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

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**EVIDENCE**

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**Chair**

**Mrs. Bernadette Jordan**



## Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Tuesday, April 24, 2018

• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.)):** Good morning, everyone.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Monday, April 16, 2018, we are studying Bill C-68, an act to amend the Fisheries Act and other acts in consequence.

Today, I want to welcome to the committee Mr. Vandal from Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, who is subbing in for Mr. Rogers.

We have by video conference Duane Post.

From West Coast Environmental Law Association, we have Linda Nowlan, staff counsel.

We're going to start with opening remarks from Mr. Post.

You have 10 minutes, please.

**Mr. Duane Post (Councillor, District of Kent):** Thank you for allowing me to come before the committee.

I'm a councillor for the District of Kent in British Columbia. Our community has about 6,000 people living here. We're very interested in this process, and in this bill.

We have approximately 142 kilometres of ditches in the District of Kent. Most of those are on agricultural properties. They help with flood infrastructure, and with drainage of farmland.

We have two federal prisons in the District of Kent. We also have the Agassiz research facility, which is also a federal complex. Some of the challenges we face around our flood infrastructure and drainage are the compensation requirements that are often imposed on us. Some of the habitat alteration or destruction of habitat is often difficult to mitigate.

Oftentimes when we do drainage work, it really does result in habitat improvement, yet we need to compensate for that, mostly by planting other plants, which help with fish habitat.

One of the main problems with that is the maintenance of that compensation. There isn't really a plan for that. We always end up maintaining that. It becomes something that our local government always needs to budget for. We feel that's a little bit of downloading from other government levels. We're really interested in this process, and how it's going to look.

I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions that any of you may have.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Post.

Next is Ms. Nowlan from West Coast Environmental Law.

**Ms. Linda Nowlan (Staff Counsel, West Coast Environmental Law Association):** Madam Chair, it's a pleasure to be here again.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present to you today.

During the last election, you heard loud and clear that Canadians had lost faith in the revised system under the previous government to approve projects with impacts on fish habitat. The West Coast Environmental Law Association commends the government for following through on its commitment to restore lost protections and modernize the Fisheries Act.

There are many provisions that we and many others across the country are pleased to see, and I'm happy to talk more about them if you want. Today, though, I'm here to talk about how you can improve the act even more while you have the chance to do so. As the minister mentioned this morning, there is still time to propose amendments.

Many conservation groups have worked collaboratively to analyze this bill and have proposed amendments on three key issues: rebuilding fish stocks, cumulative effects, and environmental flows and fish passage. We fully support and endorse these.

Today I'll address two broad areas where you can propose amendments that will make the act even better and address past criticisms of it. You can set national legally binding and enforceable standards in the law directly. I'll speak to two of these issues: flows and cumulative effects.

The other big issue I'll speak about is increasing government transparency and accountability. The government has made great strides in this area as well, especially with mandate letter commitments. Additional improvements can be made to increase transparency and accountability, and I'll speak of three ways.

First is legally binding standards.

As described in one of our briefs to you, the legislative history of this act, going back to when it was first introduced—and it is one of Canada's oldest acts—shows Parliament's clear intent to create national standards for the protection of fish and habitat. Courts at all levels have confirmed the wide scope of this federal power.

Standards on environmental flows are a priority area for legislative change. The minister this morning gave you the internationally accepted definition of “environmental flows”. This definition is included in laws around the world, and it really would be an improvement to Bill C-68 to actually talk about the flow regime and environmental flows—the environmental role of water for fish. Water law was traditionally about water for people. The concept of environmental flows shows that water has a really critical environmental role, especially for fish and other aquatic organisms.

DFO's own science advisory report from 2012 talks about the need for a national framework for flow, so that there can be a consistent approach to this issue across Canada. From all your work, you know very well about the decline in fish—northern cod, which was spoken about this morning, and both Atlantic and Pacific salmon—and the decline of fish habitat, which continues apace across this country. One example is that only 10% of the former habitat of the lower watershed in the Fraser River remains, and that's one of the biggest salmon-producing rivers in North America and probably the world.

Minister LeBlanc indicated a willingness to consider amendments. We have provided language for amendments that define environmental flows, establish national standards on the acceptable limits of flow alteration, and establish monitoring requirements.

The second area that you've already heard about this morning is cumulative effects. This is a big one. The government is grappling with it, and I know the department is grappling with it. It's a difficult one.

The cumulative effects of small projects remain a major cause of habitat loss, and this was a priority issue in public consultations. The minister said there are two types of projects: large projects, which go through the authorization, and low-risk projects that avoid harm. This actually leaves a really big gap in terms of all the medium-sized projects—a massive number of small to medium-sized projects that cumulatively can impact fish habitat and cause it to be lost.

We support amendments that have been provided to the department and will be provided to this committee in briefs, which talk about ways to better address cumulative effects. One way to do this is by expanding the records that are in the proposed new public registry, to require not only the authorizations in there but also that all the projects be approved under the codes of practice and under designated project regulations. You can really press a button—online registry—and say, “Here's our project. Here's where it is.” People can track it. Scientists will track it, as will researchers and DFO.

● (1105)

This bill also needs to address one of the chief ways that DFO currently uses to exempt proponents from the need to obtain a habitat authorization, and that's the letter of advice. This isn't mentioned at all in the act. We suggest and recommend that the letter of advice be defined in the act, and that all letters of advice also be posted on the public registry. A letter of advice is given to a proponent because there is the potential to cause harm to fish habitat. Why not tell everybody about this advice?

I'll move rapidly along, because I know I have limited time here.

I also want to talk about, in the second half, transparency and increasing accountability. I've already mentioned the public registry. We and many others strongly support this. This has been a recommendation from many groups for many years.

There's a great registry for CEAA projects. We need such a registry for fish and fish habitat projects as well. Now we have one, and that's great, but the rationale for making some records mandatory and some optional is really unclear. Mandatory records include standards and permits, and optional records include guidelines, policies, and intergovernmental agreements.

It's really not clear why there's a distinction between mandatory records and optional records, the ones that are listed in proposed section 42.3. We recommend that all the ones listed as optional be mandatory.

There's a new requirement for more transparency and public access to information, which again is a great improvement. It's a five-year report from this committee, or your corresponding Senate committee, on the administration of the act. We suggest and recommend that if you're going to do such a five-year report, why not do the state of fish habitat and the state of fish stocks across Canada? Our neighbour to the south, with a bigger population and more impacts, does a national fish habitat report every five years, and Canada can and should do that as well.

Third and finally, the act can increase accountability through legal mechanisms allowing other levels of government and scientists to request action, and require a response from the minister. We're proposing this amendment to deal with one of the big criticisms of the former act, that there was too much discretion.

The minister and his or her staff could, really, make decisions without too many bounds on their discretion. The act has been changed. There are many factors that now must be considered when making decisions under the act, but we recommend that another way to increase accountability would be for other levels of government, scientists, and conservation groups to make requests. I'll give you one example of what I'm talking about.

There's a new provision in this act for the protection of long-term area-based fisheries restrictions, and these are what DFO calls marine refuges. They're intended to be a complement to marine protected areas. Long-term fisheries closures are a federal responsibility. They can only be imposed by the federal government. They really require an extra level of protection for provincially and indigenous declared marine protected areas.

For example, as far back as 2004, the Province of B.C. has requested from DFO that for the ecological reserves and marine protected areas declared under provincial law, the province wants federal fisheries closures. It wants full protection for those areas. Fourteen years later, that still hasn't happened. The province is still talking to the federal government about it.

Why not put in a legislative mechanism requiring the minister to act, creating the ability for a province, or an indigenous government to make this request of the minister, and requiring a response from the minister about the decision? Indigenous declared marine protected areas are another set of places where complementary federal fisheries closures could enhance protection.

There are some other suggestions for increasing accountability through this ability for people or other levels of government to request the minister to take action that are set out in our brief, which will be provided to you shortly. You're moving so quickly, and we haven't yet filed our brief, but we will.

In conclusion, many of the provisions in Bill C-68 will require regulations. We look forward to working with the department and the government to make these regulations effective. It's important to examine whether all the procedures contained in this law will help restore Canadians' faith in the fisheries regime. We're sure your committee wants to achieve this goal, and will work with everybody who appears before you on amendments to achieve that goal.

Thank you.

• (1110)

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

From the government side, we're going to Mr. Hardie, for seven minutes. Please make sure you direct your questions to whom you want to speak to.

Mr. Post, if you want to weigh in on anything, just raise your hand and we'll get to you as well. It's sometimes hard to keep track of the people on video, but we'll make sure we get to you. Thank you.

Mr. Hardie.

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

Mr. Post, you're larger than life on the big screen here, so we'll start with you.

When we were examining the previous government's changes to the Fisheries Act, much of the work that we did was to try and understand what motivated those changes and to put an effort into maintaining the changes that made sense and then refining the changes that maybe didn't produce the results or the regime that people felt comfortable with.

With respect to your municipality, you have a lot of agriculture out there, but I think you also have some pieces of the Fraser River that you're probably bordering on, if I'm not mistaken. How do some of the changes that you see in this bill sit with you, with respect to some of the problems that may have been solved by the previous changes? Are we reverting to the old problems, in your view, or have we hit a good spot here?

• (1115)

**Mr. Duane Post:** With respect to HADD, the harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction of fish habitat, that's triggered any time we do any ditch maintenance work. Often, when the ditch work is done, the habitat is improved. With the previous Fisheries Act, we felt that we were achieving that. Now, we're a bit worried that we're reverting to it.

