee if you were committed to working with the recreational fishery, you said yes. My question is this: Will you recommend that these modest conservation-based proposals be implemented for April 1, 2022?

• (1205)

Hon. Joyce Murray: I'd like to thank the member for that question. I have met with the representatives of the recreational fishers. I completely understand, as a coastal British Columbian who spends time on the water and on the Salish Sea islands, just how critical this is.

I also understand that the recreational fishery is worth multiple times, I think six times, the commercial salmon harvest, so it is very important economically as well. We are having discussions

with the recreational sport fishery representatives. The department knows it is a priority for me that we give serious consideration to the request—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you, Minister. I—

Hon. Joyce Murray: —and we are considering their proposals. Those discussions aren't done yet.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you. I appreciate that you're working on it. Again, the question was “will” it be implemented, not “may” or “if”. We need an answer, Minister.

I'll go to my next question. So far during the current integrated harvest planning process, senior DFO Pacific region staff have informed the sport fishing advisory board that they will not reopen the existing 2021-22 salmon IFMP, which would result in a fourth year of severe socio-economic hardship, starting April 1, 2022.

I use this example for comparison. If sockeye showed up in harvestable numbers far more than anticipated, would DFO prevent the harvest of those fish because doing so varied from the IFMP? The sport fishery advisory board has met the department's new information requirement. The SFAB has substantially adjusted their proposals based on this new information.

Minister, this is my second question: Will you instruct your DFO Pacific region senior staff to stop putting roadblocks in front of the public fishery advisers, open the IFMP and adopt these extremely low-risk proposals?

Hon. Joyce Murray: To the member, the department is in discussions with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board on these matters. It takes their concerns and their proposal seriously.

I do want to reinforce, though, just a broader context—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Minister, I have 30 seconds, so I'll ask my last question. I'm sorry.

Hon. Joyce Murray: Okay.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Are Rebecca Reid and other Pacific region senior staff in charge of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans or are you?

Hon. Joyce Murray: I think the member knows the answer to that question. The minister makes these decisions with the best advice of the scientists and the staff who work for DFO.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zimmer.

We'll now try to fit Mr. Hardie in for five minutes or less, please.

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

Through you to the minister, a letter is coming your way, Minister, that represents some really good work by everybody on this committee as we looked at the implications of the flooding in the Fraser Valley and basically the difficulty that salmon have in reaching a lot of very good habitat that traditionally has been cut off by flood control mitigation.

I would ask that once the minister gets this letter we receive a fulsome response to this committee on the recommendations and the findings in that letter.

You mentioned the Bligh Island issue that went back to 1968. I want to go back to 2016 and the *Nathan E. Stewart* tugboat sinking, which unleashed a great deal of diesel into the water. One of the issues at that time was the lack of consultation with and the use of traditional knowledge from first nations in order to manage that whole issue. Basically, I wanted to find out—in your planning and your mandate letter—how much of the first nation knowledge, etc., will be factored into future strategies that come out of the DFO and your ministry.

Specifically, I would like the minister to comment on work that was done or was proposed to be done at the Kitsilano Coast Guard base, which this government rescued from being closed. There was supposed to be training there for first nation communities in rescues and all of the things that need to be responded to when a mishap happens along the coast.

I hope that wasn't too convoluted a question for the minister, but I'd appreciate her answer.

Hon. Joyce Murray: That was indeed a disastrous situation that the member referred to with the spill and the sinking. That's one of the key focuses of our oceans protection plan: to put in place the capacity for indigenous communities to be guardians of the waters, their traditional waters, and to have the craft, the equipment and the training to be able to identify problems and respond very quickly.

I will say that with the *Zim Kingston* incident, the first call that went out from the incident commander was to the local indigenous communities, and they were partners in the spill response throughout. We're going to be building on that capacity to respond. It has already been hugely increased by the \$1.5-billion oceans protection plan.

Perhaps the commissioner has a more granular response to the way the Kitsilano Coast Guard base, which we reinstated and expanded, is being used for indigenous training.

• (1210)

Mr. Mario Pelletier: Thank you, Minister.

Yes, we indeed have many indigenous training programs that came to light with the OPP and have been very successful. A good example of this is that at the end of the first training session, people went back home and the next morning there was a search and rescue incident around Tofino. The person who got the call jumped in their boat and went out and saved that person. That very first training session translated into saving a life.

We put a lot of emphasis on this. Kitsilano is fully operational, and it has been one of the busiest search and rescue stations so far.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

I'd like to cut it off here, if that's okay. We're all out of time for the first hour.

I want to say thank you to the minister, and of course to her officials, for appearing today once again.

We'll recess for a couple of minutes to swap out attendees here at the committee.

Again, thank you very much.

• (1210) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1215)

The Chair: We're back. We're going to be a little bit short on time on this one, but we'll try and get as much of it in as we can.

