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Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald



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• (1605)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)): Welcome to meeting number six of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, October 19, the committee is resuming its study of the implementation of Mi'kmaq treaty fishing rights to support a moderate livelihood.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of September 23. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. So that you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking, rather than the entire committee.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen of either the floor, English or French.

For members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the directives from the Board of Internal Economy regarding masking and health protocols.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer.

As a reminder, all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

With regard to the speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses. Today, from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, we have Matthew Hardy, manager of the fisheries and ecosystem sciences division, gulf region; and Kent Smedbol, manager of the population ecology division, Maritimes region. From Oceans North Canada, we have Ms. Susanna Fuller, who is no stranger to this committee.

We will now proceed with opening remarks.

Dr. Smedbol from DFO, you have five minutes or less, please.

Dr. Kent Smedbol (Manager, Population Ecology Division, Maritimes Region, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Members of the committee, thank you for inviting us here today.

This is an opportunity for us to speak about DFO science's role in providing advice in both the DFO Maritimes and gulf regions of Atlantic Canada, notably with respect to lobster fisheries.

My role in DFO science is that of division manager responsible for fisheries assessments in the Maritimes region. I am joined by my colleague Matthew Hardy, who has a similar role in the gulf region.

As you know, the mandate of DFO's science organization is to provide the information and advice for decision-making. In the context of fisheries, this means providing information on the biology of species, the status of their populations; providing advice on levels of sustainable harvest; and using ecological information to make inferences about the health of populations. In this way, DFO's science program supports the conservation and sustainable use of Canada's fisheries resources.

We undertake the monitoring of fisheries and Canada's oceans, we conduct research that addresses questions relevant to our mandate, and we use this information to generate advice through the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat. This work is often done in collaboration with partners, both domestic and international.

With respect to lobster specifically, the stocks are generally healthy throughout Atlantic Canada. Environmental conditions continue to be favourable for the productivity of lobster in our waters.

DFO science provides targeted assessment for different lobster fishing areas, and these areas vary in terms of assessment approach as well as population and ecosystem considerations.

As such today, my colleague and I are here to respond to any questions regarding lobster science in the gulf and Maritimes regions.

Again, thank you very much for allowing us to present.

• (1610)

The Chair: Okay. That's just shorter than the five minutes allowed. That's great.

We now go to Ms. Fuller for five minutes or less, please.

Ms. Susanna Fuller (Oceans North Canada): Thank you, all, for inviting me to speak here today.

I work for Oceans North, an organization that engages on conservation initiatives in Canada's Arctic and Atlantic provinces, in partnership with indigenous communities, as well as non-indigenous fishing entities. We support the implementation of UNDRIP and upholding indigenous rights.

As many of you know, I was very engaged in the modernization of the Fisheries Act, and supported the inclusion of section 35 of the Constitution in the act. At the same time, we were one of the few environmental organizations that also supported the inclusion of owner-operator provisions in the act, because we fully understand their social and economic value in rural communities. We also worked hard to ensure that the Fisheries Act require the rebuilding of depleted fish populations.

My perspective on this issue comes primarily from my role as a biologist and conservation practitioner, but also being keenly aware of the economic value of the fishery to coastal communities, and the relative state of poverty in first nation communities. In my experience, crises emerge, because those with decision-making power fail to make the hard decisions, or tackle the real challenges in a timely, creative and thoughtful manner. As a case in point, we are far from rebuilding the northern cod stock, despite its collapse 30 years ago and concomitant impacts on coastal communities, because we made the wrong decisions at the wrong time, or we avoided making the right decisions at the right time.

The conflicts we see unfolding in our communities, on our wharves, and in the hearts and minds of so many people who are watching what is happening in Atlantic Canada is, in my opinion, the result of failure to address three key issues over the past three decades: ensuring the health of the Atlantic Canadian independent fishery; full implementation of the Marshall decision; and conservation of fish populations. These are not new problems.

I had a chance to go back and look at the Atlantic fisheries policy review, and there has not been full implementation of that review. That started in 1999, the same year as the Marshall decision, and was completed in 2004. I'll just remind you of the vision of the Atlantic fisheries policy review, which said:

The Atlantic fisheries will become a biologically sustainable resource supporting fisheries that: are robust, diverse and self-reliant; effectively involve all interests in appropriate fisheries management processes; are sustainable and economically viable, contributing to the economic base of coastal communities; and provide for the constitutional protection afforded Aboriginal and treaty rights and where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal resource users work collaboratively.

This is from 15 years ago. It also included commitments to preserving the independence of the inshore fleet.

As you are well aware, independent fishers are the big small business of Atlantic Canada, yet there's been a growing concentration of the resource that leaves many feeling as if their industry does not have a future. Amendments to the Fisheries Act in part ad-

ressed this; however, there remains the fear that in any given year, the uncertainty of the fisheries is further exacerbated by the declining labour force, ballooning licensing costs, and an uncertainty about the health of key fish populations.

Fear and uncertainty are significant, but not the only ingredients in the current conflict. The lack of comprehensive, responsible and accountable organization of parts of the inshore fishery also means that they seldom come together on a joint vision for their industry. In my experience, there's been a lack of education by the various fishing associations of their members on the importance and content of the Marshall decision, or how reconciliation can take place proactively. I am pleased to hear there are efforts ongoing right now by the Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters Federation to address this and to improve education.

On moderate livelihoods, the AFPR stated:

An important objective of this policy framework is to provide for Aboriginal participation and involvement in fisheries management decision-making processes so as to promote collaboration between all resource users.

I concur with others who have presented here on the failure of DFO to address the issue of moderate livelihood since the clarification of the Marshall decision. While attempts have been made, these have come at the expense of fisheries governance opportunities. As well, I expect the failure has been in part, because it is impossible to envision the end point. What needs to happen is transformational. It's much more difficult to address an issue in the midst of a conflict, however, conflicts emerge because an issue has not been addressed.

Reconciliation and upholding the Marshall decision and treaty rights was never going to be easy, but avoiding it has made it much more difficult. From listening to others who have presented to you, it is clear that the governance of first nation fisheries is one of the key concerns. The AFPR defines co-management as "the sharing of responsibility and accountability for results between Fisheries and Oceans Canada and resource users, and will eventually also encompass the sharing of authority for fisheries management." This is what many first nations are asking. Interestingly, a legal commentator in 2001 stated that "The Atlantic Fisheries Policy Review has the potential—though whether it will or not is unclear at this point in time—to fill the regulatory gap that has existed since the 1990 Sparrow decision."

Finally, my third point is on conservation. In the end, if there are not healthy fish populations, there will be no fishery. The fish do not care who catches them. Lobster has been the saviour of our rural economies, with increasingly valuable exports being realized largely on the backs of the lowest trophic level fisheries.

● (1615)

The lobster fishery requires an incredible amount of bait, of which herring and mackerel have been the species of choice. These are now at historically low levels largely as a result of setting quotas higher than the populations can bear.

As the moderate livelihood fisheries expand to other species and new areas, it's imperative that there be joint data collection protocols, science assessments and consideration of fishery-wide conservation matters to ensure that we are not jeopardizing the future of communities, human and ecological, first nations and non-first nations. Integrating the two-eyed seeing into how we manage fisheries will also be an important step.

Finally, this is just a reminder that Fisheries and Oceans Canada manages the fisheries for the public good, and I would argue that upholding first nations' rights, ensuring the future of coastal communities and rebuilding fish populations are all in the public good.

My final point relating to moderate livelihoods is that the fishery cannot be expected to bear the entire responsibility of bringing first nation communities out of poverty. Much, much more needs to be done to bring jobs and livelihoods to first nation communities across all economic sectors and to make reparations for our centuries of colonial history.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Fuller. It was a little over time, but not by much.

We'll now go to our questioning rounds.

First up for six minutes or less is Mr. Calkins.

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

I'm going to start off with our scientific personnel from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I want to ask a question about management.

Notwithstanding that you mentioned that it was your mandate to look after the fishery—and, of course, I think that mandate has been broadened now to include Crown/indigenous relations—as someone who is responsible for the biologists, the biology or the scientific side of it, I'm not going to ask you specifically about whether or not you understand Marshall or Marshall II or all of those things. Instead, right now, Mr. Smedbol, what we're dealing with is access to the fishery, the charter right of the Mi'kmaq to it and the apparent access to management of the fishery, which is, I believe, different from access to the fishery itself.