Nationally, I understand that it probably is a good policy, but for us locally, it's difficult for us to work with and usually results in less ditch work or maintenance work being completed, which costs us more money in the long term.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** You mentioned that some of the work you do on the drainage ditches actually improves habitat. Is there any mechanism in place that captures that information, so that you can show DFO or whoever asks that the situation in fact is better once you've done that work?

**Mr. Duane Post:** Yes, there is. There are fish studies that are done. Dissolved oxygen is improved. One of the biggest problems that we have is reed canary grass, which grows as a mat in the ditch. Once that's removed, it's much more clear, open water and a lot better for fish.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** There's obviously an obligation to ensure that things are clear, so that you know what the rules are and particularly how they apply. The concept of the habitat bank may be of interest to you, because if you are making these improvements, there should be a credit of some sort for that. Does that appear obvious to you in the legislation?

**Mr. Duane Post:** Yes. In what I've read, I'm looking forward to that and for our municipality to be able to use a credit system. I think that part of it would be beneficial to us.

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

Ms. Nowlan, the issue of cumulative effects is an interesting one because little by little a system can be degraded, like a dock here, a culvert there, etc. It raises the issue about how you measure or how you decide when you've reached the tipping point. Are we looking at the prospect of retroactive obligations to the people who maybe have built something there many years earlier or, as some people are fearing, that this could end up with the last one in has to carry the load for the cumulative effects that have gone on for quite some time? Can you comment on that?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** Sure. I think that the act won't have retroactive effect and there are new provisions for ecological restoration in areas that have been damaged by the cumulative effect of multiple small projects, so that is an improvement.

Areas that are particularly sensitive could be designated under the ecologically significant area regulations. This was an improvement made in the 2012 version of the act, but no such areas have ever been designated. Now, this bill says that when you're designating that area, you should prepare a fish habitat restoration plan. For example, in some parts of the lower Fraser, you could designate an ecologically significant area and then you could look at restoration plans. I think this act does provide some good guidance on how to address that issue.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** How do we address, or try to avoid, that the last project in has to shoulder the weight of everything that's gone on before? Do you have any suggestions?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** I think registering all the projects on this public registry would be an improvement. For example, if there was a code of practice for agricultural ditches, you could just register the fact that you had done work on your ditch. You could get credit if you restored habitat, and you would get demerits if you actually damaged it. People would know what the impact on habitat was from that particular project, and could add it up with others.

• (1120)

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Another issue is transition. Every time governments change the rules, there are people who are caught, literally and figuratively, in midstream. I heard from some mining interests that were concerned that when the rules were changed in 2012, there were some people not necessarily far enough along to have been grandfathered into the old system, which set them back and imposed significant costs. There are similar concerns this time around because we're changing things back again.

Do you have any thoughts from your standpoint? We do have to continue to care for that balance of the economy and the environment.

**The Chair:** I will allow for a very quick answer on this one. It's going to go overtime, but very quickly please, Ms. Nowlan.

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** That's fine. I think the act can do both and does do both.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We move now to Mr. Arnold, for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to both of our witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Post, you commented about the previous version of HADD and seeing it return. HADD, which is harmful alteration or destruction of fish habitat, appears to be a noble cause, but in practicality, how did it affect operations of your district and other municipalities in the lower Fraser, when dealing with flood mitigation, flood avoidance, and so on? Could you tell us some of the issues?

**Mr. Duane Post:** It was restrictive in nature because you always had to compensate for ditch work or flood mitigation work that you've done, whereas the actual work was often an improvement for fish habitat. We always felt it was really quite restrictive.

In the last few years, DFO has been good to work with. Previous to 2012, they were staffed a bit better. There was more staff. They were good to work with, quick to get back to you. In the last few years, it's been turned over more to the province. In that regard, it's been more difficult.

Getting back to HADD, HADD results in more work for our municipality.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Is it more restrictive for you to carry on day-to-day operations?

**Mr. Duane Post:** Right. Really, we get less work done with the same budget.

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

Ms. Nowlan, I believe you spoke about clarity in the bill, how it should increase accountability and so on. I want to refer to an article in *The Lawyer's Daily*. It's a publication from law firms. In the second paragraph, it states:

Bill C-68 introduced by the Trudeau government Feb. 6 would also create a bit of a bonanza for lawyers who advise on environmental and other regulatory matters...

That's a pretty glaring statement that there's uncertainty and lack of clarity in this legislation. How can you say that it's providing clarity when this review by law firms says exactly the opposite?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** I have read the article and I think what it says is that every time a law is changed, it's a bonanza for lawyers. That's a fact of life. No matter when you change the law, it's a bonanza for lawyers. When the law was changed in 2012, it was a bonanza for lawyers, too.

I think what that article was getting at is that there will be some new litigation. There has been litigation about the Fisheries Act for over 150 years. It's not excessive by any means. It clarifies the law and the intent. If the HADD provision hadn't been taken out in 2012, we would have had another six years of court interpretations of what that means. But it was taken out and now it's back. The courts will actually be able to pretty easily go back to the previous decades of precedent in case law to interpret those provisions, so I think it was a bit of an overstatement.

The law firm represents corporate clients, which is great. We get tons of questions from community groups and scientists who are out in the field doing research, who really welcome what this law stands for.

• (1125)

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Apparently the lawyers do as well. They are looking forward to that bonanza.

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** We're a non-profit law firm, so we don't actually rake it in, I'm afraid to say.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** You mentioned the lower Fraser River and that only 10% of the original habitat still exists. Do you have any recommendations on how that might be mitigated or changed, short of basically eliminating all of the commerce that takes place there?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** I definitely would not want to eliminate the commerce or the places where people live and work, but I think there are some places where there can be habitat restoration, as I mentioned when Mr. Hardie asked his question. I think there are some new provisions in the act that talk about ecological restoration for particularly sensitive areas, and I'm hoping the government makes use of these important provisions.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** I'll go back to you, Mr. Post. In your district are you able to see where you may possibly have difficulty with flood mitigation or flood preparation with the changes that are coming? I am concerned right now that the temperatures are changing very quickly in the interior. We have a snowpack that is 150% of normal in some areas, and all of a sudden we have extremely warm temperatures and possibly rains following.

How are you able to deal with flood preparation with respect to the current act versus with the proposed changes?

**Mr. Duane Post:** That's a difficult question. We are able to deal with flood preparation. However, without the management of the Fraser River for the last number of decades, really, it's becoming increasingly difficult. It's more of a regional strategy with the Fraser, but without bank protection or channelization, it's difficult to prepare for a flood.

This year there's going to be a really good test of how prepared we are. Going back to the 1950s—so 70 years ago—there was no access to our community by highway. On one side there was a highway but not over the Fraser River. There actually was a ferry that took people across. Today that ferry could not run because of the gravel bars that are there. The river is changing naturally all the time. We've been managing it for more than a century, but in just the last couple of decades, it has become increasingly difficult.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Post. I'm sorry. We have to move on. The time is up.

Mr. Donnelly, go ahead for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses, Councillor Post and Ms. Nowlan, for being here.

Councillor Post, I was a city councillor in Coquitlam for seven years before doing this job, so I appreciate having you here and hearing your testimony.

Ms. Nowlan, I want to start with you. You covered a lot of ground in your 10 minutes or less, and I certainly appreciate that. I want to just follow up on your offer to submit written recommendations, which I think would be very helpful to go along with some of the issues you talked about, the cumulative impacts, environmental flows, rebuilding plans, accountability, etc. Can you provide this committee with specific written recommendations?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** Yes. Thank you. I'd be pleased to do so.

I know that a number of other conservation groups across the country have been collaborating as well. They have been working on proposed recommendations for legislative amendments, and have been actually talking already with the department and with—I assume, indirectly—the Department of Justice about these. So, yes, for sure this committee is moving quickly, and this bill is moving quickly, but we'll try to get it to you as soon as possible.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Thank you.

Speaking of the department officials, we were just talking to them earlier, and the question of triggers came up, how the Fisheries Act might trigger an environmental review. That was an ongoing discussion.

I am wondering if you have any comment about what you would like to see in the Fisheries Act in terms of what existed and what doesn't exist now and perhaps a recommendation around triggers.

• (1130)

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** I think in the previous regime, major project authorization under subsection 35(2) acted as a trigger for an environmental assessment. That seemed to work well, so I think that should be restored.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** There was already some discussion about small, medium, and large projects that can add to that cumulative impact within a watershed, within an ecosystem, or within watersheds within an ecosystem. Can you give the committee some examples of medium-sized projects? From being a city councillor, I know there are obviously housing developments and large bridges across rivers, but are there other kinds of projects in the medium category that this legislation would impact, obviously, in municipalities and villages and others that you could speak about?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** For cumulative impacts, maybe one example would be land use development like that in our very rapidly growing Lower Mainland area. Each individual house, depending on how close it is to a fish-bearing stream, may not have a large impact but it could be a medium impact, and if you add up a whole housing development, that certainly would have at least a medium impact. It's my understanding that local governments—and maybe Councillor Post can talk about this—after the HADD prohibition was removed, did not get as much help from DFO in looking at the impact of housing developments on fish habitat.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Reviewing those projects is really important. I think the minister did talk in some of the.... My Liberal colleagues referenced the additional funding in the budget to review that, which is helpful.