We will now resume with our second panel, of course. I have a few comments for the information of our new witnesses.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. Members may also identify from which witness they would like a response. When you are ready to speak, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. When you are not speaking, your mike must be on mute. I remind you again that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either the floor, French or English. Please inform me immediately if interpretation is lost and we will ensure it is restored. When speaking, please speak clearly and slowly.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses today.

We have, from the Canada Border Services Agency, Shawn Hoag, director general, commercial program, and Lidija Lebar, director, program and policy management. From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have Mr. Doug Forsyth, director general, market access. As an individual, we have Carmen Sotelo, researcher with the Spanish National Research Council.

We'll now hear opening statements. We'll begin with the Canada Border Services Agency for five minutes or less, please.

• (1220)

Mr. Shawn Hoag (Director General, Commercial Program, Canada Border Services Agency): Good afternoon.

Thank you, honourable Chair and honourable members.

I'm here today to speak to you about CBSA's role within the management of the fisheries, and specifically the areas that concern the crossing of the border.

I first want to say thank you to the committee for the opportunity to contribute to the committee's examination of the traceability of fish and seafood products, and to speak to the CBSA's role in this process. While I cannot outline all aspects of the process in terms of what other government department are responsible for, I can speak to this process from the perspective of the Canada Border Services Agency.

The CBSA facilitates the flow of legitimate trade and enforces more than 100 acts and regulations that keep our country and Canadians safe. In terms of fish and seafood importation, the CBSA plays a role in delivering the program by verifying that other government department requirements are met for seafood being imported and exported to and from Canada, as well as administering the Customs Act.

The policies governing the importation of fish, seafood, seafood products and shellfish are established by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Environment and Climate Change Canada. The CBSA works closely with these other government departments to support them and ensure that fish and seafood importations are compliant with the established policies. These activities primarily include verifying that any required licences, permits, certificates or other documentation required to import the goods to Canada are provided while also ensuring that appropriate duties and taxes are remitted by the importers.

The CBSA assists the CFIA by enforcing the policies that govern the importation of food, plants, and animals into Canada to the extent that these policies apply at Canadian border points of entry. Currently, imported fish and seafood products are regulated by the Safe Food for Canadians Act and the Health of Animals Act and their accompanying regulations.

The CBSA assists Fisheries and Oceans Canada with enforcement of the aquatic invasive species regulations, the import prohibition on shark fins, and assists with the trade tracking of certain species of tuna, swordfish, toothfish and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The majority of commercial importation of foods is regulated by the CFIA and must meet CFIA requirements to be eligible for entry. Import requirements vary depending on a variety of factors, including the commodity, country, or U.S. state from which they are being imported. These import requirements can be found by consulting the CFIA's automated import reference system.

High-risk goods require review and approval by the CFIA's national import service centre before they can be released by the Canada Border Services Agency into Canada. In addition, certain high-risk goods require inspection by CFIA before the goods can be released. The CBSA, at the border, releases, refers for inspection, or refuses entry of goods based upon the recommendation provided by the CFIA.

When the CBSA discovers goods suspected of non-compliance with other government department legislation, such as that of CFIA, they are detained under section 101 of the Customs Act and referred to the responsible department or agency for further inspection and, if necessary, enforcement. The CBSA does not inspect food for the purposes of verifying quality standards and labelling

requirements, nor do we undertake any testing for compliance with these other federal requirements.

In the context of traceability, importers are obligated to accurately describe the commodities, including fish and seafood, and their country of origin on the commercial import documentation. The level of description required depends on the legislative and regulatory requirements for that specific product.

The CBSA is also responsible for administering the customs tariff. As part of that mandate, the agency is responsible for ensuring the proper tariff classification for goods being imported. Proper tariff classification on seafood importations at the border is complex, and there is little means for us to visually distinguish between various types of seafood at the time of importation.

Based on this limitation, the CBSA employs a risk-based, post-importation verification program that relies on a books-and-records verification of import documents, such as purchase orders and accounting documents. Such verifications may be conducted in cases where seafood mislabelling is suspected.

• (1225)

For example, in 2017-2018 such verifications of seafood for tariff classification detected seafood fraud resulting from mislabelling and misclassification of large shipments of roasted eel fillets. One such tariff classification verification resulted in a reassessment of \$136,500, which the importer then had to pay.

Further, the CBSA provides the importing community with advance rulings that confirm the appropriate classification to use when the goods are imported. Over the last five years, the CBSA has issued seven advance rulings to importers to assist in their compliance at the time of the importation of the various seafood products.

The CBSA recognizes Canada's efforts with respect to traceability of fish and seafood products. We take our role in this seriously and will continue to support the Government of Canada's efforts to address this important issue.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hoag.

We'll now go to Mr. Forsyth, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Doug Forsyth (Director General, Market Access, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Good afternoon.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with committee members today in the context of the committee's study on fish and seafood products' traceability.