I would like to ask you a question about the collaborative approach that DFO takes in dealing with its stakeholders and others, and whether or not you believe that collaboration is the best way to go, with DFO ultimately being responsible for the management of the fishery. Do you believe that collaborative co-management is going to work or if non-collaborative co-management will work in ensuring the long-term sustainability of lobster stocks?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: I may ask my colleague, Matthew Hardy, to jump in at the end.

One important thing to note is that my colleague Matthew and I are both members of the science sector. We're not part of DFO management, so really it's not within our mandate or area of expertise to speak to management or decision-making within the department.

I would turn your question to our role within the science sector and our role in the provision of advice. When we do provide advice or when we undertake our monitoring programs, we do collaborate with a number of other entities, both internal and external to the department, NGOs and other agencies, including first nations.

We'd be happy to collaborate in any sort of monitoring programs in the future, and we are open to have those discussions around lobster or any other species. There are examples already, I think, of fulsome science monitoring and research collaboration throughout the Atlantic zone.

Really, with regard to co-management, that's an area that's beyond our expertise, and I will turn it over to Matt if he has anything that he'd like to add.

● (1620)

Mr. Matthew Hardy (Manager, Fisheries and Ecosystem Sciences Division, Gulf Region, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you, Kent.

I think you've answered it well. The only thing I would add is that, from my perspective, some of the best science actually comes from collaborative programs that we have with stakeholders in the industry, through which we are able to benefit from the expertise of the fishing industry and other stakeholders and rights holders to do research that we might not be able to do otherwise and to incorporate their views and to be able to more fully explore some of the scientific questions that we're asked to look at as we try to fulfill our mandate.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: In your opinion, then, is collaborative research the same as collaborative management?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: It isn't necessarily. I think collaborative research and collaborative monitoring can inform management, but they are somewhat separate from the actual practice of managing a fishery. I think I would leave it at that.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: When you guys set a season for a fishery—let's say, in the LFA 34—what factors go into deciding the opening and closing dates, and how does conservation factor into that decision?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Seasonality goes back a long time and is based on a number of activities and decisions going back decades—certainly long before we were involved in fisheries management.

There are, I would say, two categories of considerations. The first one is sort of biological and ecological, and the second relates more to the economics of the fishery. We can speak to the first part.

As you know, lobster fishing seasons do vary by lobster fishing area across the Atlantic zone. There are important conservation considerations to keep in mind, and these include minimizing the interaction of the fishery with important life history stages. From June through to September—and I'll speak to my area within the Maritimes region and particularly in southwest Nova Scotia—lobsters undergo several important life events. During this time they may be sensitive to handling, so we would recommend that be considered in management actions.

In terms of these life stages, during the summer months almost all lobsters molt their shell, leaving them with soft, fragile shells for several weeks or months. When in a soft-shell state, lobsters are susceptible to increased mortality due to handling. Also, adult lobsters mate during the summer months. Mating occurs just after molting and involves a significant investment of time and energy in courtship behaviour. Lobster larvae are also released from bearing females during that period.

Those are some considerations I think we would use to inform management around seasons. However, as I said, it's not just the biological consideration. There are economics related to the seasons as well.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: If I—

The Chair: I'm sorry but you've gone way over time, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I'm just getting started, Mr. Chair. I have so many good questions left

The Chair: I know. Six minutes doesn't last long when you're having fun.

We now go to Mr. Morrissey for six minutes or less.

Go ahead, please.

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

I want to follow up on the answers that were given by Matt and Kent.

You're stating for the record before the Commons committee here that lobster is vulnerable at times of the year.

• (1625)

Dr. Kent Smedbol: I think there are life history stages, which have a seasonal component, in which they are potentially more susceptible to handling than they are at other times of the year.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: They are vulnerable, though. This is not an animal that is consistent from the time the ice leaves until any time of the year, that has the same resistance to any type of predatory action.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Yes. I would just take it back and look at it from a broader perspective. When we, within DFO science, give advice to management around—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Let me be a little bit clearer. There are times of the year when the lobster is molting and it is moving out of its shell. Nobody should be participating in pursuing lobster at that sensitive time of the year.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: There are important considerations around seasonality, as I said, and I'll ask my colleague to step in—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Could you get right to it, because six minutes goes fast.

This is a critical decision, because there has been some questioning that seasons are irrelevant. I just want to be clear from the science side that seasons are important.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Handling of lobsters during a soft-shell period or during their spawning might have individual level effects on that lobster, so they're more susceptible to handling. It could lead to increased mortality or sublethal effects.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Whether that handling has a population-level effect is a function of several other factors such as the amount of handling, the size of the population—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: However, you don't have control over that.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: DFO science does not.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Has DFO science ever recommended or advised the changing of season time? I'm not referring to just a few days at the opening.

In the last 10, 20 or 30 years, has DFO ever recommended the expansion of seasons within the commercial fishery?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: I manage a division of science that undertakes assessments in the Maritimes region. Within the Maritimes region, to my knowledge, science has not recommended, without being asked, any changes to the season.

I would defer to my colleague for other regions.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay. Mr. Hardy, quickly.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: Certainly.

I can speak to my experience. Within the gulf region, there is a desire to protect soft-shell lobster during certain periods of the year where a molting season—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: That's why you have seasons that have been in place for some time.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: Yes, and the seasons—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Therefore, from the point of view of science, seasons are important.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: I believe they are important in certain areas and in managing effort overall.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay.

Are there water areas where lobsters are more vulnerable at times of the year, such as in reference to warming and shallower waters?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Matt, I can start with that, if you like.

Within the Maritimes regions and the southern gulf, lobsters are at the middle of their range, if you think about that.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Therefore, we don't expect any impacts that might arise from climate change—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: No. I'm not referring to climate change, just the normal cyclical warming of shallow bays that has been known for sometime.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Yes.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: When they warm up, are lobster more vulnerable in those areas at times of the year?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Matt, perhaps you could respond.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: Perhaps I could just offer that lobsters in those warmer waters tend to go near shore. Often, females that are egg-bearing come near to shore to seek those warmer waters and to help with the development of their eggs.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay, and they're crucial to the overall health of the stocks.

Therefore, I could conclude reasonably that fishing in those areas at times of the year would have a long-term negative impact on lobster stock.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: Yes—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay, I have a question for Ms. Fuller.

Ms. Fuller, would putting seasons or having first nations communities fish within existing seasons have a negative impact on the ability to earn a moderate livelihood? I'm asking the question in a global sense.

• (1630)

Ms. Susanna Fuller: Not necessarily, except that I do know that some of the conflict on the wharf has been difficult in order to prosecute those fisheries.

I think the question also is, where is the market for those moderate livelihood lobster?

If it's to be exported, that's why hard-shell is much better to export, because it has a much higher survivability rate.

If it's local, soft-shell can be sold—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Then if you were going to recommend anything on the moderate fishery, from your experience, and you're not biased, imposing seasons would have a long-term positive impact on the ability to earn a moderate livelihood.

Ms. Susanna Fuller: Again, it depends on where the market is.

If it's going to go into the same flow in the supply chain as the non-indigenous lobster, it depends on the state. Soft-shell lobster do not ship well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Am I through, Chair?

The Chair: Oh yes. Thank you, Mr. Morrissey.

We now go to Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas, for six minutes or less, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon to the honourable members. Good afternoon to the witnesses.

I'm going to get right to the point. My question is for Ms. Fuller.

Ms. Fuller, I listened carefully to your opening statement. You mentioned the lack of education around the Marshall decision. The current problem stems from the mismatch between the regulatory framework and the right of indigenous communities to fish for a moderate livelihood.

What tangible measures should the department have introduced?

[*English*]

Ms. Susanna Fuller: I think that when the Atlantic policy review was being done there should have been an immediate rollout of what that meant for aboriginal fisheries. There should have been a rollout of education when the Marshall decision was done and when it was clarified.

The department spent a lot of time allocating money and funds and ways of buying licences, which I think was needed, but it should not have ended there. We should have had a massive amount of treaty education, Marshall education and really working proactively with the independent fishers to figure out the way forward. We would have avoided much of this conflict.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Ms. Fuller.

Specifically, can you tell us what the department could have done to prevent the current conflict that has unfolded?