The last thing I want to talk about is that the environment commissioner just released, this morning at 10 a.m., a pretty scathing review of aquaculture. This amendment to the Fisheries Act doesn't talk a lot about aquaculture. I think it's because we're anticipating an aquaculture act coming in. Obviously, this is an issue of concern, especially for where I'm from on the west coast, because you have an impact of.... You have competing interests. You have competing mandates within DFO. On the one hand, they're tasked with conserving wild fish, which drives our commercial fishery and other fisheries, and they are also promoting farmed fish, which the environment commissioner is saying is putting disease into the waters, impacting our wild fish, and the department isn't even monitoring or aware of some of those diseases.

I'm wondering if there's anything your association could recommend for C-68 to strengthen that in this regard.

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** I haven't had the opportunity to read the commissioner's report. It's a huge issue on our coast. I know it is in Atlantic Canada as well. Right around us, Washington state is now moving to land-based aquaculture and moving away from open net pen aquaculture. Alaska is as well, so B.C. is caught in the middle. We're still doing it. We haven't really fully implemented the Cohen commission recommendations, which took a precautionary approach to approving new aquaculture, as you well know.

I'm not sure what Bill C-68 can do about this issue. There are aquaculture regulations under the act currently, so we could take a look at that issue in more depth, but I do know that the government is looking at a separate aquaculture act, as you mentioned, which I think probably would be a good idea, given that there's a very inconsistent regime across the country right now.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** How much time do I have, Chair?

**The Chair:** You have one minute, please.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** I have one minute.

I just was going to ask a final question about the public registry, and then maybe you could elaborate. I think you made a very specific recommendation that the optional areas be made mandatory. What would that look like, and how would that help the act?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** I think the Prime Minister gave a direction to every single minister in the mandate letters that government should be open by default. That's great. That is how it should be. That's how a functioning democracy works.

Therefore, I was surprised to see in this bill that things like guidelines and policies would not automatically be published on a public registry. They might be published somewhere else on DFO's website. That is true, and they are right now, but why not centralize all the available fish information and fish habitat information in one place?

It wasn't clear to me what the distinction was between optional and mandatory records, and I think many people are pleased that this registry will exist and we have new—not new anymore—electronic communication that makes these types of registries very functional and really of value to researchers as well as regulators. Why not put whatever you can into that registry?

• (1135)

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

For the next seven minutes we're going to Mr. Finnigan, please.

**Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to our guests for being here today and on the west coast also.

Mr. Post, this is just a question and we'll get to the real stuff later. In your opening statement, you said that when you do maintenance as a community or a city, sometimes you have to put in a culvert, things like that, and then you have to maintain the banks all along it. Once you've restored that, you said that you had to keep maintaining it. Eventually the banks would return to their natural state, I would assume. How long would you have to maintain that? I'm just curious about that.

**Mr. Duane Post:** Quite often, Himalayan blackberry grows there and if you don't remove that, it can become really invasive and take over the whole bank. As well, there's reed canary grass, which can grow right in the water in some locations.

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** Speaking of that reed canary grass, I was just watching a show the other day about a frog in B.C. that's on the verge of disappearing.

**Mr. Duane Post:** Was it the Oregon spotted frog?

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** Yes, that's the one.

I don't know for what reason, but just going to that reed canary grass, do we know whether by removing it we are damaging or doing something to other species? Have you been told that it is an invasive species? Is it a native species or is it something that you know...? You said that it would restore the water to clean, but do we

know that it doesn't harbour other ecosystems? I'd like to hear your thoughts on that.

**Mr. Duane Post:** There's a whole Oregon spotted frog recovery team. They would probably be better able to answer some of those questions. However, if we maintain that grass, even just by cutting it, it actually improves the habitat for that frog.

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** Okay.

**Mr. Duane Post:** We're often not allowed to cut grass along ditches because it's deemed as fish habitat, but on some watercourses we are allowed to, and in those courses we don't have to do any actual excavating of ditch material. It can go 10 to 15 years without any real work in those ditches, just by cutting the grass.

The frog benefits from that grass being shorter. If it grows quite tall and falls over in the winter, it's not good habitat for the frog either.

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** The frog was just an example I used.

When you change or take away certain native things, whether it be grass or conditions, you wouldn't know that you might be destroying a certain other species that could be food for something else. I'm reaching far here.

Anyway, as far as the regulation itself is concerned, do you find that in the provincial and the federal regulations, DFO's, there is an overlap? Is there a layering of regulations? Are they well-coordinated as far as when you're applying for a permit to alter a wetland or a brook is concerned?

**Mr. Duane Post:** There is some overlap, but really it comes down to who has the jurisdiction. We often have to wait for approvals before we get the go-ahead to do the work.

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** Is there a sequence? Would you go to the province first and then you would go to DFO? Is there a sequence, and will this act change some of that?

**Mr. Duane Post:** No, the act will not change that.

• (1140)

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** Okay.

**Mr. Duane Post:** We'll still have to go to both jurisdictions.

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** Thank you, Mr. Post.

Ms. Nowlan, you were referring to the loss of some of the fish, such as the cod, and how on the east coast the Atlantic salmon and also the salmon on the west coast have been going down over the years. Of course, a lot of the reasons for the numbers going down probably have to do with human practices and commercial activities, but there are also other things.

We know that on the east coast, for instance, the habitat has been moving north. We're quite sure that it's related to warming waters. I'm just curious about how far-reaching the act should be, because we know that one of the reasons the waters are warming up is all the CO2 in the atmosphere, which warms the air and then eventually the water.



As far as the legal side is concerned, how far do you think it should be reaching? It could be also just applying road salt or whatever. How far should we go in saying this is harming the fish and therefore we need to go right to the source?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** That's a hard one. I think the impact of climate change and a warming ocean on fish is beyond my expertise, but I know that lawyers and regulators are trying to figure out how to address this in law. It's a really major issue for all resource management, but fisheries in particular. I think DFO takes an adaptive management approach where they can see the results of their fisheries management decisions, and hopefully adapt them so that if the fish are moving north, then they move their management effort and attention further north.

I think you've asked a hard one. How far should the act go? I guess it's a question of how much we value the wild fish in our ocean, and whether we want to keep them there. We should go a long way, I think, to keep them there.

We've really decimated a lot of fish stocks around the world. Canada does have good fisheries management, generally. We're probably an envy of the world, but if we want to keep that up, we have to go pretty far in the law. I think it's a really important legacy for our children, grandchildren, future generations. Also, what will happen to the ecosystems if the fish are gone? No one really knows. Will jellyfish take over? Will plastic take over? There are studies which say there will be more plastic in the sea by 2100—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Nowlan. I'm sorry I have to cut you off, but we have to keep on time here.

We'll go to Mr. Miller for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to Ms. Nowlan and Mr. Post for being here.

Mr. Post, I'd like to get a clearer example of the kinds of problems your municipality went through because of DFO regulations, or whatever, and if there's a connection. I come from a municipal background, so I certainly sympathize with you.

You made one comment about replacing a culvert or whatever, and having to maintain the bank. Part of your one comment, I believe it was to Mr. McDonald, was about the fact of maintaining the invasive species of grasses, whether it's canary grass or whatever else. I can understand if you're trying to remove grass in the water, because that is part of the fish habitat, but to be stopped from maintaining or cutting the grass up to the bank shouldn't be an issue. Could you clarify that? Did I misunderstand your comments?

**Mr. Duane Post:** I don't think you misunderstood my comments. Even if it's just grass that's along a ditch bank, we have to apply to DFO to cut that grass. If that's the only habitat on that ditch, they may or may not approve that, or we may have to only cut one bank and not be allowed to cut both banks. In some of the ditch maintenance work that we've done, we're only allowed to maintain 150 metres, and then leave 150 metres, and then do another 150. Then the following year we clean the sections we missed in the previous year.

If we were allowed to do the whole channel, we wouldn't have to go back for probably five years. Because we're just piecing it together, by the time you finally get it clean, you're back to where you started and you really haven't lowered the level of water in the ditch.

• (1145)

**Mr. Larry Miller:** First of all, I can't imagine for the life of me how DFO or anybody could justify that you have to apply to cut grass onshore and not in the water. To me, that's just bureaucrats hanging on to something.

I only have how much time?

**The Chair:** You have two minutes.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Ms. Nowlan, you stated that your group is non-profit, and I only have two minutes here, so answer very briefly, please.

Where do you get your funding in general?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** It's a combination of sources: the public, foundations, some government contracts, some fees for service.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Why would the government contract you?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** Sometimes they want advice about environmental laws, different levels of government.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Okay. Well, the government has lots of lawyers on staff, so there's—

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** We have no current federal government direct funding that I'm aware of.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** That's fine. I just think it's ridiculous, when government already has its own lawyers, that they would hire. I'm sure your lawyers are good; that's not the point here. It's about spending money—bad money, I'd say.

Do you get any money from Tides, Sierra Club, the Clinton Foundation? You mentioned foundations.

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** No, not the Clinton Foundation. We have three associated non-profits. I'm here with the association, and the association does not get foundation funding from the sources you mentioned. But the related research foundations—

**Mr. Larry Miller:** The David Suzuki Foundation?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** No.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** What are these foundations, then, that you get money from?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** We've had grants since the organization was started in 1974 from the Law Foundation of British Columbia, which is a provincial foundation that gets its money from interest on lawyers' trust accounts. There's one in each province. We've had grants since then.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Are there any other foundations?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** Yes, there are lots of other foundations: the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, some American foundations, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. We have received money from Tides Canada. In our annual report, we have a full list of all our sources of funding.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Okay.