Mr. Chair, I understand that the committee has already heard from colleagues representing the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, who are the key governmental bodies responsible for seafood traceability and safety. I hope I'll be able to complement the information you received from them and answer your questions as they pertain to Global Affairs Canada's mandate, in particular with respect to international trade obligations.

[*Translation*]

The trade policy and negotiations branch at Global Affairs Canada is responsible for developing and implementing Canadian trade policy, as well as heading all international trade negotiations and the administration of free trade agreements in Canada.

This branch is also responsible for litigation and dispute settlement, as well as administering import and export controls, as per the Export and Import Permits Act.

[*English*]

The market access bureau, which I lead, looks after certain issues of trade policy and negotiations, namely market access for both manufactured and agricultural products—in collaboration with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada—government procurement, trade and environmental issues, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers and regulations. I understand that certain issues that have been raised in the context of the committee's study to date may have an international trade dimension. These include labelling requirements, including country of origin labelling, or COOL, international standards, regulatory alignment and co-operation, as well as certain trade aspects of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

I'm happy to do my best to respond to the questions you have today.

In completing my introductory remarks, I would simply wish to offer a general observation about how Canada's international trade obligations function as something to keep in mind as the committee develops recommendations for a Canadian traceability program.

The core of Canada's international trade obligations is that foreign and domestic producers be treated the same way, subject to the same rules and the same conditions of competition. This means that any new measures and compliance procedures Canada could develop with respect to fish and seafood products and apply to imported products will also need to apply similarly to Canadian products.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Ms. Sotelo, for five minutes or less, please.

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo (Researcher, Spanish National Research Council, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for inviting me to participate as a witness in this session. I'm here as a coordinator of two EU projects, Labelfish and Seatraces, which were funded by the EU Interreg Atlantic program

here in Europe, and these two projects were related to seafood labelling and traceability.

I work with the Spanish National Research Council, which has different research institutes devoted to the ocean and its resources. In the case of my institute, which is the Marine Research Institute in Vigo here in Spain, we have been working on seafood fraud for more than 30 years and, in particular, we have been developing analytical tools for fighting seafood fraud. Obviously, this work has been done in collaboration with other European research institutions, and I'm not going to mention all of them. What I have to say is that during all these years we have analyzed many seafood commercial samples, the different processing levels, and we have been looking for mislabelling and, in particular, for species misrepresentation. Although we didn't conduct market studies that are properly considered statistical, we have observed that seafood fraud at retailers both in Spain and Europe has been decreasing over time since the 1990s when we started to work on this topic.

We think that the following reasons may explain the decrease. We think that the development of analytical tools to authenticate seafood and the fact that this method is easy to implement for a reasonable price have been supporting this decrease. We also think that consumer and industry awareness about the impact of seafood fraud has contributed to the decrease in fraud. Finally, of course, the enforcement and control by authorities that has been put in place in Europe during these years is also a significant reason for this decrease.

However, we have identified some aspects that need further attention and that we were focusing on in our recent projects, Labelfish and Seatraces. I'm going to name them quickly. We think there's a lack of harmonization and standardization of the current methods to control for misrepresentation, especially of species and geographic origin. Even though there has been a lot of effort to develop these methods and build the databases, we think there isn't enough coordination for the purpose of harmonization and standardization.

Also, we think that developing fast and easy-to-perform analytical tools for some of the main issues with seafood misrepresentation, such as species, geographic origin or populations, are needed. Also, there is other information that is required by European law, such as the declaration of the presence of water or declaration of aqueous solutions in some seafood products, or not declaring some processes, such as freezing, or even tools for differentiation of wild versus farmed seafood.

We think another important aspect to be addressed is increasing the population's awareness of the impact of labelling and traceability on fisheries' sustainability. Also, the impact that the application of these two tools has on decreasing IUU fisheries damage is another important aspect that we think should be addressed.

Developing digital tools for helping stakeholders like fishermen and industry to implement food chain traceability in the seafood sector is also an important aspect to consider.

Finally, there's improving co-operation among different government agencies and, especially in the case of Europe, different countries—we are a number of countries with the same regulation and think we should collaborate on this, but this can be extended to other parts of the world—to exchange information about new types of fraud incidents and the types and specific analytical tools to be used for fighting this fraud.

● (1230)

Thank you for your attention. I will be open to questions from you.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you for that, Ms. Sotelo.

Before we go to questioning, please accept the condolences of the entire committee for the Spanish fishing trawler that had a pretty large loss of life recently off the coast of Newfoundland, my home province. Our condolences to you and everybody involved in that particular incident.

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: Thank you very much. In fact, that ship was from very near to here. Thank you.

The Chair: You're welcome.

We'll now go to questioning.

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

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first couple of questions will be for you, Ms. Sotelo. We've heard some testimony here from some of the Canadian associations that are concerned about the barrier, in their research, that has shown.... They believe that pricing increases resulting from labelling may be a barrier to consumption of seafood products in Canada. I know that the University of Maine conducted some research and found that in Europe, when the seafood labelling products improved their retail labelling, it in fact increased consumption and the willingness to consume.