[*English*]

Ms. Susanna Fuller: I think that immediately trying to work with first nations on moderate livelihoods and understanding what was.... You know, the moderate livelihood is not black and white. It's different for every community, as others have said here, but allowing that to go forward in a way that was not conflict oriented.... I think we have spent quite a bit of time since the Marshall decision and since the first commercial communal licences were purchased, and then the next step, just in the last few years, was to again address the moderate livelihood through money only.

This is a very complex issue. It is not going to be solved by money only. We need policies, education and regulations around moderate livelihood that are done jointly with first nations communities, and we're going to have to do a lot of that going forward to repair a lot of the relationships that have been broken and have suffered in the last few months in Atlantic Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Ms. Fuller.

I listened carefully, and you again referred to “education”.

Other than education, are there measures the department could have introduced to prevent the unfortunate situation we are dealing with today?

[*English*]

Ms. Susanna Fuller: Maybe I'll give you an example. When the Government of Canada committed to protecting 10% of its coastal and ocean environment in 2015, I heard that at every single fisheries advisory committee meeting that I went to, every single one.

I will say that I have never heard it said—until maybe more recently—that this is what the Marshall decision is, this is how we're going to start to consider it when we think about fisheries science and management, this is how we're moving forward on moderate livelihood plans with indigenous fishers, and this is how it links to conservation harvesting plans that are put forward by the non-indigenous fishery. There are many practical ways that it could have been advanced, and it wasn't done.

Again, I just think that stating that “we are going to implement Marshall and this is what we think it could look like”.... I have not heard that at fisheries management advisory committee meetings, if that's specific enough.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Ms. Fuller.

My questions are for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans officials.

Given what Ms. Fuller has explained, can you tell us whether the department has done a lot more in the way of education?

[*English*]

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Yes, thank you for your question.

Again, I can speak to aspects of that related to the science sector. Certainly, in the last number of years, they've rolled out a number of training programs for our science staff to make them aware of moderate livelihood, the Marshall decision and indigenous reconciliation programs. Through the regions, we have set up in a couple of areas additional activities for working with indigenous groups and first nations, but it's really not for me to speak to sort of the management approach around moderate livelihood fisheries.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Mr. Smedbol.

Is there a definition for “moderate livelihood”?

[*English*]

Dr. Kent Smedbol: As a member of the science sector, I'm not aware of a definition, but really it's not something for the science sector to speak to. That would be a policy statement and a government-to-government issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Would it be possible to have the department provide a definition for “moderate livelihood”?

[*English*]

Dr. Kent Smedbol: I'll take that back as a follow-up request and see if we can provide the committee with something. But I think the minister did, before the committee—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Mr. Smedbol.

Another of the department's core responsibilities is conservation. Can you tell us whether the department knows the quantity of fishery resources removed for the purposes of a moderate livelihood?

If so, since when?

How is that measured?

[*English*]

Dr. Kent Smedbol: In terms of removals from moderate livelihood, I don't, or at least the science sector does not, currently have that information, and again, I'm unaware if other branches within the department have that information.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blanchette-Joncas.

We'll now go to Mr. Johns for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Chair, is it possible to get a written answer since my question was not answered?

I would like the department to provide a written answer to my question.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, and I believe, from listening to the answer, that Mr. Smedbol committed to trying to get you that answer. We hope the department will provide in writing any answers that don't get answered here this evening.

Back to Mr. Johns for six minutes or less, please.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Thank you to all the witnesses for your testimony today and for being here at the committee. I'll start with Mr. Smedbol.

You've been asked a lot of questions about the impact of the moderate livelihood fisheries, especially recently with the Sipekne'katik. Could you believe that the 350 traps, the dry lobster pots, that were used by the nation, which they said amount to about 0.005% of the overall commercial catch in LFA 34 since September 23, has had a significant impact on the conservation of the stocks in that area?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: That response actually requires a little context. I think most on the committee understand how our assessments are undertaken. We monitor, particularly in LFA 34, commercial catch and we have some independent fishery surveys—

Mr. Gord Johns: I mean just in terms of its scale, this is a pretty small-scale fishery that's taking place.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: The way we assess changes in the population is by comparing catch per unit effort within area 34 relative to that in previous years. Until we have all of the information in from this particular year, we can't fulsomely undertake that comparison. Secondly, given that we are looking backwards, if you will, in time it can take several years actually to detect a potential impact of any removal or additional removals or other type of activity on the population level trends within LFA 34.

● (1640)

Mr. Gord Johns: Dr. Fuller, you mentioned in your presentation that there's been a failure by the government to meaningfully educate people, especially non-indigenous fishers, about the implications of the Marshall decision. In the 1991 report the committee did on the Marshall decision, the committee found that the government was unprepared for the decision, which led to violence and confusion. What is clear to me is that the government was, once again, unprepared when it comes to this Sipekne'katik and when they instituted their moderate livelihood fishery. What recommendations do you believe this committee could put forward to encourage the government to make that societal change to accept that we are all treaty people and have obligations under the existing treaty?

Ms. Susanna Fuller: I do think that we really need all of the civil service to understand what reconciliation is, especially in DFO where the pressure on the resource to actually do reconciliation is real. I don't know that there is a departmental strategy on educating staff on reconciliation and what that means. I do think it will mean not working in silos of fisheries, science and management. It's much more holistic than that.

I am pleased to hear that there have been recent efforts by the Department of Justice and CIRNAC to give briefings and presentations for the independent fish harvester organizations. I think that's a step in the right direction, and one that is probably 15 to 20 years late.

I think that really we all need to be treaty people and have that education. My children are now learning about the treaties in their elementary school, and I think that that education is probably fulsome than we have in the Canadian government, and particularly within the fishing sector.

Mr. Gord Johns: I really appreciate that, and certainly your talking about young people learning about treaties and section 35 rights, but we've had several non-indigenous fishing organizations appear before this committee and assert that they have the right to be at the table when the Mi'kmaq nation and the federal government discuss the moderate livelihood fishery. However, few of those who appeared could discuss any meaningful reconciliation plans or anti-racism strategies they've adopted. Can you speak to any successful programs that you've seen to bridge that communication gap between non-indigenous and indigenous fishers? If so, how were such programs implemented?

Could you also address the understanding that both ministers, including Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, should be meeting with that nation on a nation-to-nation basis and that they are representing the fishers?

Ms. Susanna Fuller: I think there's a frustration about the lack of communication and being able to discuss issues that affect ev-

erybody, including the resource. I understand that frustration. I cannot speak to any programs per se, or very specific, dedicated policy outcomes that have happened within the non-indigenous and indigenous fisheries. I can only say that people have worked hard to create relationships. At the heart of this is the relationship, and it has been hard work with Bear River First Nation, Acadia First Nation and the Bay of Fundy fisherman to come to an agreement after Burnt Church and after the Marshall decision. There has been hard work in Cape Breton between the fishing associations to come to an agreement. It's not easy. People are afraid for their livelihoods and their futures.

I think, though, that there are really interesting opportunities. We know in that Atlantic Canada there is about a 40% labour market decline expected in the next 10 years. There will be very interesting opportunities to do apprenticeship programs between non-indigenous fishers and indigenous fishers. We don't have the people to purchase the licences or work as crew in the next few years because of the demographics.

I think there are huge opportunities. In New Brunswick, there's a partnership between the Elsipogtog processing plant and some of the crab fisherman. There are examples of where this collaboration is just happening and has happened. I think many of those relationships are quite damaged right now.

I do think we need to come up with different ways of doing things, whether or not that's talking circles or.... People are hurt in their minds and in their hearts, and I don't say that lightly. Friendships have been broken, and we're supposed to do the opposite in the peace and friendship treaty implementation, and it's going to be a long road ahead. I do think we need to start at the wharf and make sure that there is anti-racism education and that people are understanding so that we can move forward together and have resource management and science that will support communities going forward. That may mean changes, but how do we do it in a way that is sensitive?

I don't know that non-indigenous fishers can necessarily be at the table for our nation-to-nation conversations, but again, on many of our fishery advisory committees, there are indigenous representatives and non-indigenous representatives sitting at those lower level tables where management decisions and science are discussed. It's not one table that's going to solve this. It's going to be many, many tables, and we're going to need to figure out bottom-up and top-down processes for that.

● (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns.

We will now go to Mr. Williamson, for five minutes or less, please.

You're on mute.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Pardon me. There we go. I was thanking you, Chair, and thanking our witnesses.