Am I out of time?

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Miller, but you're out of time. Thank you.

Mr. McDonald, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses, in person and by video conference.

Mr. Post, it was interesting to hear you talk about how you have maintained things. It puts a burden on your budget, I guess, to continue maintaining something that you've excavated or dug a ditch to prevent flooding upstream somewhere, perhaps for people who live in your town. To me, by doing it you're probably saving money in the long run, because you're not going in and being challenged by a resident to sue the town or whatever because of the flooding taking place.

We had a similar situation, I guess, speaking as a former councillor and mayor of my hometown, with a very slow-moving river. Every time there was a good heavy rain, there would be flooding. We tried to get permission. It seemed like it was going on and on and on, until we found out through some source that with a flooding issue, next time you're in fear of a flood, go out to the river with your excavator and fix it. You don't need permission to do it. We did exactly that, and to my knowledge, we didn't get in any trouble. DFO probably came up afterwards and looked at it.

Sometimes in an emergency situation, it's probably easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission. I'd like you to comment on how it works in your municipality and on your dealings with DFO.

• (1150)

**Mr. Duane Post:** I don't disagree with you that typically it is easier to ask for forgiveness. However, we don't really want to put our taxpayers under that kind of stress. We'd rather get the approvals. That's the system we have, right? Get the approvals in place, do the work, and see the results. That's how we want to proceed with all of our ditch work.

**Mr. Ken McDonald:** We just found that getting the approvals took years.

**Mr. Duane Post:** Yes.

**Mr. Ken McDonald:** It dragged out so long and the problem continued. But thank you for that.

Ms. Nowlan, you mentioned the aquaculture industry, as did my colleague Mr. Donnelly, that we are to regulate it, and yes, I agree. I think it needs to have an act of its own, simply because of the way aquaculture operates and the differences between that and a commercial fishery. I recently spoke to a very well-known, very big processor in my province. Their comment was that the population of the world is getting bigger, and the fish resources that are being fished are for the most part getting smaller.

Somewhere, you have to find a way for that very valuable protein to be available to the masses of the world, and it's their feeling that aquaculture will be the answer to that for many types of fish and whatnot.

Could you comment on the gap that they predict will happen with the wild fishery and on aquaculture having to fill that gap?

**Ms. Linda Nowlan:** You're right. It's really important for food security around the world and also here in Canada and in our north and on all three coasts. To me, it's critical that aquaculture doesn't negatively impact wild fish. That's key. We have to make sure that doesn't happen, however we can. That's number one.

Number two is we need to make sure our wild fish stay healthy so they don't keep diminishing. I think Minister LeBlanc recently announced more action on illegal, unreported fishing. That is a direction in which we need to go to make sure wild fish continue. On aquaculture, I believe MP Donnelly has sponsored a private member's bill about moving toward closed containment aquaculture, land-based containment, and there are promising developments in that area. It may not solve the world's problems but it's one possible solution.

I think we want to go in a number of directions, but the bottom line is, do we want our wild fish to survive?

**Mr. Ken McDonald:** I think there are probably problems with both land-based or sea-based until we get it straightened out, and as you said, do it right.

**The Chair:** You have five seconds, Mr. McDonald.

**Mr. Ken McDonald:** Okay. I'll say thank you.

**The Chair:** Before we move on to our next panel, Mr. Arnold has asked for a point of clarification. I'm going to give you one minute to do that.

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

It shouldn't take me that long. I just wanted to provide clarification on the reed canary grass that was mentioned. It's a non-native invasive species that grows seven or eight feet tall, pulls over in the winter, smothers everything else. It becomes a monocultural environment. That's part of the reason the municipalities need to control this on the waterfront and in Salmon Arm where I live. It has completely pushed out the native bulrushes. It does need to be managed.

Thank you.

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

Thank you, Mr. Post from British Columbia. Ms. Nowlan, thank you, and it was good to see you again.

We're going to suspend for a few minutes and change witnesses.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•

• (1155)

**The Chair:** This is hour two on the Fisheries Act. We have three presenters.

We have appearing as individuals Chelsey Ellis, Cailyn Siider, and James Lawson.

Each of you will have 10 minutes to provide your opening remarks.

We're going to start with Mr. Lawson, please.

**Mr. James Lawson (As an Individual):** Madam Chair and honourable members, thank you for having me here and listening to my story.

My name is James Lawson, and I am a career fisherman. During my time I have harvested salmon and herring by seine, herring by gillnet, frozen at-sea prawns and urchins by scuba dive, and geoducks by surface-supplied dive. I grew up on boats, spending my summers out on the seiners ever since I was a baby and earning my first paycheque on half-share at 13 years old.

These years on the water got into my veins, and I will never be able to walk away from fishing despite the countless warnings I received from crew members and mentors. They all told me to go away to school and get an education to escape the fisheries. They considered it a dying industry setting sky-high lease prices on quota, insurmountable prices to buy licences, and an ever-decreasing opportunity to put gear in the water, squeezing the next generation of fishermen away in a monetary stranglehold.

I heeded their words in part, went to university, and obtained a bachelor of science, but now that I have had a taste of the fishing lifestyle, I can't get it out of my heart.

I decided to be a fisherman like my father and his father before him. It is my family's legacy. We have been fishing since time immemorial. I am a Heiltsuk band member through my father, and my mother is Tsimshian. I also have strong blood ties in the Nisga'a and Haisla nations. These are all coastal areas with small communities strung across the land that have leaned heavily on fishing, communities like Bella Bella, King Cove, Kitimat, and Port Simpson.

Look to the archeological excavations on Calvert Island, and you will see that my people have been fishing these waters for at least 15,000 years. These communities are scattered up and down the coast and are yearning for fishing to make its triumphant return to them, bringing socio-economic benefit.

Many of these would-be communities have already died, such as Namu and Butedale. Some places, such as Ocean Falls and Klemtu, have turned to alternative sources of income, such as farmed fish, much to the disdain of their struggling neighbours still trying to uphold wild fisheries.

There is a certain understanding that people need to support themselves somehow, but it further divides an already splintered fishing community. The Heiltsuk, with their main community of Bella Bella situated close to Klemtu and Ocean Falls, have issued a statement denouncing fish farms in their waters in support of the Swanson occupation in the Broughton Archipelago.

It's hard to sit idle as we watch this access loss go to foreign and domestic investors who have no intention of going out on the seas and fishing the product themselves. We have been cast into the role

of serfs upon the sea, toiling to catch fish to get paid at a fraction of its landed value because we are under the heavy-handed entities who charge what they feel for doling out access. It is supposed to be a common resource for British Columbians, not a luxury held by a few.

This increasing privatization feels like it has certain parallels in history. In pre-contact times, the nations fished our traditional waters both to feed ourselves and to harvest commodities desired in trade from neighbouring nations. All the work was done in each respective nation's waters, in practice adhering to adjacency policies. Over time, this simple system eroded away and was radically changed by introductions such as a new fishing fleet of settlers, a transformation of fish to being an economic commodity first and a sustenance commodity second, and the introduction of licensure to be allowed to harvest.

Companies staked a claim on many of these licences, and everybody felt the wrath. Fishers were under their thumb and companies jealously guarded their access to the resource. Fishers oftentimes had to bend to the wills of the companies. Everyone felt the wrath of price-fixing, and first nation groups largely felt like they had been stripped of their inherent right to fish in their unceded territories.

Where first it was first nations losing access and companies holding power over all fishermen, it is much the same for commercial fishermen today. They are losing their access to people with large sums of money and are having to pay hefty lease prices to remain in work. The reconciliation amending the loss of first nations' access is still ongoing today, and I wonder how long it will be before today's commercial fleet is being reconciled for being driven out of the water by policy. When will the owner-operators be the ones to have control over their own destiny?

Currently, non-operating investors are holding so much quota on licence that they have the power to streamline processing to centralized locations and to be the ones who set a price on a product caught by others. The wealth is not benefiting many, as it is intended, but few. Small-town B.C. sees very little of the benefit when the owners who have the access aren't community members. They're being crushed by practices aimed at earning investors and buying companies maximum profit, which do little for the well-being of places like Bella Bella, but it is very hard to stand up and correct this practice when somebody else holds the key to your earning ability and when the cost to buy your own access is so prohibitive.

There are some bright spots. I have the advantage of the PICFI and the aboriginal fisheries strategy programs on my side, since I am first nation. Without these supports, I would never have set my degree aside and obtained my fishing master fourth class or commercial diver certifications. Without the hope these programs offered to somebody like me I would never have invested myself as much to join the area B harvest committee or attend community-building workshops like the BC Young Fisherman's Gathering.

•(1200)

There is some opportunity out there. For instance, I just participated in a test charter for herring in my nation's traditional waters for 23 days on my family's boat, but not all is as beneficial as it seems. The system is not perfect.

The Central Coast Commercial Fisheries Association, which serves four first nations on the central coast, has eight urchin licences but 10 certified divers. That's not enough to get us all on our feet and established in our own business. In some cases this is just the opposite: there isn't a big enough base of willing career fishermen to draw from to get all these licences fished by central coast first nations operations.

These programs are there to help us gain access through government funding, and even they are competing with the non-operating investors. I just watched two sea cucumber licences get purchased for \$2.5 million, prices that these programs have trouble competing with and that are prohibitive to a young man like me trying to break in and have a chance at making it.