I'm wondering if you could comment. As Europe has increased its retail and consumer knowledge of what's on the label, has there been an increase in consumption and sales?

● (1235)

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: I really don't know what answer to give. This is a difficult question, because the labelling regulations are not equally implemented by all the types of retailers.

We conducted a study in our Seatraces project and saw that in local fishmonger markets, for instance, which are small and public seafood markets, the labelling is very poor. These types of retailers

rely on the trust of the consumers buying the fish. However, in the case of supermarkets and big retailers, the level of compliance is really high. I think it took a little bit of time to be accepted. When you buy seafood, especially fresh seafood, you have to trust a lot the person who is selling you the fish. In the case of a small fishmonger, it could be easy to know the person, but in the case of supermarkets, this is not as easy anymore. You have to rely on the labels.

So people are accepting the labels. I believe this has also meant an increase in price, but not very dramatic.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you very much.

Ms. Sotelo, I don't know if you know much about the Canadian labelling system, so I'll start by sharing this with you. The executive director of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency stated in her opening statement here that "Canada is recognized as having one of the best food and safety systems in the world and has implemented robust food safety traceability requirements".

I don't know if you've looked at what we do in Canada, but if you are knowledgeable, do you believe that on the seafood side we do have, or are recognized as having, one of the best food safety systems?

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: Certainly, I don't know the system you have there. I believe food safety should be, as in other occidental countries, of a very high standard, but my expertise is more related to seafood labelling and not so much seafood safety. I'm sorry. I don't really know the regulations around this system in Canada.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I guess that's the point at which I've sort of come through our study, that our requirements under the Canadian Food Inspection Agency are more about food safety than they are about consumer knowledge and transparency on the consumer side. Essentially, the basic regulations in Canada are that the labelling requirements are the common name of the fish; the name and place of the business, and not where it was caught; and a lot number or code identifier, I guess in case traceability on food safety back through the supply chain is required if there is a problem.

But all of the things that we seem to see as required in Europe are not required here in Canada. For example, to my understanding, not only is the name of the food required in the list of ingredients. Also required in Europe is the possible name of any allergens; the quantity of certain ingredients by category; the net quantity of food, or the weight; the date and minimum durability of the “better use by” product; special storage conditions; name of business and name and address, which we do here in Canada; country of origin, or place of provenance, of the seafood; instructions for the use; nutrition; date of freezing of frozen unprocessed fish products; the commercial and scientific name; the product's production method; the catch area, including the FAO fishing area in which it was caught or farmed; whether it's farmed or not; the fishing gear used; whether the product has been defrosted previously; and the minimum date of durability.

Those are quite extensive rules required on packaging, which presumably in Europe leads to greater transparency and understanding for the consumer about what they're actually buying. Our doesn't do that. Can you comment on that a little? Was Europe, previous to this, doing basically what we're doing now, and you've evolved from that system of very limited labelling?

• (1240)

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: Yes. You're right. I think you mentioned the more extensive way of labelling seafood. We have different categories of seafood and different requirements. I think this is a little bit messy, because if you have to buy fresh seafood and it's packaged, you may require many of the items you described there. However, if you buy canned tuna, you don't need to put the scientific name on the can. So there are a bit of different aspects in the regulation implementation, because not all of them require the same.

As you mentioned, we started with only commercial names. This has been evolving over the years toward the inclusion of more information on the seafood products. I don't particularly think that this is perhaps all needed, but I think the regulations here in Europe are very much influenced by the many NGOs and consumer associations that require that all this information is needed for sustainability reasons.

I don't know if I have explained that well.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you very much.

I think my time is well over, Chair.

The Chair: Oh, yes. Somebody will suffer at the end.

We'll now go to Mr. Hardie for six minutes—or less; that's the key word there.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Hoag, it would appear from your description of the CBSA's activities and scope that there is still quite a reliance on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the focus on the safety of the product. But knowing that CBSA employees.... I guess it's what you would call a “risk management strategy” for inspecting goods coming into the country, because you can't look at every container that ends up in port.

I don't want you to identify anybody, but generally speaking, when we are looking at importers, have we identified and flagged high-risk products, high-risk origins and high-risk importers in light of people who might try to bend or break the rules?

Mr. Shawn Hoag: As part of the CBSA's processing at the borders, we receive information from the importers into our automated systems in advance of the product's arrival. That information is then used by us to conduct a risk assessment, and all goods that are arriving in Canada are risk-assessed, and yes, we do track who the high-risk importers are across a range of goods, based on history, so we know what we need to pay attention to when goods come to cross the border.

When that documentation is received, it's also forwarded to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and we rely on their determination and recommendation as to whether the goods should be allowed in.

That doesn't remove the ability of our officers at the border to exercise their discretion with respect to specific goods, or for us to detain goods until we are fully satisfied they meet the other government department requirements.