I'll turn right to our friend from DFO. Could you tell me, in less than a minute, why we have seasons in the lobster districts?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: There are two components to lobster seasons, and a lot of those seasons have been in place for decades—a very long time, in the case of the Maritimes. They are a combination of biological and ecological considerations as well as economic considerations. The biological considerations that we in DFO science can speak to are seasonality relating to life events around moulting and breeding.

Mr. John Williamson: Okay. That's what you were saying before, yes.

Why do you think it's necessary to protect the soft shell lobsters, or lobsters that are moulting?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: There are a few considerations. They are more susceptible to both lethal and sublethal effects in handling, simply because they are very soft shelled—

Mr. John Williamson: That's just the act of fishing. Even if you just throw them back, they're at greater risk of dying in the whole process, aren't they?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: It's the handling of them, yes. Even animals that are, let's say, undersized or.... Well, they wouldn't be soft shelled and buried. Animals that are outside of the harvest window are handled and returned to the water. There are studies that demonstrate that for soft-shell crustaceans, post-release mortality exists.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: I would offer, from first-hand experience, that a very soft lobster is very prone to damage. If its shell is pierced or damaged in any way, then it's prone to infection and whatnot, from an individual lobster perspective.

Mr. John Williamson: That's right. The act of hauling up a lobster, getting it out of a cage, and even throwing it back can be quite violent, in my experience. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Matthew Hardy: There is certainly a higher likelihood of mortality of that individual lobster if it's in a soft-shell state.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: It does depend on how they're handled.

Mr. John Williamson: Of course.

Again, on the back of a lobster boat when you're hauling in traps, it can be a rough-and-tumble environment.

Do you believe that establishing seasons in the Maritimes and enforcing them has led to the higher catches that we're seeing today, that the seasons have helped ensure lobsters are there for future generations or for future seasons, if you like?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: I would have to say that the short answer is that it's unknown. We have first principles, biological and ecological reasons, to suggest to minimize interaction with lobsters when they are soft shell or when they're in their breeding season, but we don't have definitive evidence to suggest that's the case.

Mr. John Williamson: So there's no evidence, going to the 1970s before when there were no seasons to today. You wouldn't look at that data and see that there's been what I think are rapid increases or annual increases in the stock?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: There certainly have been substantial and, I would say, remarkable increases in lobster productivity and abun-

dance in the last 20 years. Whether or not that can be directly attributed to conservation or seasonality is.... Remember, those seasons have been in place for a long time. It's only in the last 20 to 25 years that we've seen this really large increase in abundance and productivity.

Mr. John Williamson: This is my last question. I think I have about 40 seconds.

Can you talk to me? As a scientist, what does the medium and long-term future of the Bay of Fundy look like when you consider climate change and warming waters? My understanding is that's putting, from a scientific point of view, from everything I hear, whether it's from out of New England, Maine or in area, downward pressure on the stock.

● (1650)

Dr. Kent Smedbol: At the moment, that area is within the core central area of lobster range. If there are negative impacts from climate change, we're not expecting those in the short term.

It is factual to say that at the very southern extent of their range, due to increasing temperatures, we've seen a very sharp drop in productivity of lobster, let's say, off New England, and an increase in susceptibility to disease. Long term, this is an area of concern, and it will continue to be an area of both concern and research.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Williamson.

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

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you, Dr. Fuller, for joining us today.

You mentioned that there's a lot of fear and uncertainty around the fisheries. You also mentioned that there are some really good practices. We're hearing that Justice and CIRNAC are starting to provide education.

I'm wondering if you feel there is anything we could do with technology or communications that could help alleviate some of the fears and uncertainty out there? Do you have any recommendations for us?

Ms. Susanna Fuller: Absolutely. I think the data from the FSC fisheries and the moderate livelihood fisheries should be made public. I think that has just been made public. The data from the moderate livelihood fishery in St. Marys Bay have been made public.

I think we need detailed information on catch rates, but I would also say that needs to come, as well, from the non-indigenous fishers. The more information that we have together, the better we can understand the impact of increasing the fishery.

I would focus on the information at hand. I know a lot of the questions here are focused on the soft-shell lobster. I don't believe that we have a soft-shell lobster protocol in the commercial fishery right now. I don't know if we know how many soft shells come up during the seasons, so I think that's something that needs to be done.

I would focus on getting us back to having individual fishermen, non-indigenous and indigenous, working together on improving practices. Again, I think that we need to start at the wharf level to build trust again.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Thank you very much.

My question now is for DFO.

You said that the lobster stocks are healthy. To me, that would mean there is not a conservation issue. Of course, we know from aboriginal case law that the only way to infringe on aboriginal or treaty rights is through conservation or safety. However, a lot of people don't trust that data and say, well, they don't know.

Can you tell us how DFO measures whether a stock is healthy or not? Are there indicators, kind of like forest fires or COVID, that say this is green, orange or red? Is there any of that kind of information out there? I'm trying to get a sense of how DFO measures whether lobster stocks are safe.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Thank you for your question.

Again, I'll turn to my colleague if he has anything additional to say.

In Atlantic Canada, our lobster stock assessments are indicator based. As I said earlier, we compare recent information and catch rates or landings relative to historical trends.

For most lobster fishing areas, our primary indicators of stock abundance rely on fishery-dependent information, such as catch rates, catch-per-unit-effort, and, in some cases, landings. I mentioned LFA 34 and also LFA 38. We do have fishery-independent information—a couple of other LFAs as well. This includes trawl surveys, dive surveys and recruitment trap surveys for young lobster.

A key point to your question is that most of our lobster stocks have precautionary approach frameworks in place. Abundance indicators are compared directly to reference points on stock status, and, overall, most of our lobster stocks are considered to be in the healthy zone of the precautionary approach framework. We have annual monitoring where we compare trends in those indicators, be they fishery dependent or fishery independent, relative to those indicators.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: To add to that a bit, as Kent mentioned, the precautionary approach does provide a little bit of that traffic-like approach of green, yellow, red to guide us on whether a stock is in the healthy zone or not.

In southern Nova Scotia, within the gulf region, we also track things in the same way. We use different indicators. For example, in our fishery, we do an assessment based on 10 different indicators, which include fishing pressure, abundance, production, and a vari-

ety of blended indicators that provide indications as to whether the stock is doing well overall along those various different parameters.

• (1655)

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Okay.

Are there any best practices currently being used by DFO where DFO is working collaboratively with Mi'kmaq organizations to co-manage any species in the Atlantic and doing it well?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: I'm not familiar with co-management. Speaking again as a member of science sector, we certainly have ongoing monitoring programs that are collaborative in nature...I think in just about every one of our Atlantic regions. It covers a variety of species. Those levels of collaboration are everything from where we are a minor player and the first nation or indigenous group is the main driver of that monitoring program, or, conversely, we are.

In terms of lobster, I'm not familiar with co-monitoring specifically for co-management. I would again turn to Matt on whether he's aware of any examples.

One that does come to mind that might be close is with the Eskasoni-Unama'ki in the Bras d'Or Lakes. They have an ecosystem-based management plan for the lakes which is quite comprehensive. It's high-quality work and a high-quality document.

Susanna might have some idea of this one as well.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Thank you.

The Chair: Actually, Mr. Battiste, you've gone a little over time.

We'll now go to Mr. Blanchette-Joncas again, for two-and-a-half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans officials.

I'd like to discuss fishery management plans and indigenous communities. Do you think it's possible to effectively manage stocks of a species when different regulatory regimes apply within the same area?

[*English*]

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Again, I would speak to our scope, which is in science. In terms of monitoring, we would provide advice related to the overall health of the stock and trends within that population. We currently, and would in the future, look at the issue of total removals relative to a sustainability target or within a precautionary approach framework. Even now, we don't break that down by fleet or the component.

I know that doesn't directly answer your question. However, from a science perspective, we could certainly provide advice, if asked, on a variety of different management schemes.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Mr. Smedbol.

Would you be able to follow up in writing?

I'm a bit confused. Earlier, I asked you whether there was a way to measure it, and now you're telling me that it can be managed. Your answers are a bit confusing. I would like the department to provide some clarification, please.

What would happen if the regulatory framework governing an indigenous community was clearly at odds with the department's?

[English]

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Again, that's directly outside our mandate and area of expertise within science, but I'd be happy to take a follow-up to that question.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you for that information, Mr. Smedbol.

Does the Department of Fisheries and Oceans maintain that its regulatory regime supersedes those of indigenous communities?