Stopping this non-operator investment practice has the potential to halt and reverse the price spike of access and make return on investment more reasonable.

This isn't just a chance to satisfy a select group of individuals. This is an opportunity for coastal rehabilitation. Give the benefit of B.C. fish back to the fishermen through steps toward owner-operator policies. Having this broad base of empowered fishers will funnel economic gain through small communities via increased adjacency practices. Talk to these coastal characters and mine their immense wealth of knowledge for their takes on conservation and management. Keep us included and involved. We have a great interest in keeping our lifestyle alive. You will struggle to find more passionate wardens of the sea than those who have invested their lives into it.

We are the fabric of this rugged and majestic coastline, icons of British Columbia, and we are going extinct. Think of the father out in the spring gale shaking herring for 48 hours in an open skiff; the salmon skipper mentoring the next generation on the ground and wondering if they will even be able to take over his operation; the woman skippering a pram boat with her daughters on board; or the diver spending hours under water harvesting in the surge and the depths to make his wage. Then ask yourself why they have to pay somebody else who doesn't have the skill set or the desire to be there.

Give us back our power and voice by taking steps toward owner-operator policy, and we'll do our part in taking care of small coastal communities in B.C. in speaking up for conservation and effective management.

Thank you for your time.

•(1205)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lawson. You did it with some time to spare.

Ms. Cailyn Siider.

**Ms. Cailyn Siider (As an Individual):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and honourable committee members, for inviting us to appear as witnesses and share with you our unique stories and perspectives in

regard to our experiences as commercial fishermen on the west coast.

I apologize in advance for my lack of organization and a well-prepared presentation. We three were given less than 72 hours' notice to organize ourselves in time to be here to appear in person. James and I had recently travelled to Prince Rupert and were given little choice but to appear here today wearing our gumboots. Because of this, the words I have prepared today are largely anecdotal and from my heart.

My name is Cailyn Siider. I'm a fifth-generation commercial fisherman from Sointula, British Columbia. I have actively fished for more than a half of my life, beginning with gillnetting for salmon and trawling for shrimp on my family's 38-foot boat, the *Milly III*. My family is currently actively engaged in the salmon, halibut, rockfish, herring, Dungeness crab, and shrimp fisheries. I've spent most of my adult life crewing on salmon seine boats, as well as prawning, and most recently salmon trolling off the north coast of B. C. I am fortunate to have grown up within and around many examples of multi-generational fishing families.

After I leave Ottawa this evening, I will return to the west coast to begin preparations to fish prawns on a multi-generational family boat from Campbell River. Following the prawn season, I will begin the northern salmon troll season on an independently owned boat from Pender Harbour. Unfortunately, these examples of independent, multi-generational family fishing operations have become the exception rather than the norm on the west coast.

I am currently in the process of completing my B.A. in peace and conflict studies, a program devoted to social justice, community-building, and grassroots social change. I chose this program because I believe that, coupled with my passion and intimate knowledge of the commercial fishing industry, I may have an opportunity to help turn the tide of the devastation that current fisheries policy on the west coast has inflicted upon my family, my friends, and the communities I belong to and cherish. Being invited here today helps to solidify this belief that there is hope for our communities and a future for young fishermen, like Chelsey, James, and me. We want to be the future of the commercial fishery on the west coast, but we need your help.

Now I'll explain a little more about who I am and where I come from.

As previously mentioned, I'm from Sointula, which is a tiny community on Malcolm Island, nestled between northern Vancouver Island and the mainland at the intersection of Queen Charlotte and Johnstone Strait. Malcolm Island sits just west of the Broughton Archipelago, and along the migration route for the majority of salmon that return every year to the Fraser River. This is in the heart of the traditional territory of the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples, who have lived off the riches of the ocean since time immemorial.

My family are settlers to the B.C. coast. On both sides of my family my ancestors immigrated to Canada from Finland at the turn of the 20th century. They moved west, eventually finding themselves in the newly established utopian community of Sointula. These settlers from Finland were farmers and poets and philosophers who were not prepared for the coastal climate of the Pacific Northwest. A theme in fishing that most fishermen will be able to attest to is that you need to be resilient, adaptable, resourceful, and creative. Five generations back, my family learned this the hard way. Some took to the forest; most took to the sea. Since then, Sointula has been well established and known up and down the coast as a coastal fishing community.

I represent the fifth generation of my family to be an active fish harvester involved with the commercial fishery in B.C. My first summer fishing I was two and a half years old. My parents and I travelled to Haida Gwaii to gillnet chum salmon in Cumshewa Inlet. The trip west across the open waters of Queen Charlotte Sound made me seasick. On the trip back, after we were finished fishing, I sat on my father's lap as he navigated us through the open ocean swell. I squealed, "Wee, Daddy, do it again", every time we could ride down from a swell and green water would crash over the bow. I got over my seasickness and have been fishing ever since.

I spent summers as a teenager gillnetting salmon with my dad, exploring the B.C. coast and spending time in the communities that rely on the health and sustainability of our fisheries. My sisters and I would take turns going out on openings. We learned work ethics, community values, independence, how to live off the ocean, camaraderie, and respect and appreciation for the coast and all the gifts it gives us. As I grew older, graduated from high school, and began exploring the world on my own, I continued to return every year to the coast to fish and spend time in my home community of Sointula and the fishing community that extends up and down the B.C. coast. I'm a member of the B.C. Young Fishermen's Network and the UFAWU.

I have sat on industry advisory boards and have been engaged in grassroots movements around salmon fishing most of my life. The first letter I ever wrote and decided to send was an opinionated piece, written in crayon, to fisheries minister Fred Mifflin, when I was six years old.

Growing up in Sointula, we had two operational fish plants: McMillan's, in the heart of the breakwater, and Lions Gate, uptown. Sointula had a large gillnet, trawl, and seine fleet. If you lived in town and didn't fish, you worked at a plant. If you didn't work at a plant, you worked at the pub or the co-op store, somewhere that was sustained by the money made by fishermen or shore workers.

- (1210)

There is an urban myth in Sointula that it once boasted the highest per capita income tax bills anywhere in Canada. I didn't fact check this, but during Sointula's boom years, I don't doubt it.

Today, Sointula has a handful of gillnetters, no trawlers, and one seine boat that hasn't fished in years. The fish plants that I used to visit with my dad and grandpa, where the old fishermen would sneak me candies while they jawed politics over cups of coffee, are long gone. The co-op store runs at a fraction of the capacity it once did. The pub is open during tourist season, if you're lucky. People my age

and young families have migrated out of Sointula. Rumours resurface every few years about whether the elementary school will close. Thankfully, it remains open.

This is not a story unique to Sointula. This narrative is repeated up and down the coast, from Ucluelet to Prince Rupert to Alert Bay. Our communities are suffering and have been suffering for a long time. This damage is a direct result of the increasing privatization and corporate control of our commercial fisheries. Due to federal policy and opportunistic corporations, we have been pushed out of our homes, our communities, and our livelihoods. The Canadian Fishing Company or a foreign investor doesn't care about the preservation of coastal communities. Jimmy Pattison does not care about Sointula or Bella Bella or Port Hardy. The investment of these companies in the sustainability of our fish and fisheries is just that, an investment. As coastal communities, we have a vested interest in the sustainability and stewardship of our fish and fisheries because it means that our children and grandchildren will be able to eat wild salmon, to see the sun rise over the open Pacific Ocean, and they will be able to live the same adventurous, fulfilling, and beautiful life we have, if they so choose.

Our legacy is the health of our coast, the succession of family ways of life, and the vitality of our communities. The Canadian Fishing Company has its bottom line to look out for. We have our families, communities. and coasts to look out for.

To have owner-operator policy entrenched within the Fisheries Act would help to empower us on the west coast with the agency to rebuild the commercial fishing industry in such a way that benefits active, independent fishermen and their families and communities, not just the highest bidder. Adjacency would help us breathe life back into our communities and allow them to hopefully return to the Sointula that exists in my memory.

We need preservation, protection, and promotion of not simply commercial licence holders, which would mean anyone with enough money to buy a licence, such as a corporation, but we need preservation, protection, and promotion of active, independent commercial fisherman.

Jim Pattison's tax writeoff of a commercial fishing fleet does not need protection. Independent commercial fisherman like us speaking in front of you today do. Otherwise, we are doomed to live our lives as tax writeoffs for Jim Pattison and other disconnected corporate investors.

Until we change this, my livelihood, my life, is just part of an investment or tax writeoff for a corporation. I deserve more than that. Our coastal communities and active independent fishermen deserve more than that. We deserve to be treated the same as our brothers and sisters on the east coast. It's outrageous that there is a west coast fisheries management model and an east coast model. Where is that line where fisheries policy in Canada changes? Does fisheries policy suddenly change in Ottawa? Does it change when the corporate lobby on the west coast decides it does?

Whatever this change process ends up looking like, I firmly believe it needs to come from the ground up rather than the top down. This change needs to be centred around and led by coastal communities and active, independent fisherman. Anything less would run the risk of perpetuating this harmful cycle of corporate control of our common resource.

These are the first steps in a long process, but we are representative of the young fishermen in B.C. who are ready for it, who are energetic and motivated and want to go for it. Being intentional and paying attention to this process is just as important as any goal we work toward.

