

## **Brief for Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans**

**(From Jonathan Crofts of Bishops Seafood, Kelowna BC and also representing Slow Fish Canada)**

My name is Jonathan Crofts and I am writing this brief as an independent family operated fishmonger\* operating in the Okanagan valley of BC but also representing the views of members of the Slow Fish Organisation\*\* in Canada.

The purpose of this brief is to outline our views on the current issues with West Coast fisheries pertaining to Licence and Quota issues, the effects these issues have on food security, small businesses in our coastal and inland communities and on independent fishermen, and to give our recommendation on how to tackle these issues.

The issues of licence and quota consolidation have been well documented in testimony to your committee so I will not go over them in detail here, except to lay out for you the effects that they have on my business and others.

Firstly, because the fisheries in BC are weighted toward large boats, large companies, processors and corporate investment in quota and licences, the fisheries have become very much weighted in favour of volume over and above quality and variety. Because of this, access to top quality fresh fish for fishmongers and consumers has become harder and harder. This results in a devaluation of our fish, reducing the economic benefit for all. Also, consolidation leads to an over dependence on only a few individual species, leading to higher risk of over fishing, a reduction of biodiversity, and subsequently a lack of diversity in the market place which represents an economic loss of opportunity.

Further to this point, because of this consolidation, it has become almost financially impossible for young fishermen to start and develop their own independent fishing business, a process that not only affects our fishing communities, but also stifles any potential innovation in fisheries which might lead to greater quality and therefore valuation of our fish.

Because of this consolidation, and the lack of transparency around ownership of licenses and quotas, there is a real danger that control of our fisheries could pass into the hands of entities which do not have sustainability and conservation at their heart, including offshore/foreign companies. We strongly believe that fishing

communities and truly independent fishermen should have more influence in the way fisheries are managed, because they have a long term vested interest in preserving fish and allowing them to flourish, and are not simply out to extract as much volume as quickly and efficiently as possible to maximise a corporate profit. Fishermen fish because it is their life`s work, and as such they will always take a long term view compared to corporations.

### **OUR RECOMMENDATIONS**

1: We would love to see better transparency of quota and licensing so that we can track consolidation and also have legislation to prevent such assets from being transferred overseas or to entities which will not be actually using them to fish.

2: We support fully the proposed ideas to help young fishermen by having low cost loan and mentorship programs in place.

3: We believe that policy should be created now to favour independent ownership of quotas and licences by actual fishermen, over and above corporate ownership, and that starting as soon as possible, any new licenses coming up for sale be offered to independent fishermen at an economically viable rate to enable them to get in at the ground floor of the industry.

4: We believe that policy should be created to move the fishing industry towards an owner/operator status in the long term, in order to promote healthy, diverse and vibrant fishing communities which will in turn supply healthy, sustainable and properly valued seafood to consumers and chefs in Canada.

5:Our vision for the future is for Canadians to have access to a large diversity of their local seafood, ethically and sustainably sourced, with a value chain in place that everyone can benefit from, from the fisherman to the consumer.

\*Fishmonger; This is a term which describes a person or business which trades in seafood and specialises in dealing with fish in a way that ensures the quality is maintained properly, the fish is presented correctly to the end consumer in a way which makes the product attractive and value is added where appropriate.

\*\*Slow Fish Organisation; The Slow Fish Organisation in Canada is a committee of people, mostly in the seafood or related businesses, who subscribe to Slow Food values. Slow Food is a fundamental grass roots organisation started in Italy in 1989 to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us. See <http://slowfood.ca/slow-fish/> for Slow Fish Canada, <https://www.slowfood.com/> for Slow Food international organisation <https://www.slowfood.com/slowfish/> for Slow Fish International <https://www.saveourbcfisheries.info> Has more detail regarding our viewpoint, and that of some of our like minded partners.