[English]

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Again, that's not my area of expertise within the department. As the minister said last week—

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I would like an answer in writing.

Now I will turn to resource access and conservation. Where do stock levels have to be before it is deemed appropriate to close the moderate livelihood fishery?

Mr. Matthew Hardy: I can venture an answer, if you like.

[English]

Dr. Kent Smedbol: I would take a step back and look at it from a broader perspective, not identifying any particular fishery, but for overall health and sustainability of a stock, multiple fisheries of the same stock. Again, we provide advice on the overall trends within the population. How surplus yield within that population is apportioned among users is not a science question; it's a policy question. But in terms of additional mortality or removals within a population, I know this answer is not the most palatable, but it depends on a number of factors within an LFA. It depends on the size of that LFA, population abundance—

• (1700)

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Mr. Smedbol.

I would like some clarification in writing from the department, please.

If lobster stock health were to enter the critical zone and the commercial fishery had to be closed, would the Department of Fisheries and Oceans allow the moderate livelihood fishery to carry on?

[English]

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

We now go to Mr. Johns for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Gord Johns: Dr. Fuller, it's clear that one of the issues when it comes to conservation is that DFO could be doing a much better job with data collection and catch monitoring. What solutions to this problem do you see need to happen? Is it more a question of funding, hiring more regulators, and greater enforcement of dock-side or logbook monitoring? Also, maybe you can also share with us how the federal government can better work with first nations to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the data collection process.

Ms. Susanna Fuller: For the first part on what we could do better in fisheries monitoring, I am pleased to hear how much the inshore fishery has been worried about conservation because I've worked for a long time to try to get more monitoring. Whether it's video or electronic monitoring or better logbook reporting, it is often opposed by fishermen. I think maybe there's an opening now that we do have a fisheries monitoring policy. We can start to get much better, more timely data from the inshore fishery. I think at the same time we should talk to the Mi'kmaq fishery to figure out what's appropriate in terms of timeliness and data, and there is an opportunity for some collaborative data collection—absolutely. But there is a trust issue that we need to rebuild.

Can you repeat the second question?

Mr. Gord Johns: How can the federal government better work with first nations to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the data collection process?

Ms. Susanna Fuller: I think you know that the COSEWIC assessments we do under the Species at Risk Act do have quite good terms of reference for indigenous knowledge. I think people are at least thinking within DFO about how to.... The CSAS, the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat, should work on some terms of reference for incorporating indigenous knowledge, and to my mind there has been one in Nunatsiavut that has incorporated western science and Inuit knowledge on a par with each other. I think we need to do much more of this, and DFO needs to learn quickly how to integrate indigenous knowledge systems into that science advisory process.

Mr. Gord Johns: Thank you.

You talked about poverty. In this committee we've heard from the Mi'kmaq about their difficult challenges earning a livelihood even outside the fishery, and it's certainly their right to earn a livelihood through the fishery. We as MPs need to support that so they can exercise their right to do so. You've discussed the Atlantic labour market in the past. What obstacles do you see existing in the current labour market for indigenous people that stop them from earning a moderate livelihood?

Ms. Susanna Fuller: I think, number one, there is still a lot of racism on the ground. I'm not sure how many non-indigenous fishers hire indigenous fishers to fish with them. It sometimes goes the other way around in terms of licence leasing.

Again I say that we do have to support the moderate livelihood fishery to continue in a way that doesn't jeopardize the resource, but we have to look across all of it. It's not just fisheries that Mi'Kmaq should have a right to. There is forestry. There are other resources. Really, across our economy we need to open up and think about how we do much more labour inclusion. We have not done that.

I think the recent purchase of Clearwater by the Mi'Kmaq is a signal that they're going to go big, right? We still have people in adjacent communities who sometimes will not hire first nations. We need to get through that. It's a fundamental problem of racism, in my mind.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns.

We will now go to Mr. Arnold.

You have five minutes or less, please.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Smedbol, you talked about the allocation of the harvestable amount being determined by science, but then the decision on how that harvestable amount would be apportioned would be a policy decision. Can you elaborate on that a little bit further? Who sets the policy on how it's divided up?

• (1705)

Dr. Kent Smedbol: First, to make a small correction, DFO science provides advice on levels of harvest. We don't set a harvest level within a precautionary approach framework. We do recommend on levels relative to risk.

On the second part, I'm not entirely sure where exactly that policy level sits within the department. Usually those discussions around allocation occur at the resource management table, and at the low level with the fishery advisory boards. Higher than that, I'm afraid it's outside my area of expertise and experience.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Okay. Thank you.

What other factors does DFO base fisheries management on? Do the various branches within DFO operate on the same prioritization of parameters in determining seasons?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: I can speak for DFO science in general around that. Our role is to provide advice for resource management and provide advice on particular questions that we're tasked with addressing. Usually those answers are couched in the language of sustainability and risk, in terms of risk to the resource. Really, sir, I'm afraid I simply don't have the expertise or the experience to answer the second part of your question.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Okay. Thank you.

Is the conservation of fisheries the pre-eminent objective of DFO science?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Our role within DFO science is to provide advice on the sustainable use of harvestable resources. We also provide advice on a number of other types of issues or items that relate to fisheries science and ocean science.

A lot of our role in terms of the provision of advice is response. It's a response to our clients, both internal to the department and external to the department. When it comes to decision-making, it's just providing information, evidence-based recommendations, and risk of potential decisions around harvest and other ocean activities.

Mr. Mel Arnold: To get back to the science that you work on, then, how does your department adapt to making decisions based on science when you don't have data from certain harvests that are taking place? What do you base the decisions on when you don't have hard numbers to work with? Do you have to estimate? How do you do that?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Generally speaking, this is a core component of fisheries science. It's not just lobster; it crosses all the taxa for which we provide advice. Uncertainty and the explicit expression of uncertainty in our level of confidence, in our knowledge of, say, abundance and trends within a population, is a core piece of information that has to be communicated to resource managers and resource users and the public.

We are very rarely in a situation, sir, where we have a lot of information where we can provide highly precise and accurate trajectories or advice. The key thing for us—

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

What direction from the minister's office has your science group received instructing you on how to adjust your scientific methods of assessment or to account for the harvest that's occurring outside of DFO's season openings?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: To my knowledge, sir, at this point we have not received any specific direction. We have provided advice on some queries that came through the media, but other than that, we are still undertaking our usual monitoring and provision of advice for lobster.

Matthew, I don't know if you have a different experience.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: No. I would entirely agree with that.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

If there's any time left, I would like to—

The Chair: No. You've gone a little bit over, actually, Mr. Arnold.

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

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Fuller, my first question is for you. First of all, you talked about those processing plants owned by first nations and how it was a great collaboration. That's in my own riding. There are two. I see first-hand that great collaboration throughout the years. I think we would not have seen that 20 years ago. We came a long way. It's going well now.

That said, my dad was a fisherman for 30 years. I see first-hand the highs and lows of this fishery. Back in 1980s, in the north here, there were a lot of lobster. Then, back in 1990, there were almost no lobster. My family was on social assistance because of that for many years. A restocking effort was put in place not only by commercial fisherman, but by first nation fishermen also. Everybody worked together, so now I think the proof of that is that we have more lobster in our area.

That said, you said also that cod and herring stocks were in decline too, and maybe herring more so because of the bait we used. In your opinion, do you think the conservation piece or aspect should be a number one priority here while at the same time respecting the rights of first nations on this moderate livelihood, but doing it in a commercial season, for example? I know that many questions were asked about it. In your own opinion, if we talk about the soft-shell market, like the DFO scientist was saying—and you also said that we should look for a soft-shell market—why look for a soft-shell market if the number one priority here is conservation? What is your opinion on this?

Do you feel that we should prioritize conservation, while respecting at the same time the moderate livelihood, so that all of those things can be done at the same time during the commercial season and we don't hurt the lobster stocks, not only for only commercial fisherman but also for first nation communities, and all Canadians and all people who depend on that business and industry?

• (1710)

Ms. Susanna Fuller: I hear you. I think we need to do a lot more science in understanding the conservation value of what happens when we do fish soft-shell lobster.

I know that in St. Marys Bay there is scallop fishing during the period that the lobsters are moulting. That has gone on for years. I don't think that's necessarily a good idea. In the State of Maine, they have a year-round fishery and their stocks are not dissimilar to ours. I think we need a lot more questions.