Chelsey, James, and I are young fishermen. Just the three of us, being so young, represent 40-plus years of experience actively fishing on the water. Imagine the hundreds or even thousands of years a room full of fisher men and women, such as at the Fisheries for Communities Gathering, represent. The traditional and community knowledge within that room, within our fleets and communities, is invaluable. Change needs to come from that experience, from those voices, from our voices.

That's a little snapshot of who I am and why Bill C-68 and these proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act are important to me. I appear here to provide anecdotal evidence that speaks to my experience as a young fisherman from a long lineage of women and men who have made their lives on and beside the sea. To adopt into the Fisheries Act, actively though carefully, practised policies such as owner-operator will be to help us carry on these lifestyles and traditions that we love so much.

I believe strongly in the power of storytelling. Storytelling has the power to bring people together and change the world. There is a great divide between this room where we are now and the communities we all come from and represent. It should not and does not have to be this way. All of us here now have a responsibility and role to play in closing this divide.

• (1215)

I hope that at the end of the day, we all have the same vision for the west coast: healthy oceans and thriving communities. Community engagement is critical. Listening to, respecting, and acting upon traditional community knowledge is fundamental in realizing this vision.

I urge you to continue listening to our voices, to our stories. If there is one certainty of all fishermen, aside from our independence and stubbornness, it's that we all have stories to tell.

The time to act is now, because as any old fisherman might tell you, the tide waits for no man and very few women.

Thank you for having us here today to share our stories with you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Siider. You did a great job. It doesn't matter if you have gumboots on or not, you did a phenomenal job.

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ellis, please.

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis (As an Individual):** Madam Chair, and honourable members, first of all, I would like to thank you very much for allowing us the time to speak. I really appreciate this opportunity.

My name is Chelsey Ellis, and I'm a third-generation fisherwoman from a small fishing village in Prince Edward Island. I spent my early years on the water fishing lobster and scallops with my family. I then graduated with a biology degree that was heavily concentrated in marine science. Upon graduating, I took a position in the U.S. working for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as a fisheries observer. I then moved on to a position with the P.E.I. provincial government as an oyster biologist, and I was working on the side as a seafood traceability coordinator in Atlantic Canada.

I have been living on the west coast in small fishing towns in B.C. for the past six years as a seafood traceability coordinator, a fisheries observer, a monitoring program coordinator, and also as a commercial fisher. I have worked in 11 different fisheries as a biologist and commercial fisher on two coasts in both Canada and the U.S. I'm currently working towards my 150 ton master ticket, and I'm a member of the BC Young Fishermen's Network.

I'm here today to offer my unique experience to the proposed changes to the Fisheries Act, specifically the two pieces that I feel are missing. One, in decision-making, the preservation or promotion of the independence of active fish harvesters needs to be taken into account in all of Canada's fisheries. Two, the knowledge of commercial fish harvesters needs to be added as a consideration for decision-making. This is crucial to maximizing the social, economic, and cultural benefits of all of our fisheries.

Commercial fishing is the backbone of my community on Prince Edward Island. The provisions in place on the east coast protect and promote the independent owner-operator. This provides a meaningful and important livelihood that supports people in place, allowing young people the opportunity to stay in their communities and follow their families' traditions if they choose to do so.

I found this to be in stark contrast to the west coast, where provisions in place do not support and protect independent owner-operators. Companies, shareholders, and foreign entities have been enabled to buy and lease licences and quota. This has resulted in licences and quota being transferred out of the hands of fishermen and communities, creating extremely high capital costs, which have resulted in huge barriers to entry for the younger generation.

Through my experience as a biologist and a commercial fisher on both coasts, I've seen the impact that this discrepancy has created. Young people are not able to see themselves gaining access to or making decent wages in the fisheries on the west coast. The high cost to lease licences and quota has transferred most of the profits from fishing out of the hands of those who are doing the long hours and hard work to those who simply have the deep pockets to make the costly investment.

It doesn't have to be that way. This government can preserve and promote the independence of active fish harvesters across all fisheries in Canada. If steps were taken in the long-term direction of preserving or promoting the independence of active fish harvesters on the west coast, it would create great benefits to sustainable fisheries and healthy coastal communities in the exact same way that it would on the east coast.

Through my experience, I've seen that having an intergenerational link within the industry is a huge component to sustainable fisheries and healthy coastal communities.

We are at a crucial moment on the west coast. If things continue in the current direction, the intergenerational link is going to be severely or completely broken. Taking the control of resources outside of coastal communities and the fishers who fish them can have a negative impact on sustainability. Independent multi-generational fishers have the most to lose if a fishery isn't sustainably managed.

There are great amounts of pride, respect for the ocean, and knowledge transferred generationally in commercial fishing—transmission to family, and to all the people starting out in the industry who come to work for multi-generational fishers. I have seen this transmission through my own family and in action on both coasts. It's an extremely positive experience being on a boat with a multi-generational family fisher or someone who has directly learned from one.

Many multi-generational fishing families on the west coast have members who would like to continue working in the industry. Unfortunately, many of them are unable to make a decent living to support their families and ultimately have to make the choice to look for work elsewhere.

It's the same problem that is being seen in the Vancouver housing market. Many young people would love to own a home in Vancouver, but it's not a realistic option. Houses are no longer a place to live, but an investment to make profit from. This creates a speculative market and drives up the cost.

● (1220)

In the same way, owning fishing licences and quota under current policy on the west coast has become an investment that pays high returns. Just as stand-alone houses in Vancouver are unaffordable to

the vast majority of the population, fishing licences are unaffordable to almost everyone trying to enter or expand within the fishery, and that is because of the speculative market.

The threat this creates to long-term sustainability is that the current system on the west coast creates the same differences that can be seen between home owners and renters. Fishermen who are only able to lease licences and quota, by circumstance, don't always have the same long-term vision and goals as independent owner-operators. It creates an attitude of making as much as you can as quickly as you can to offset the huge cost of leasing the licences and quota. If you don't feel you have a stake in the future, why would you be worried about the long term?

By preserving or promoting the independence of active fish harvesters on the west coast, you would be promoting sustainable fisheries and healthy coastal communities, which leads to my second point.

To fully understand what is happening in an ecosystem, the knowledge of commercial fishers needs to be added as a consideration for the decision-making. The men and women who have fished for their entire lives have intimate community knowledge of their local ecosystems. These fishers have worked on the water for 30 years, 40 years, and more, as have their parents before them. Utilizing their knowledge could ultimately help DFO make better management decisions.

Bill C-68 should afford opportunities for knowledge transmission and decision-making from commercial fish harvesters and involve them more in the process. Through my work at a biologist, fisheries monitoring coordinator, and commercial fisher, I've noticed that there is a negative attitude toward using the knowledge of fish harvesters in management decisions. A broken link exists in communication, where the knowledge of fishermen is not being accounted for and is being unfairly branded as untrustworthy. This is to the detriment of all involved and is creating great amounts of extra work and making it harder to enact positive change.

I see a future where fishers are inextricably involved in fisheries management, monitoring, and enhancement, using their on-the-ground knowledge and innovative thinking to work together with government to improve the fisheries for present and future generations.

I am so optimistic about the future of our fisheries in Canada. I hope people for generations to come will be able to have the same positive experience of commercial fishing that has enriched my life.

I've spoken with hundreds of fishers on both coasts, and the common thread is that commercial fishing is an important tradition and lifestyle. It is also a platform to challenge yourself and to explore and exceed your personal limitations. It's a meaningful living that completely connects people to place and creates a personal identity.

I have hopes that this experience and the benefit it has for our coastal communities will be understood and steps will be taken toward protecting it over the long term. We need you to all be partners in that.

In closing, I would suggest that Bill C-68 should include the following in its considerations for decision-making: one, the preservation or promotion of the independence of active fish harvesters in all fisheries; and two, the knowledge of fish harvesters. These two additions would be positive steps forward to maximize the social, economic, and cultural benefits to commercial fishers, coastal communities, and the future generations of all Canadians who are called to this work.

While working on the west coast for the past six years, I have collected photographs and interviewed those who work in the industry. I'm leaving you with a very small sample of their voices explaining why they love to fish and their hopes for the future. Their reasons for fishing and their hopes for the future echo up and down the west coast.

I want to thank you again for this great opportunity to speak. I really value your taking the time to listen.

● (1225)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Ellis.

We do have copies of the presentation that Ms. Ellis is speaking about, and we will have it translated and distributed to members.

I would be remiss if I did not say, as the only woman on this committee, that it's wonderful to have some women fishers presenting today. Thank you very much for that.

We are going to Mr. Hardie for the first seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to our guests for being here. Your comments have echoed some fairly deep-rooted suspicions we've had.

Just to clarify, we made the point in some of our earlier studies and will continue to make the point that relying on traditional knowledge does not confine itself to indigenous fishers. It means everybody who's on the water who knows something.

I'll also reflect that very often we've heard about the difficulties people have in dealing with the DFO and about how closed they are to outside information, whereas I think our orientation has been to see more citizen science. Given that basically we're dealing more and more, as we've heard from our west coast colleagues.... These aren't fishers from 50 years ago; these are scientists. These are people who have high education and know things and whose resource is being wasted because the doors have been closed to them. We want to open those doors.

In our conversations with the minister this morning, we brought up the owner-operator issue. Like you, I'm from the west coast, and I've often wondered how it is that we got to the situation there, when

so much effort is being made to preserve the economic and social benefits of the owner-operator situation on the east coast. My colleagues can tell you that even there it's under stress and threat.