• (1245)

Mr. Ken Hardie: All right, if you have something more to add, something in writing would be very useful, Mr. Hoag, because again, our time is limited here for questions and I appreciate your input.

I'm sorry, I didn't capture the name of our Foreign Affairs witness, but, sir, when we have trade agreements with other countries, and we have our trade policy, is there a reasonable expectation that our foreign trade partners will exercise due diligence in following and tracking the things that are important to Canada, such as the IUU fishery, which is horribly damaging to species and to the environment, as well as seafood fraud, which tends to be a growing issue.

Do we have those expectations and do we, if you like, assess performance with respect to those expectations?

I think we may have lost him. I don't see him on the screen.

Mr. Doug Forsyth: I apologize, my connection dropped off, but I caught most of your question. I'm having some Internet connection problems.

In response, I think when we enter into free trade negotiations with a partner, we absolutely assess what's possible before we get to the negotiating table. That's part of our due diligence, to assess what kind of agreement is possible at various negotiating tables, including some of the ones you mentioned, whether it's under the environment or writ large under market access. Certainly we look at a number of different issues and then when we sit down at the table with our counterparts, it's very much the case that we'll look at areas of commonality, look at areas where we can move forward together. I'm thinking specifically of the CETA, the Canada-European Union economic agreement, where we do have common objectives and we were able to achieve them in a number of different areas, whether it was the environment, or labour, etc.

Before we would negotiate with anyone, we would ideally like to have a common set of objectives, for sure.

Mr. Ken Hardie: If you have some concerns, do you talk to the CBSA?

Mr. Doug Forsyth: We actually work very closely with our CBSA colleagues as well as other government departments. As we go forward in a negotiation, there will be some differences, frankly, between Canada and whomever we're negotiating with, and those are part of the things that you would settle at the negotiating table. But we definitely work with our other government departments, including the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as well as CFIA, which have also appeared here.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Ms. Sotelo, you mentioned that you've really made some progress on the issue of seafood fraud through the use of analytical tools. Can you give us a bit more detail on what those analytical tools might be?

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: Yes, the gold standard nowadays is Sanger DNA sequencing. I think that was a breakthrough. When we started to implement that in the routine analysis of seafood, we found a big difference between the previous fraud and the fraud that we were then finding.

Mr. Ken Hardie: You also mentioned that—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie. You have about five seconds left. You're not going to get your question in, let alone the answer.

We'll now go to Madame Desbiens for six minutes or less, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. Hoag, from the Canada Border Services Agency, and Mr. Forsyth, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

It is very concerning to know that 90% of our fished resources are exported and meet very high standards of traceability, but at the same time, we consume lower quality foods because the standards and criteria are lower or less rigorous.

What is the fastest way to change the situation and reassure our fellow citizens who consume seafood?

[*English*]

Mr. Shawn Hoag: The criteria for changing how the seafood is analyzed or reported would fall within the regime set by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. At the Border Services Agency we would be implementing that at the border. I would defer to those other departments to respond on how specifically you might change the criteria with respect to traceability.

Thank you.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Would anyone else like to add something?

If not, I have another question.

[*English*]

Mr. Doug Forsyth: I don't have anything else to add. I think my colleague handled it very well.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: In the same vein, for several weeks now, we have been hearing from witnesses in the context of our study who seem to want a working group that would consist of representatives of fishers' professional associations, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. You could join this working group too, as could Ms. Sotelo. A concerted plan could then be developed and implemented. There would be an overarching body, for example a traceability commissioner or a general labelling auditor. Following this consultation, a process to improve traceability would be implemented. This is a little of what has emerged from our study.

I'd like to know what you think and if you'd like to participate in this working group.

[*English*]

Mr. Shawn Hoag: I don't think it would be appropriate for me to comment on the specific nature of a working group. What I would say is that the CBSA meets actively with most of our government partners. We provide them advice on a regular basis. Depending on the form or method that's developed, we would participate and provide advice and border expertise as required within whatever that forum is.

Mr. Doug Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Perhaps I could add a little bit to my colleague's answer and echo his comments.

Global Affairs Canada participates with and works cooperatively with other government departments on a range of issues, including the development of regulations and standards. We would be happy to continue to do that in any form necessary and under the mandate that we have to provide advice on whether the said standards and regulations are consistent with our international trade obligations.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Do you think there may be a lack of consistency or coordination in the application of certain rules? Do you think that everyone across the board should go through this exercise to establish a definitive plan to improve things?

[English]

Mr. Shawn Hoag: I can jump in and answer that.

The CBSA is always open to consultation. We consult regularly with industry, importers and brokers across a range of goods that are coming in. Depending, again, on the lead departments and how they would wish to approach it, we would support that as best we can.

Mr. Doug Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, to echo my previous comments, I think Global Affairs Canada has a role to play as an important part of the development of regulations for the Government of Canada. We are absolutely pleased to do that, as my colleague said, in conjunction with the lead departments, however they decide to proceed with that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Would a European contribution to this working group improve or enhance our way of doing things?