I think fishing out of season is something that... I'm not an indigenous person. I grew up around fishing communities. Fishing out of season is something we don't do, right? But I will say, how do we accommodate the livelihood fishery? Why do first nations want to fish out of season? We need to unpack that and really look at the reasons. It may be conservation. It may be because they cannot feel that they can do that safely, right?

We need to really look at those, and I think we need much more work on understanding conservation, including...and thank you for mentioning the forage fisheries, because if our lobster fisheries to increase, or spread out or change, we need to think about the bait and where that source is coming from. We are hitting a critical field. Herring and mackerel are in the critical zone. It is not good.

I think there are also some things that can be done by lobster fishing area and the bay area, but that's going to require real collaboration between non-indigenous and first nation fishermen, as well as DFO.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Good. Thank you for that.

For our DFO friends who are also the line, you were talking about the data you were collecting and about having some tests done by DFO and maybe also by some fishermen. How can you make sure that the resources are in good health? For example, if I take an area here in my zone, the lobster population is exploding, but if I just go 75 kilometres west of this zone, there's less lobster in that area.

On your data that you're collecting, how sure are you sure that they're exact? My understanding, with my father being a fisherman for 30 years, is that there's no dockside monitoring for lobster. There's no quota being put in place. There's nothing for that. How can you make sure that the resources are in good health if we don't have perfect and accurate data like they do in other fisheries, like in crab, for example, where we have quota and we also have good data? How can you make sure the lobster resources are in good health?

Dr. Kent Smedbol: There are several components to that to unpack. The first one is that in a lot of LFAs, we are dependent on fishery-dependent data, which comes in the form of logbooks and landing slips. That's the information we get to work with in science. We do have, in several other areas, fishery-independent data collection that we can either compare with that fishery-dependent data or tune it, if you will.

Recognize, as I said, that uncertainty is a fundamental part of the advice that we provide. It's just the reality of our situation.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Let's say with your data that you collect—

I think I'm done. Thank you.

• (1715)

The Chair: You're done—that's the easy way to say.

I want to take a moment to thank our witnesses for this session of our committee study. From the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Mr. Hardy and Mr. Smedbol, it's been a pleasure; and from Oceans North Canada, Ms. Fuller, I'm glad to see you at committee again and your educating us on various topics.

We will now allow the witnesses to leave so we can get into committee business for the remaining 44 or 45 minutes of committee.

Thank you again.

Dr. Kent Smedbol: Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Matthew Hardy: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay, I don't think we have to suspend or change anything to proceed now to committee business. Of course, we're still in public and televised.

We've had a number of requests to try to do some committee business, so we will do that now in the time remaining. I know we have things we need to do. I think right off the top, we need to decide where we're going with the current study on a moderate livelihood fishery. How many more meetings do we do, or when do we want to come to a dead stop and submit recommendations or drafting instructions to our analysts? And, of course, what study do we do next?

I will say right from the start that I think we only can plan right now up as far as December 16. We don't know what will be happening beyond that, so we probably have to keep it to that. We won't get a lot done between now and then.

Mr. Johns, I see you waving your hand.

Mr. Gord Johns: I suggest that we wrap up the study that we're doing right now. I think we've heard from witnesses. I think it's time to get a report done and then get to the salmon study and finish it, because we were in the middle of that study. We have a salmon emergency in British Columbia, and we need to get those recommendations out to the minister. I'm a bit concerned that we aren't going to have that in place before the economic statement that they're making on Monday. Let's hope they're addressing it in that. There are important items in that study. Then it's Ms. Gill's turn coming up here. I think we should be doing something there as well.

The Chair: Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Per what Gord said, yes, I think we need to get back to that salmon study because there are a lot of loose ends there that need to be tied up. We've broken that study up and we've gone a fair distance in the current one. It's a little bit disconcerting to see it broken up again because we'd only get maybe two or three meetings in before we break for Christmas.

I'm wondering if, in fact, we should tidy up this one and then take the break and get down and focus and concentrate on the salmon study when we get back so we get some continuity, because as I say we're losing our momentum. We've lost our momentum on that one.

The Chair: Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Do we have an idea which witnesses are still to appear before the committee on this particular study? Then we could know when we could schedule wrapping up hearing testimony.

The one area that we did not hear about, to any extent from the department, was on the whole question of legality and how the department interpreted Marshall, and what areas require additional clarification. We heard a lot on resource and impact, but we did not hear a lot on the legal aspects and interpretations.

The Chair: Okay.

Nancy, perhaps you can answer Mr. Morrissey to some degree on the number of witnesses left.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl): Certainly. To start, just a minute ago I just sent to all the P9s—all of your personal emails—the list of witnesses who have appeared, who were invited, and who have declined.

The vast majority of the witnesses were invited during that time. I will say that some of them had not yet been invited. They are the ones who usually require longer notice.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Overall, the witnesses who require more than a few days' notice have not yet been invited.

Perhaps I should give you a few minutes to look over the list.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Chair, I did not receive that list in my P9 yet.

The Chair: Okay. While we're waiting for that list to arrive in everybody's P9, Mr. Battiste, you had your hand up.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Yes. I think we've done a full study on this. We've heard from fisheries associations. We've heard from a lot of different people. I think we've heard what we need to hear to make recommendations. The only voice we haven't heard—I don't know if we've reached out to him—is Chief Sack's. He's been at the heart of this matter. I'm wondering if we've reached out to him; how many times that's been and whether he's just choosing not to testify before the committee; or if it's something else.

The Chair: Again, I'll let Nancy answer. It's my understanding that he has been invited a couple of times at least, but has—up to this point—refused. Is that correct, Nancy?

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

First, I would remind committee members that, in some cases, the discussions around specific witnesses take place in camera. Currently, the committee is in public, and the meeting is being televised. If the members still wish to discuss it, I can certainly answer any questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. I see Madame Gill.

[*Translation*]

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

I just wanted to move that we conclude the study. I see that people disagree, but the first members who spoke were in agreement on that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: Thanks.

Looking at the list, I would say that we've exhausted the list of people who have come or aren't coming and don't want to testify. I think we should wrap it up and get back to the salmon study so we can finish that. Ms. Gill has a study that she's been waiting for, and I think the respectful thing to do would be to make sure that we take a look at doing that following this.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Williamson, do you have your hand up?

Mr. John Williamson: I don't, but please put me in line.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll go on to Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Serge Cormier: To put it out there for friends on the call tonight, I want to hear more about salmon also. On what we're doing in terms of studies right now, I think we can also hear more.

I also want to put it out there that I proposed a study about the North Atlantic right whale issue, which has been going on for the last four years in the gulf. Everybody voted in favour of that.

I think it will be very difficult to do something before Christmas, but I want to put it out there that maybe in the beginning of the new year, we can start that. The fishing season will start in April. There are a lot of things that we can hear from fishermen, businesses and communities. It has been difficult for the last four years. The government put good measures in place at the time they were needed to be put. Things have evolved since 2017. I think there's more we can do in terms of making sure that it's easier for fishermen to have a normal, less-stressful season, and at the same time, protecting the North Atlantic right whale. We can think about this.

To put it in perspective, I think the measure was good. There were zero mortalities this year from fishermen. I think we can improve those measures so that the fishing zones are open a little bit more for the season and that there's less stress on fishermen. If you have heard about what they've been going through in the last season, you know it's not easy. It's not easy for communities and fishermen around the world who are also working in this situation. I want to put it out there. I hope we can start this early next year.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Arnold.

• (1725)

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

Through you, I would ask if the clerk could send the lists that she sent to the P9 account to the staff as well. They need to be in on this.

In relation to future business, I'd like to remind everyone that we have some motions that were actually passed in the previous session of this Parliament that came back once we resumed. Those were already on the docket previously, so let's not start sliding things ahead of what we'd already set out in the previous session.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Williamson.

Mr. John Williamson: Yes, thank you.

I'll make the case for a few more meetings. I would be very interested in hearing some folks address the Marshall decision specifically. What I found, in particular, both from committee members and certainly the public at large, was a lot of discussion on how the environment has changed. That might be valid, but I think this committee needs to look at what the Marshall decision said and did not say, from legal scholars or lawyers, or perhaps even people who argued the case or those who have experience in that area of the law.