The minister said that it's a permissive environment or regime. If enough people want it, it's possible to get it on the west coast. The challenge to you is thus to start thinking about how that transition could be made.

An independent fisher on the west coast of Vancouver Island was telling me about fishing for halibut. He was getting, and the numbers may not be absolutely correct, \$9 a pound, but he was paying \$7 a pound in rent.

Mr. Lawson, is that pretty typical? I'll ask all of you. What percentage of the actual revenue are you able to keep after you pay rent to God knows who?

**Mr. James Lawson:** I know this is the upcoming year for the big sockeye cycle on the south coast of B.C. I did some calling around trying to procure some more licences for the boat I fish on. There are offers requiring that 50% of the profits from that licence—that's all the sockeye quota and all other fisheries—go straight to the licence holder. That's not taking into account all the expenses we have on top of that, such as for fuel and paying our crew. The money washes away very fast when the leases are so high.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Is it similar with the other species as well?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** When I went to school, the boat I fish crab with went out halibut fishing. You're right on the numbers. It was even a bit more. The price was \$9 last year, and it was about \$7.50 for the lease. This year the price for halibut has gone down to about \$7, and then the lease has been adjusted accordingly to \$5.50, so it seems that it's just adjusting to whatever people will go to fish for. It's just shifting. I'm not sure what the percentage would be.

I haven't wanted to go halibut fishing, because it's a lot of work, and people just aren't getting paid enough for the back-breaking, long, and really dangerous work.

I've put my hands up because I couldn't go to school.

● (1230)

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** My time is short, and I need to ask about aquaculture.

There was a report this morning that was very damning of the industry, or at least of DFO's oversight of it. Can you give us even anecdotally a very quick snapshot, for the sake of time, of the impacts you're seeing from aquaculture in your area?

James, we'll start with you.



**Mr. James Lawson:** I just left that central coast herring charter, and you can ask me how happy I was when we were plowing through a 40-knot gale in the Queen Charlotte Strait. We were going to go to a place called Shelter Bay. There was a fish farm in there. I looked there, and I couldn't go to this bay: it's a competing industry, and it's polluting our fish. I have nothing good to say about it. There is no reason they should be in the waters without more regulation. They should really be on land.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Is Alexandra Morton pretty much spot on, in your opinion, in some of her assessments?

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** Yes, completely. In my experience and in my opinion, she fully utilizes traditional and community knowledge in her work and on the ground. I fully support Alexandra Morton in all of her endeavours.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** On fish processing, you invoke the name of Jimmy Pattison who, you will find, if you go into metro Vancouver or the Lower Mainland, is a philanthropist. He literally builds hospitals for people, and he enjoys a pretty wonderful reputation. But if you go up the coast towards Rupert and all the rest, the story is different. I understand that he basically controls about 40% of the licences on the west coast.

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** I'm not exactly sure what the number is. I believe it's approximately 90% of the same fishery.

**Mr. James Lawson:** Something like that.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Something like that. He closed the processing plant in Prince Rupert and moved a lot of that work to Alaska.

Where do you have to go to get your fish processed?

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** In my experience, I've worked on company boats and I've worked on independent boats. I've worked on independent boats that are choked by Jimmy Pattison. Most of my salmon seine career has been on one of those independent boats. There simply isn't the infrastructure. We pretty much have to deliver to Jim Pattison. There are a few other smaller companies, one of which James fishes for, but Jimmy Pattison controls the infrastructure. There's nowhere else to get ice. There's nowhere else to take our fish. There's nowhere else to sell our fish, so he has a monopoly. He pays us what he wants, when he wants, and ships our fish north to be processed.

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

I'm going to have to move on to the next round of questioning.

Mr. Arnold, please, for seven minutes.

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

Witnesses, I want to thank you for being here, especially in your youthfulness. It's not a common sight for our witnesses to have that young enthusiasm and enthusiasm for the industry.

It reminds me. I was at home during a constituency week recently, and we did a farm tour. We toured a dairy farm and talked about the young families wanting to take over the family farm and the investments that were required there. They did a quick survey of five local farms, and the average investment for young people basically your age to take it over from their parents was over \$2 million per farm. I don't know what your investments are in your boats, but they are probably pretty extreme for a young person to consider. I want to

recognize the similarities in that, trying to carry on traditional and family businesses.

We've heard over the years that originally fishermen were very reluctant to have monitoring systems on their vessels, reporting their catches, and so on, and there are all kinds of reasons for that. Nobody wants to give up their secret fishing spot. I don't when I'm home and get a chance to fish. That seems to be changing with an acceptance of the responsibility and the value that can be added there. Could you provide a bit of background on that part of it?

• (1235)

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** One of the greatest things that I've seen was when I moved up to Prince Rupert. I was working with the area A monitoring program with Ecotrust Canada. This was a monitoring program. Area A in the crab fishery has voluntarily.... At the start, they asked to have the camera and the monitoring programs put in place. They were the driving force behind that, because they knew that it was the way forward.

What I've seen and what I think it going to be detrimental to something that's going to be so great coming forward is that there's a lack of understanding about the system and still a really negative perception in attitude towards fishermen. Something that I saw that was causing so much extra work and creating a lot of frustration was that DFO wasn't understanding how the monitoring system applied to fishermen, and they were getting warning letters just for having a single missed scan on a buoy, when that is great. You know, the poor fellows were getting warning letters, and the system was being used in a negative way, and I think lots of other people heard about that, and that created a lot of confusion and negativity around monitoring.

I think the way forward with monitoring is to help people who are working in enforcement, in management, and in regulation to understand what it is to be a commercial fishermen, the positive experience that it is, and who these people are. I think that will save so much time and taxpayers' money and create really resilient fisheries.

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

Did the other two have a comment on the monitoring?

**Mr. James Lawson:** I have just a brief comment.

Since I've been on the area B harvest committee, when we're dealing with area managers, we often hear, "no science, no fishery". We represent a very large dataset, so it's starting to get a bit easier for us to be less reluctant to give up our spots or how much we have caught because we know that if we don't, there might be no opportunity.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** It seems to echo some of the testimony we've heard on the east coast, where the fishermen are willing to go out and do test fisheries, but they're simply not permitted to actually provide that information that could better help the department manage the fisheries or actually know what's out there.

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** Just making them feel like they're a part of it, instead of keeping it separate from them and against them, I think will turn the whole thing around.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Okay.

Chelsey, you mentioned that commercial fishermen want to be part of the decision-making process. This ties into what we were just saying. I think everybody wants to be part of that process.

How have you seen the decision-making process so far?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** Again, working as an observer and as a monitoring program coordinator, it still boils down to the negative attitude or perception of commercial fishers within DFO and within enforcement that's creating really huge barriers. I've seen it where commercial fishermen are trying to work together to create a better season for themselves, but it's not going forward and it seems that there's a really big break in communication that needs to be fixed.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Do you see the perception of commercial fishermen as trying to be sneaky and trying to push the law?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** The comment I hear so much is, "Oh, you can't put the fox in the hen house." I don't know how many times I've heard that being said or, "Oh well, people have a vested interest." Everyone has vested interests.

In my experience working with commercial fishers in all different aspects, they have a vested interest in their lifestyle and in continuing to protect and work on the ocean.

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

I'll wrap it up there.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Donnelly now for his seven minutes.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Madam Chair, I'd like to start off by thanking our witnesses. I thought your testimony was very impressive. I loved all three of your stories. I thank you for your enthusiasm, your passion, your knowledge, and your experience. Having that come to this table and to this committee is really important when we're talking about Bill C-68, which is probably the strongest piece of legislation to protect the fishery and ensure that it succeeds into the future.

Mr. Lawson, you painted a picture for us. You talked about foreign entities. You used the term "serfs upon the sea", which is pretty strong. You talked about the common resource and concentrating wealth to a few. You talked about the settlers fleet, price-fixing, owner-operators, and then your main points about control over your own destiny and encouraging others in coastal communities and nations like yours to actually engage in the fishery.

All three of you have painted very strong pictures of the work you're doing and the work we need to do on this committee to ensure that you can keep doing what you do. The future, we hope, will look strong.

Getting into the specifics, earlier we had the minister at a separate committee meeting. He welcomed recommendations on bringing owner-operator policy to the west coast. He legitimately is open to that. He is also legitimately struggling to figure out how we do that. It's on the east coast. The policy is strong there. Fishers want it on the east coast, and they're protecting it. On the west coast, we have an ITQ system, so it's slightly different and very hard to change.

Ms. Ellis, you talked about two specific recommendations. On that note, I haven't seen your submission yet, but if any of the three of you have recommendations, I would encourage you to supply those recommendations in writing to the committee, because that would be extremely helpful. When we go to look at amending Bill C-68, we specifically look at those written submissions, and they are really helpful, especially coming from folks like you who are on the front line.

As I was saying, Ms. Ellis, you've given two specific ones. The first was about the knowledge of fishers, and I agree with Mr. Hardie's point that the act is now going to include first nation traditional knowledge and the knowledge of fishers and others, which is great. Input is important, but I would say more important is actually listening to that input and then enacting it in law. You need to be diligent about following up with the government to ensure that they listen to input.

The same applies to this committee. We can hear all the testimony we like, but if we don't make recommendations to the government, it's not going to change anything. I just wanted to emphasize that you need to continue to be diligent about following up and doing what you're doing, which is already great.