[English]

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: Is this question for me? I didn't understand.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Chair, do I have time to repeat my question?

[English]

The Chair: There are only about 12 seconds left, so I don't think you're going to get much of a question in, let alone an answer.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I would like to know if a European contribution to this working group could improve things.

[English]

The Chair: I believe Ms. Sotelo said yes, they would be willing to participate in the working group.

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: Yes.

The Chair: We'll go on now to Ms. Barron for six minutes or less, please.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our witnesses who are here today.

For my first question I was hoping to hear from Mr. Forsyth.

We know that we get a significant amount of seafood into Canada from the United States. I'm wondering if you can expand a little bit on any initiatives in place to help make sure programs are safely tracked across our borders. Do you think a collaborative approach would be helpful in these processes?

• (1255)

Mr. Doug Forsyth: I think that question is probably not best directed at me. Up front, yes we do trade a lot of fish products between Canada and the United States, as we do a lot of other products, but fish, absolutely. Global Affairs Canada is not involved with any programs or administration of things that cross the border, at least in terms of that particular product.

I might turn to one of my colleagues if they have any other information to add.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Mr. Forsyth.

Yes, Mr. Hoag, is this something you might be able to better answer? If not, I'll move on to my next question.

Mr. Shawn Hoag: From a border perspective, of course the rules that the U.S. applies and the rules and regulations that we apply in Canada can be quite different. We certainly speak with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to make sure that the ports of entry are functioning smoothly, but with respect to specific regulations and requirements, that again would be the responsibility of the Food Inspection Agency or Fisheries and Oceans. We would just make sure that it move smoothly through the border based on what they've defined as the requirements.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you very much.

Ms. Sotelo, you had mentioned in your opening statement the need for greater co-operation between partners. Could you share some of your thoughts on how helpful it would be to make sure that illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing is addressed to support this co-operation between partners?

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: My statement referred more to fighting fraud by fighting misrepresentation of seafood. In Europe, and even in countries like in Spain that are not very big, we have different administrations that do not necessarily talk to each other. Sometimes you find that there is co-operation.

In terms of analytical methods, they are not using the same methods in Europe. The European Commission performed a study in 2015 about seafood labelling across Europe, and there were many different techniques and control labs were not speaking the same language, so I refer to that.

That could be applied to other things like traceability and other aspects of labelling and traceability.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you.

Perhaps I'll go back to Mr. Hoag. One of the key recommendations that we've heard from a number of stakeholders is about developing a task force or a committee between departments and agencies to help ensure that gaps are being addressed.

I'm wondering if the Canada Border Services Agency would play a key part in that, and what technical perspective do you think that this agency would bring to the table?

Mr. Shawn Hoag: As the Border Services Agency, we would bring our expertise in how goods are imported or exported out of Canada and the penalties and enforcement regimes that are available under the Customs Act.

We would do that in support of the lead departments, as they would be better positioned to lead any discussion about what the exact requirements are and the regime of traceability they would like to see put in place.

Then we would make sure that that actually happens technically at the border.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Great, thank you.

Do you agree with the importance of having this in place?

Mr. Shawn Hoag: As a border services agency, we're always interested in discussions with our other government departments that are focused on strengthening the safety and security of Canada and the health of Canadians. We do that on a regular basis.

If those departments chose to use a task force type of model or some other type of model, we would continue to support them in that insofar as it reaches back to our mandate.

Thank you.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you.

Ms. Sotelo, one suggestion we heard was that potentially mislabelled fish products could be given PCR tests, similar to what we see with COVID screening, to quickly confirm that a product is what it was labelled as being.

Can you speak a little bit to how the EU has been doing this enforcement? Are there best practices that you think we could incorporate?

• (1300)

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: I think the gold standard here is still DNA sequencing, which is not the same as the PCR test you mentioned. There are many methods that have been developed to implement this type of methodology in the seafood sector. It's more complicated because, as you know, we have many different species in the global seafood market. It's not as easy as in the case of COVID, for instance.

Yes, there are methods implemented.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: It's perhaps a bit of an over-simplification of the similarity of the tests.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barron. You've gone a little bit over.

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

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses today.

My questions will be for Mr. Hoag and Mr. Forsyth initially.

Representatives of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans have appeared as witnesses in this study.

I've asked those witnesses if they saw how eliminating IUU—or illegal, unreported and unregulated—fisheries through traceability could benefit conservation, mitigate unacceptable labour conditions and affect how Canadians buy their food. Neither the CFIA nor DFO officials answered the question directly. They said that pre-

venting fish and seafood caught illegally or with unacceptable labour conditions such as slavery was “outside of [their] mandate”.

To Mr. Hoag and Mr. Forsyth, does CBSA or the Department of Foreign Affairs have any mandates that would cause them to be concerned or take action on fish and seafood caught illegally or with unacceptable labour conditions such as slavery?