As well, I would very much like to hear from a few folks from DFO who have been all over the airwaves in Atlantic Canada. I'm speaking in particular of Dr. Dadswell, who has been doing multiple interviews. He was at DFO in lobster research in the seventies and eighties. He continues to be in that field. He's been telling the public some very interesting things that I think need to be put before this committee. That's just a sample of witnesses we need to hear from.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: In light of what Mr. Williamson just said, I'm prepared to be a little bit more flexible. I don't know how many more people need to come and tell us what we already know as committee members, but if there are some other tidbits that can be gleaned, I would be in favour of that.

I was going to propose, Mr. Chair, that if there are a few witnesses left that Mr. Williamson or others would like to hear from, we can leave that possibility open if they're available. I would suggest that at a meeting next week, after we've had a chance to meet ourselves, we come back and provide drafting instructions to the analysts. Then we proceed afterwards to resuming the study on salmon and see if we can get that off the books.

If we do need one or maybe two more meetings on this, it's easy to add the testimony while we're already working on a report. There's no reason that we can't be flexible enough if we need to take an hour to hear from some witnesses at some point in time.

I don't think we need to do a hard stop, but I think we should do a soft stop right now, proceed with the drafting instructions and get to work on the salmon study.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Bragdon.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is more procedural, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to check whether we can simply continue with this study for one or two more sessions, if additional witnesses are able to join us, and then go back into the west coast Pacific salmon study.

I think would be very helpful to how we function as committee members if we can get the list of witnesses who are going to be appearing before the committee a bit sooner, or further in advance, for preparation purposes. Sometimes we're getting them the same day. I know sometimes that may be because of confirmation or not hearing in time. If there is a way for us to get that in advance, so that we can prepare, be ready to go, and have time to make sure we're set to go for the committee meetings, that would be good. We could have prep time for our staff for questions and research, etc.

I just want to put that out there. I understand there are times when you just can't reach the witnesses. I get that part of the equation. If at all possible, to get notice of that sooner would help us immensely, for sure.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bragdon.

To part of your comment, I do understand from the clerk that she has been exhaustively trying to line up witnesses, but was unable to reach them and it's a matter of the last second if somebody is available or not.

At times it is difficult to give the list of witnesses out, but we will try to get that resolved, and work on it a little bit harder so people can prepare for the meeting that's upcoming.

Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you, Chair.

This might sound strange, but I agree with Mr. Williamson that the committee should take another meeting or two to go through the list. I'm looking at the list that was sent by the clerk to us. I see Robert Thibault on here. It was recommended that we have him appear. When I look across the list, to me it appears as if he said yes and appeared, when in fact he didn't appear.

When you say the list is exhausted, I don't quite see how we arrived at that, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Let me see. If that is the case, it's definitely a mistake that I would have done in trying to make sure—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I'm not saying.... It's when I'm looking across this. I'm not really sure.

The Clerk: Let me have a look at it.

The Chair: While Nancy is having a look at that, I'm getting a message that it's time to start cluing this one up, and get it done, and move on to salmon, hopefully, before Christmas.

Perhaps I could suggest that we allocate the next meeting for any witnesses who we can come up with for that particular meeting—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Will that be a full two-hour session, Mr. Chair, for witnesses?

The Chair: It will be a full two-hour session, but if we haven't got enough witnesses, maybe partway through the meeting we can move into drafting instructions. We will see if anyone else who

can't come to that meeting can in fact come to the next meeting after that, and dedicate what's left between now and December 16 beyond this to try to clue up the salmon study so we can get that one off the books.

Then we move into the new year, can start off fresh with a new study, or perhaps have two studies on the go at the same time if need be. I think if we can clue up the two of these before Christmas, we would be accomplishing what we can leading up to the Christmas break, instead of starting something completely new, and not getting anywhere with it before we break for Christmas, and then having to try to refresh our memories when we come back.

Is everybody onside with that synopsis? I don't see any dissenting votes so—

Mr. John Williamson: I have one question—not a dissenting one.

When you say the “next meeting”, do you mean this coming Wednesday?

The Chair: Wednesday and Monday, because Wednesday has already been allocated.

Mr. John Williamson: Okay. Basically a week Monday would be our last meeting then.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. John Williamson: All right.

Through our vice-chair, could I be sure that Dr. Dadswell is at least approached. I will provide his contact information as well.

The Chair: If you can provide that to Nancy, Mr. Williamson, that would be great, and the contact information if possible, so she can try to line that up for you.

Mr. John Williamson: I will do that. I might make one or two suggestions.

Thank you very much, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Nancy, I think we know where we're going between now and December 16. We'll have one or maybe two meetings at the most to clue this up and drafting instructions, and then we will try to clue up the west coast salmon study.

The Clerk: Thank you.

Just to clarify, the House will not be sitting on December 16. It stops on December 11.

The Chair: Thank you for that. I thought the drop-dead date was the 16th. I think that still gives us enough time to get those meetings in and get clued up.

That's what we will aim for. I don't know if there's anything else anybody wants to raise right now.

Madame Gill.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: I actually didn't have any more questions, Mr. Chair. I just wanted the floor. I believe I was next on the list.

Since we seem to be booked until December 16 as far as the two studies go, I would like the committee to deal with the motions I had previously put on notice.

The first pertains to sport fishing. It reads as follows:

That the committee undertake a study to examine the possibility of undertaking a reform of the rules, laws and practices surrounding federal saltwater sportfishing for the Eastern Quebec region; that this study be based on the British Columbia experience in this area, as well as on the principles of access to the resource for coastal populations and the development of scientific data; that the Committee call witnesses including scientists from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, representatives of First Nations and interested stakeholder groups to testify before the committee; and that the committee report its conclusions and recommendations to the House of Commons.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

I assume that you're making that a motion right now for the committee to do that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Yes.

The Clerk: Certainly, Mr. Chair, we can proceed to the vote if there is no discussion on Mrs. Gill's motion concerning sport fishing.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: I have a point of order.

Can you read the motion, Nancy? I didn't get it all.

The Clerk: I can certainly read the text of the motion again.

In English, it is:

That the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans undertake a study to examine the possibility of undertaking a reform of the rules, laws and practices surrounding federal saltwater sportfishing for the Eastern Quebec region; that this study be based on the British Columbia experience in this area, as well as on the principles of access to the resource for coastal populations and the development of scientific data; that the Committee call witnesses including scientists from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, representatives of First Nations and interested stakeholder groups to testify before the Committee; and that the Committee report its conclusions and recommendations to the House of Commons.

Are you all good, Mr. Johns?

The Chair: You're still on mute, Gord, but I saw your head nod that it was okay.

Mr. Gord Johns: That's great.

The Chair: Okay.

Continue, Nancy, please.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: You have another one that you want to put forward, Madame Gill.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Yes, I had two other short motions.

The first pertains to harbour facilities:

That the Committee undertake a study on the Small Craft Harbours Program to determine whether the program's directions are still relevant and whether it is still achieving its objectives, to examine the state of the national system of harbours, to determine whether funds are being distributed fairly among the various

types of harbour facilities and regions, and to assess the importance of marine infrastructure on land use and on the development of coastal and First Nations communities.

• (1740)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

The interpretation was a little bit late, Madame Gill. I do apologize.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: It's fine.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: I understand.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Hardie.

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

The committee did a fairly extensive study of the small craft harbours situation in the last Parliament. I'm wondering about the utility of doing another one. Perhaps Ms. Gill is focused mainly on Quebec, and perhaps that's the area where some focus might generate some additional information to build on what we learned from our last study.

The Chair: Madame Gill, do you have any response to Mr. Hardie's question?

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Yes. I agree completely with Mr. Hardy on this topic.

Not all the data that I'm asking for is included in the study. Of course, Quebec isn't part of the study at all. However, there are many small craft wharves in the regions of Quebec. That's why it would be good to complete the study and to have the same data, so that we can look at the issue.

The study doesn't need to be very long either. The study can be very short if it has been partially completed. It could be completed at this point.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Normally I would be very supportive of a motion dealing with small craft harbours. I've been a member of this committee for several years now and have participated in at least three, if not four, studies on small craft harbours

I've been as far to the east on the coast as you can get, as far to the west on the coast you can get. I've been to the Arctic. I've been to all of our freshwater places in Manitoba and others. All one would have to do would be to go back and take the last four copies of the small craft harbour reports, read them, reword them and issue the fifth copy of the small craft harbour report, and it wouldn't look any different from the first four.

While I appreciate the politics of doing this, there are a number of really important issues, like recreational fishing, like this whale issue we have on the east coast, which I don't remember this committee ever doing a study on, that I think we should actually spend the committee's time and effort pursuing.