Getting into owner-operator and how we support active fish harvesters, you painted a picture of transferring power to investors who are essentially slipper skippers. We hear them being called slipper skippers—armchair skippers, right? They're the ones who are investing in licences while you actually go out there and fish, but they take a big chunk of your paycheque, essentially. There's a role for investors, absolutely, but how do we make it so there's also a larger role for fish harvesters? That's what the minister is asking you to be specific about, given our system and our context on the west coast, which is very heavily ITQ, individual transferable quota.

In the remaining time I have, I'm wondering if any or all three of you would like to elaborate on that.

• (1240)

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** It's not going to be a short-term solution. It's very long-term, beginning with taking a really hard look at what the policy is. It means doing an independent review and really getting a good understanding of this web that's been created, I guess. Lots of those people who are armchair fishermen are people who were fishermen before. This is their retirement. There are so many people involved in how it should piece out and over the long term go towards promoting independent owner-operators. It will be very long, with steps taken over 20 or 30 years, so that people who want to divest from the fishery and who aren't going to be involved with the fishery have a really good opportunity, and so that people who are fishermen and want to retire can do so with dignity.

I don't have solutions, but I think the first step is this independent review.

• (1245)

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** That's a couple they have: an independent review looking at other things, like our east coast. How do we apply that here on the west coast? Looking at how we can transition, you're being very reasonable in saying that we should look at a long period of time. I think that's helpful.

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** Thank you.

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** I'd like to echo Chelsey in saying that it needs to be a long and very intentional process that's very careful and very community-centred and community-based, with a lot of community engagement, because we don't want to hurt people. We don't want to hurt someone's retirement plan, someone who did spend most of their life on the water.

It has to be very intentional. It has to be careful and well-thought-out, and that's where that community engagement comes into play.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'm going to have to cut you off there, Mr. Donnelly.

For the next seven minutes—and I won't say “finally”, as we're going to keep an eye on the clock—we'll go to Mr. Morrissey, please.

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

I want to compliment you on an excellent brief. You demonstrate the demographic of what is changing on the east coast: a fishing industry that is made up of young people who are educated, articulate, and know where they want to go.

For my question, what we hear so much is that I don't think the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has caught up to the changing face of the fishery. They still maintain what I call a paternalistic approach to micromanaging people who today are well-educated and know where they're going.

Madam Chair, I want to acknowledge that Miss Ellis's grandfather was a colleague of mine for a decade, and he was one of the people who mentored me into public life and advised me for some time.

I'm very impressed with your presentation. I want to follow up on my colleague Mr. Donnelly's comment. I know that the minister understands your frustration, because he grew up on the east coast in

sight of the east coast fishery and the owner-operators. That's why he led the discussion on enshrining this in legislation. On the east coast, we've talked about owner-operator for a long while, but it's only through this piece of legislation that it will actually be enshrined in legislation, and that's key.

How do you, this new face of the industry, help him make the changes to begin to enshrine owner-operator on the west coast?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** Personally, I would love to have people involved in stakeholder community meetings and just really pounding the pavement and understanding what.... There's such a wealth of information that pounding the pavement and understanding what to do—

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** How many people do you represent? What's the percentage of the industry that shares and articulates the point of view that all three of you—

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** I've never met anybody in the west coast industry who doesn't have the same feelings, but I know there are other people out there.

What about you, Cailyn?

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** That would be very difficult to gauge. I think that's a very important question, because we don't represent every single fisher man and woman on the west coast. That's an important question.

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** It's one we could look into.

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** Yes.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** But you are the face of the next generation growing and you speak to.... I agree with you totally that government, in this legislation, must be such that it will recognize and take into account the knowledge of the commercial fish harvester. We heard that during the earlier consultation. That's extremely important, but I'm curious as to how you can better mobilize your position.

You pointed out, Chelsey—accurately—that this will not change overnight, but if somebody doesn't begin the process, then somebody will be sitting here 20 years from now articulating the same problem.

• (1250)

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** I think there are people who are mobilizing to articulate this some.... The BC Young Fishermen's Network is newly formed.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** How old would it be?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** Oh, I'd say a couple of months.

We've just started. I think it came from talks over the last year. They had their first gathering this year. We've been getting help from the Alaska Young Fishermen's Network about how to come at it. We're starting it. It's going to have chapters in each community and hopefully we'll be able to come together at least monthly and then for a big gathering once a year.

We have friends with Ecotrust Canada and T. Buck Suzuki, as well as the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters.

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** There's also the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Very good. I'm impressed.

How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Okay.

So you only formed a couple of months ago.

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** Yes. The first gathering was in February.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** What brought you together? Was it primarily this issue?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** Yes, I believe so. We knew we wanted to start towards that.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** The affordability of new entrants entering into the process: Is that your mandate; is that your mission?

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** Part of it is. It's just to have a community for young fishermen to meet and discuss things and for issues like that.

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** I think a big part of it, too, that I've heard echoed and that I'm strongly advocating for, is changing the negative perception of commercial fishing and showing people the positives in it.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** The negative impression from whom?

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** [*Inaudible—Editor*] the department.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** The department?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** Well, I look at maybe what the perception of fishermen in Alaska is, or on the east coast, compared with the perception of the general public of what fishermen do and what their job entails on the west coast. I've seen that be very, very different. I think putting that out there is what's going to help.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** You've said you've experienced that, and I'm intrigued by that.

How would you compare the Alaskan interaction between their government regulatory body and the fishermen versus the Canadian experience?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** I think it comes from...and I've heard this. If you ask the mandate of someone who's a fish and game and wildlife worker, i.e., what is their purpose, they can list it off really quickly. Within that is to protect and enhance the livelihood of fishermen. If you ask someone who's maybe in management or regulation at DFO, they're not quite sure what their mandate is.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** That's interesting.

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** It's more of a precautionary "against" instead of a working "with". I just figure, man, wouldn't it be great if we had more industry projects, if we had people working more closely together?

I think that's what it was maybe 20 or 30 years ago, from what I hear from people, but something has happened. There's been some sort of shift, or some communication that's been broken. I'd be really interested to find out what it is.

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

Mr. Miller, you will have the final five minutes.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I really enjoyed your presentations, all three of you. With no disrespect to our bureaucrats when they come here, it's so refreshing to hear some real-life stories.

Mr. Lawson, I come from a farming background, from agriculture. You might take me off the farm, but you can't take the farm out of me. Don't ever apologize for not wanting to take the fishing out of you.

**Mr. James Lawson:** I won't.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** I totally get it.

Ms. Siider, you mentioned east and west coast policies. I think Mr. McDonald will back me up, because I've heard it, that even in the east coast policy there are differences between the mainland and Newfoundland.

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** Yes.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** It baffles me. Then I hear that there's a different one for the west and east coasts. As briefly as possible, what's the rationale for that, or is there any?

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** I don't know.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** I would take it that there probably isn't a rationale.

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** There's a long and storied history of corporate ownership on the west coast. From what I understand, the current policy that's being allowed on the west coast opens the door for that. Fishermen, people like us, haven't necessarily had a lobby against that. We haven't been organized.

• (1255)

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Are you saying, then, Ms. Siider, that there tends to be more corporate ownership of the fishing on the west coast than on the east coast, in general?

**Ms. Cailyn Siider:** From my experience on the west coast, yes.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Okay. That kind of explains it.

Ms. Ellis, I thought you had a really good comment when you said that fishermen have a vested interest in their future. Just before that, you said that everyone has a vested interest. I thought that was so true.

With that, I believe it was you who talked about monitoring. Is that monitoring information actually being heard by DFO, in your opinion?

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** In my opinion, no. I work on the boats. I collect the information. I'm inputting the information through my work, but when it's received at DFO, it's just being archived. I think people are crying out for science. Fishermen pay out of their pockets thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars to collect this data, and I haven't seen anything being done with it.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** You're saying it's being ignored.

**Ms. Chelsey Ellis:** It's just being archived. It's crazy this has to happen, but I haven't seen anything—

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Okay. That was my observation as well.

I want to talk a little about fisheries rehabilitation. This can go from habitat protection to restocking of fish in the appropriate places, etc. In general, and you can all comment on this, is there enough being done there in general terms to help our fish stocks, whether it's stocking, rehabilitation, or protection? I'm hearing a belief out there that more should be done from the stocking end of it.

We do it for the sports fishery. Should we be doing it for the commercial fishery?

**Mr. James Lawson:** Absolutely. More fish, more profit through a lot of different fisheries, like the recreational fleet, and then you start taking care of the FSC obligations as well, but you need to mention habitat protection. When I was up near Bella Bella, we went into Spiller Inlet, and we were watching our competition with other industries. There were two logging camps built right across salmon creeks, and there is no voice to shoo them away because we're so fractured. There are independent fishermen like us, then there's the recreational fleet that says they're taking all the fish.

I feel more should be done on habitat protection than everyone saying it's overharvesting. How do you align everybody when everyone has different interests?

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Would you refute overharvesting in general?

**Mr. James Lawson:** Yes, I would.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Are there any further comments, or are we out of time?

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

Ms. Ellis, Ms. Siider, Mr. Lawson, on behalf of the committee, I can say a lot of us have been here for a few years now, and that was one of the most refreshing presentations we have heard, so thank you so much.

**An hon. member:** The most.

**The Chair:** I am hearing from a committee member that it was the most refreshing presentation. We appreciate your testimony very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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