Mr. Hoag, please go first.

Mr. Shawn Hoag: We're always concerned about illegal goods that are entering the country. We do that at all of our border ports of entry on a regular basis. Our officers are well trained to identify products. In addition to that, the data that is provided to us helps us identify high risk at borders. As those products cross, we can detain them and work with CFIA to make sure they don't make it to market.

With respect to the labour conditions aspect of it, the CBSA is involved in Canada's emerging forced labour program. We are working with ESDC and other government departments—again, in our role of supporting—to make sure that when goods hit the border, they are detained, seized or forfeited if they don't comply with our labour standards.

Thank you.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Mr. Forsyth.

Mr. Doug Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I can perhaps add a bit to my colleague's intervention.

First off, in terms of IUU fishing, the department of Global Affairs Canada does not have a mandate to manage that or to deal with that.

Then I would echo my colleague's comments with respect to labour standards and the participation of Global Affairs Canada. Along with our colleagues from ESDC, CBSA and a couple of other departments, we are working and doing our best to manage that issue and make sure labour standards are enforced with respect to trade in goods imported into Canada, including fish products.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Maybe I'll go back to Mr. Hoag. To identify those products that may be achieved through IUU fisheries, do you have a mandate through your department to identify those potential products or who do you rely on for information as you do your inspections at the border?

• (1305)

Mr. Shawn Hoag: I'll lay out how it works at the border. We would receive the data ahead of time from legitimate importers or brokers. Our automated systems and our analysts would then review the goods, including fish, coming into Canada. If there was illegal fish coming in, it's unlikely they would have all of the permits and requirements and documents that CFIA requires legitimate traders to have.

CFIA would then signal to us that specific shipments should be held and follow-up action taken, whether that's some type of enforcement regime or some type of compliance approach. We would do it in partnership with CFIA.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

This is for both of you, Mr. Hoag and Mr. Forsyth. Is there a central forum for your organizations to work with the Government of Canada and organizations like DFO and CFIA in developing traceability systems?

Go ahead first, Mr. Hoag.

Mr. Shawn Hoag: I'm not aware of any centralized discussion focused uniquely on traceability that the CBSA participates in, but we do have frequent bilateral discussions with CFIA and with DFO regarding their specific regulations and how we apply them at the border.

Mr. Doug Forsyth: Mr. Chair, I would add that to the best of my knowledge, we similarly are not involved in any type of ongoing development with CFIA and with DFO on traceability at this time.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Maybe I can ask one quick one—

The Chair: No. Actually, you went 30 seconds over, so there'll be no quick one today, unless you're doing it yourself.

I will now go to Mr. Hanley to close us out for today.

You have five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you. What an honour.

Ms. Sotelo, than you very much for your presentation to us. Thank you for being with us today.

My first question is for you. First, congratulations on all the progress that's been made in the EU. I think there's much to emulate and to strive for.

One of the aspects I'm interested in is the co-operation with industry. Could you comment on the amount of regulation versus voluntary co-operation with industry and on how that might have evolved over the years? What role did that play?

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: *Muchas gracias*, Mr. Hanley.

My experience was that at the beginning, there was not too much co-operation. They were very afraid that these things were going to decrease their economic benefit. Over the years, they realized that traceability and good labelling were helping them, in fact, because their products could be more reliable to consumers and the prices

could be higher. We have a lot of response nowadays in terms of industry involvement in this.

I hope this answered your question.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Yes. Certainly.

Here's a smaller question. I notice that you discussed Labelfish as part of the traceability program. Now, that's focused on the Atlantic region. I assume that because this is an EU program, what applies in one ocean.... They're similar, or there's harmonization, I guess, between different seas or oceans within the EU jurisdiction.

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: Yes, of course. This is something that is more related to program funds for projects in the Atlantic region, which are more intensive in terms of fisheries. That is the reason that it was funded by them, but the regulation is the same for all the fisheries in Europe. Yes.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Thank you.

If I may continue with you for a little bit, I note that you noted also that there isn't a lot of data to assess the analysis of trends over the years, but you noted that seafood fraud had declined over the years. I'm wondering whether that's a gap you identified, with maybe a lack of analytical capacity to actually assess progress, and whether that is one of the projects for the future.

• (1310)

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: I don't think I quite understood your question very well.

We did notice that when we started to work, there were not easy-to-implement analytical tools. There was a lot of fraud in the retailers in the market. When we developed these DNA techniques in the decade of 2000 and so on, we noticed that the industry knew that it could be done and then things started to change.

I don't know if I got your question right. I'm sorry.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Thank you.

I think it was more about how you measure the effects.

Dr. Carmen G. Sotelo: Okay. We received a lot of samples at the beginning and we were seeing numbers like 50% or 60% being mislabelling. It was really rampant fraud. Nowadays we are seeing numbers of 5% or 6%, depending on the type of seafood, really. This is a very huge market of very different things. For instance, we determined that in the case of Atlantic bluefin tuna, the fraud here in Europe, particularly in Spain, could be as high as 100%, which is really high.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone.