The Chair: Mr. Arnold.

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

I have to echo Mr. Calkins' comments. We did a fairly extensive study of small craft harbours from coast to coast to coast in the last Parliament and submitted that report. I have to agree that there are many other pressing issues.

We have declining salmon stocks on the west coast. We have declining Atlantic salmon on the east coast. We have cod stocks that still haven't recovered. We have incredibly significant issues with our fisheries. It's not that small craft harbours are not a significant issue, but unless we can get the fish stocks restored, we're not going to have fishermen either. I think we need to focus on fisheries and keep our focus that way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Hearing no further discussion, Nancy, can we—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: May I speak, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Madame Gill.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Thank you.

I understand that only a limited number of studies can be carried out. Mr. Calkins raised the political issue. However, like everyone else, I'm here to represent a constituency. My constituency has 1,500 kilometres of coastline. It isn't the only constituency with that many maritime coastal areas. It has many wharves. Right now, if the study didn't look at the Quebec situation, you should know that some people in our area...

Yes, when we talk about the Pacific region, the salmon issue comes up. I agree with this. However, some coastal communities or entire indigenous communities in our area are dealing with security challenges, because of the harbours. They're losing the fishery altogether. Entire villages and regions are closing down. You'll understand that, for me, the challenges in Quebec are as important as saving the salmon in British Columbia or the peaceful resolution of a conflict that should be resolved simply because the Mi'kmaq have a right to a food fishery. These are my reasons.

I'm wondering when this committee has done a study on Quebec in the past 30 years.

In my view, this is another reason to include Quebec in all the studies, when possible, unlike this time around. As was done for eastern or western Canada, I would include these topics for Quebec in subsequent studies, including a study regarding my third motion on seals, where I also talk about the Atlantic.

Thank you.

• (1745)

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Seeing no further discussion on this particular motion....

Mr. Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I had used the “raise hand” function, but thank you for noticing my wave.

For my friend and colleague, Madame Gill, I know you have several motions that you've given notice of. It sounds like the consensus of the committee is moving towards finishing the moderate livelihood study and moving to finish up the Pacific salmon study, and then there are a couple of options, including the motion that just passed.

Just for the clarity of the committee, could you give us some insight as to what would be your highest priority among the various motions? Would it be the recreational fishing motion that just passed? If you had to choose one of them as your highest priority for the next topic to study, would you be comfortable sharing that information with the committee?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: I must admit that it's like choosing between each of your children. You don't want to choose one over the other.

It could be recreational fishing. However, as I said before, it's always for economic or social reasons. Whether we're talking about harbours, fishing or even the seal hunt, all these issues matter to me.

I'm both answering and not answering your question. However, it could certainly be recreational fishing.

[*English*]

The Chair: Seeing no further discussion, we'll vote on this one, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Certainly, Mr. Chair.

The vote is on the motion by Ms. Gill regarding the small craft harbours program.

(Motion negated: nays 9; yeas 2)

The Chair: Ms. Gill, do you have one more?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: I want to move a motion on the seal hunt.

That the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans undertake a comprehensive study of seals that would examine the ecosystem impacts of seal overpopulation in the waters of Quebec and eastern Canada, international experience in seal stock management, the domestic and international market potential for various seal products, social acceptability, and the socio-cultural importance of developing the seal hunt for coastal and first nations communities with access to the resource.

• (1750)

[English]

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Mr. Hardie, go ahead.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Would Ms. Gill like to include the west coast? We have lots of seals out there.

The Chair: Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Hardie already mentioned what I was about to speak about. There are indications of seal and sea lion overpopulation on the west coast, and there seem to be developing markets for those seals. We should look at all coasts if we're going to study seals and predators.

The Chair: Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, I thought that in the last Parliament, or maybe it was the one before that, we studied the seal issue almost as much as the small craft harbour issue. I'm pretty sure those reports are side by side going back through history for the last 15 or 20 years or so. I'm more than happy to take a look at this, because it is an issue.

We should do a whole-of-ecosystem study, and actually study the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' ability to do ecosystem-based management of species across the whole plethora of cetaceans, fish, the benthic zone and so on. There are a whole bunch of creatures that can't be actively managed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, including pinnipeds, in proportion to the rest of the food chain, so I'm more than happy to have this discussion.

The Chair: Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: In the spring, this committee approved a motion that I had submitted.

Madame Gill, it had similar objectives to your study. It was tabled with the clerk in both official languages. Maybe we could put the two together. The study I wanted was that we travel to the west European countries that have been successful in managing the seal population and get testimony from them.

Mr. Calkins, in the five years that I've been on the committee, I don't recall the committee's studying seals in particular.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: It might have been back during Harper's time. I know that we've done it. It might have been back even before that.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay.

On this one, I think it's timely for us to do it. This growing population is a concern on both east and west coasts. Perhaps we could blend the two together.

Madame Gill, would you comment, please? You were present when the committee made a decision on a motion I had brought. I'm wondering if we could bring the two together, including travel to see those countries that have actually been effectively managing the seal population.

The Chair: Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: It's not often that Mr. Calkins and I agree, but I think we need to take a whole-of-ecosystem-based approach in

looking at species. I agree with him that it needs to be expanded and be broader—certainly having forage fish involved as well and the different predators. I think it's important that we talk more about a whole-of-ecosystem-based approach in how this committee takes a look at things, because I think a lot of work needs to be done here.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns.

Madame Gill.

[Translation]

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

I want to address the following points.

I'm totally open to including the west. We could simply amend the motion to that effect. It's a bit like Mr. Morrissey's motion as well. I completely agree with his motion, except for one aspect. If I recall correctly, the motion referred to travelling abroad, particularly to Nordic countries such as Iceland. Given the COVID situation, this aspect shouldn't be added to the motion.

Regarding Mr. Johns' comment, the idea isn't to completely exclude the seal from the ecosystem. I wouldn't believe in this. All ecosystems must be taken into consideration. The idea was really to focus on the seal species in general. The seal is indeed a predator. However, we really want to see the scientific evidence and look at solutions for the seal fishery.

• (1755)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gill.

Our time for today is getting very short. I don't know if we want to vote on this or if we want to....

Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wasn't sure whether you were using the “raise hand” function or looking at the physical waving of the hand.

The Chair: Both.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Good.

As Mr. Morrissey pointed out, he had a motion in the last session that, yes, we were going to look at seals on both coasts. I don't know whether it was actually voted on and passed this session or not, but I did notice a difference between it and the previous motion that was passed. In his motion he wanted the committee to call witnesses, including indigenous communities, senior departmental officials and so on, but in his second motion, introduced in October 2020, he removed the piece about the inclusion of indigenous communities. I'm just wondering why that was.

Since we're also running out of time today, I would suggest that possibly Madame Gill and Mr. Morrissey—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: It was an oversight, Mel.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Excuse me. I have the floor.

Perhaps we can circulate some of these motions and come up with one motion that would cover it all.

The Chair: Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: It's not related to this. I just wanted to say something at the very end with regard to witnesses.

This is no dig at you, Mr. Williamson. I appreciate your local knowledge especially, but we all submitted lists for the last study, and now we're coming in with names. I want to make sure that we're working together on this. I certainly appreciate the flexibility right now, because it is a study that came up on us fast, given the circumstances, but we did take witnesses. Now we're taking witnesses still for this study. Are we all able to submit witnesses? That's on the current study.

The Chair: I would suggest, Mr. Johns, that anybody can get in touch with the clerk and put forward a witness for what's left of the study on the moderate livelihood.

I will make a recommendation to both Madame Gill and Mr. Morrissey. Perhaps over the next few days, you can collaborate somewhat and bring back a motion that maybe incorporates what

you're both trying to do to make sure that the wording is included. I wouldn't want to see our voting on two things that are overlapping. We can probably deal with it at the end of one of the meetings coming up in the next week.

Right now, we are completely out of time. There's not even time to do a vote.

Thank you to everybody again for your co-operation this evening. Hopefully the advice on the seal one will pan out to be something. I will say that here on the east coast, it is a major problem. I'd love to see something done about it or at least recommendations to try to solve the issue to some degree to the satisfaction of the people in the fishing industry.

Again, thank you everyone. Thank you Nancy, clerks and staff. It was a great meeting again today. See you next Wednesday.

I'll now adjourn the meeting and wish everybody a good evening.

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