That concludes our questioning in the second hour of our committee.

I want to say thank you to our witnesses who have appeared today and gave up their time to provide such valuable information.

I want to say thank you to the interpreters, our translation team, the analysts and of course the clerk.

There are a couple of things I want to remind people of. Tuesday's committee meeting will have a 15-minute in camera session at the end for drafting instructions on the traceability of fish and seafood products study.

On another note, I just want to remind members to try to do your best to be here on time. I'll grant that this wasn't the reason why we were late or lost 10 minutes today, but we did make up for it. If you're not here, we still have to start the meeting. There are time limitations on us, so I would ask members to be diligent in showing up on time regardless of what side of the table you're sitting. I want to start on time and make sure everybody gets their rounds of questioning in.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Wait one second while I finish.

I want to say as well that today we had the minister in for an hour. An hour doesn't give a lot of time. Even though there was only one five-minute opening statement, it doesn't allow for a lot of questioning sometimes, especially when we start a little bit late.

I will say that if anybody didn't get a chance to ask their questions of the minister maybe they could submit them in writing. I'm sure the minister would be only too glad to respond. We could include that in our report or study, whichever we present to the House at the end of the day.

Mr. Zimmer, go ahead on your point of order.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'm speaking up for my colleague today. There was quite a long time to get going and my colleague was just getting up to ask the next question and the time was over.

The Chair: Actually to that point, the meeting started at 11:03. We didn't get under way actually until 11:12, so we had a nine-minute delay. We added 12 minutes here at the end to make up for that, so both sessions had their hour of time.

The clerk advised me that we could add that on today. There are days we can't because time is tight. We couldn't go beyond this time today because time is tight for the people who are doing the services provided for this actual committee meeting.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I know, as a former chair, that it's nice to be able to have people finish questions, etc., but I think it's also imperative that the people in the queue to ask a question get their chance. We've seen some of the questions go long and that's a good thing to do.

The Chair: On an hour we'll never get through all the rounds of people to ask questions. It's impossible in an hour session. To the point that if we save a little time on each question, I keep track of every person who's questioning whether they go over or under on time. I'm not picking on Mr. Perkins for this, but it went one minute and forty-five seconds over on a six-minute allotment of time.

If there's time to ask a question, I like the witnesses to have time to answer it, but we've got to be cognizant of that. It's fine to complain about somebody not getting enough time, but somebody else is chewing up that time. If you add it all up, Mr. Small probably would have time to answer a question, or another member. That was on this one. It wasn't on the last one.

It's not uncommon for people to go over. I have it written down: 27 seconds, 30 seconds, 30 seconds, 18 seconds, 32 seconds, 15 seconds and 25 seconds. You have two or three minutes of time lost to another member because other members went a little bit over or the answer went a little bit over.

If you want me to be sharp or right to the second on the time, I can do that, but you may not get an answer from a witness or you might just get to ask a question.

• (1315)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I have a final comment then.

We've asked before. This is why we've previously asked to have the minister for two hours. It's so important that she's here to answer questions.

When this one opportunity came about and Mr. Small's chance sort of evaporated, I would ask.... We are the official opposition and deserve the rightful time to ask the minister questions.

The Chair: Every committee member actually deserves time.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I agree, but what's happening right now is—

The Chair: I can't change the clock. I can't slow down the clock.

I know an hour is not much time before committee, whether it's the minister or anyone else, but if we invite someone to committee and they say they can only be there for an hour, then that's up to the committee to say yes or we wait for another time.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: We've invited her for two hours and she's only showed up for one.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Legitimately, we've asked properly and she's even come back—

The Chair: I can go back to a previous time when a minister didn't show up at all, so it's give and take. I can't control the clock.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I appreciate your efforts, Chair.

I guess when I saw my colleague lose his shot to ask the minister a question.... It was unfortunate. It would be nice that we could see that disparity realized.

Thank you.

The Chair: To that point, Mr. Hardie had to give up two minutes in his five-minute slot even before we got a chance to go to Mr. Small.

I want everybody to participate in the committee as its going. Everybody got to.... You can turn on your own timers if you like, but I'll still keep track of the time. It's easy when you're doing it, sitting there asking a question and getting an answer. Five minutes is nothing. It goes by in a blink. Unfortunately, when we have so many members and so many people looking to ask questions, on an hour it's hard to get the full rounds in.

I know what you're saying, but I can't control it. When you look at the time that we do go over.... Very seldom do we go under. Ms.

Desbiens was under 10 seconds because she simply doesn't have time to ask a question in 10 seconds, so I didn't let it go on.

I'll be cognizant in the future to try to keep people to their time. Again, we have to respect witnesses as well as we allow them to answer a question.

The meeting is adjourned.

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