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Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

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• (1150)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. I would like to begin this morning's meeting by offering Madam Dansereau the opportunity to make some opening comments. I'd ask you to introduce your delegation at that time.

Thank you very much for being here this morning to meet with our committee.

Madam Dansereau.

[Translation]

Ms. Claire Dansereau (Deputy Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing us the opportunity to provide some information on our international activities and especially to answer your questions about the travel, specifically Ms. Ridgeway's travel.

May I introduce, on my far left, Ms. Michaela Huard, Assistant Deputy Minister of Policy in our department. On my left, Ms. Lorraine Ridgeway, who is the subject of much discussion these days, and the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management, Mr. David Bevan, whom everyone knows, I believe.

Mr. Chair, as the chief accounting officer for the department, I am accountable for departmental expenditures including those that relate to our international activities and to all our other activities, including travel. I want to emphasize that all travel in the department is pre-approved by managers according to priorities and relevance. All international travel is approved either by an assistant deputy minister, the level directly below mine—so approval for international travel is done at a very high level—or by a regional director general, or the Canadian Coast Guard Commissioner. I personally sign off on the travel of the people I have just mentioned. They sign off on the travel of people at lower levels and I sign off on the travel of managers at higher levels.

Ms. Ridgeway's travel is authorized by Ms. Huard. That is why she is here today. All reimbursement claims for travel are audited for accuracy and consistency with government guidelines.

[English]

Our work is complicated internationally. Canada has three oceans, the world's longest coastline, and strong reliance on balancing use and conservation of our resources, which we wish to preserve by influencing international debate and practice.

DFO's mandate covers both fisheries and oceans. Fishing is a global industry, as we all know. Canada exports more than 80% of its fish and seafood, which translated into \$3.9 billion last year and is Canada's largest food export. Canada, therefore, has significant fishing interests to protect and advance. International engagement is critical.

This is a complex policy and management field, increasingly dominated by new players and power arrangements and by new issues, such as linking fisheries to environmental and trade issues. We seek to influence international policies and standards for healthy, productive, and sustainable fisheries. We ensure consistency between international and domestic priorities and standards.

For example, combatting illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing is an important goal of the Government of Canada because it threatens legitimate fishers' livelihoods and ecosystems. DFO plays an important role in this area through activities under the Food and Agriculture Organization, or FAO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, and elsewhere with our international allies. This work includes the development of new frameworks and standards. We will provide you with further details on this.

I must say that Ms. Ridgeway is a recognized expert at working in this complex arena.

Advancing and protecting Canada's interests internationally on fisheries and oceans matters requires working strategically and tactically through international organizations and with other states. This means being present and engaged internationally to truly influence the international agenda and specific issues over their life cycle.

We are well organized to advance our international work effectively. The breadth of the DFO mandate, unusual in many countries, helps us understand how fisheries, oceans, and trade policy and management issues link together. We have formalized this into an international strategy with specific objectives and plans. The government's international governance strategy, for which we received permanent funding in 2008, guides our strategic engagement. It knits together the priorities and specialized contributions of various DFO sectors. Our international priorities and achievements have been highlighted to Parliament in DFO's report on plans and priorities and in departmental performance reports since 2005.

Lori Ridgeway, as director general of international policy and integration in the policy sector, is accountable for the overall integration of the international strategy within the department and with other departments. Ms. Ridgeway and her team are called on to represent Canada in a range of fora, on a variety of highly technical topics. As an international policy expert and negotiator, she leads specific activities related to multilateral international fisheries, oceans and biodiversity issues, and trade-related policies. She is involved in formal international organizations, such as the OECD, the FAO, and APEC, which is the Pacific organization for economic cooperation, as well as other key international organizations. She has often been elected by her peers in those organizations to chair committees or workshops or other activities.

Some specific activities have captured recent media attention because of the location and length of the meetings. One of the cases highlighted concerned an APEC oceans ministerial meeting in 2005, hosted by Indonesia and co-chaired by our minister. Ms. Ridgeway chaired the senior officials meeting. It was Indonesia that chose the hotel in which the meetings were held, and its choice turned out to be fortuitous, because a terrorist bombing occurred very shortly thereafter in a hotel in the vicinity. We all remember that bombing.

The meeting's success was largely attributed to Ms. Ridgeway's leadership on the negotiation in the senior officials meeting of a detailed action plan and proposed ministerial declaration. Ministers fully endorsed the Bali plan of action as a marine-sustainable development plan for the region and committed APEC leaders, including Canada's leaders, to help strengthen economic well-being founded on healthy regional fisheries and oceans. APEC accounts for 75% of global capture fisheries and 90% of global aquaculture.

Ms. Ridgeway also travelled to the annual NAFO meetings held in Estonia and chaired two separate OECD meetings, which included the committee on fisheries.

An excellent example of the domestic significance of our international policy work is related to various proposals, by mainly environmental organizations, in 2006 to ban bottom trawling, an activity worth almost \$1 billion annually to Canadians and one that supports more than 10,000 jobs.

•(1155)

Ms. Ridgeway brokered a 2006 UN resolution on this matter that's now widely considered to be the most important regime shift in fisheries in recent years. It allows bottom fisheries to proceed, while avoiding significant adverse impacts to vulnerable marine ecosystems. Her efforts to bring a sharply divided international community to a consensus on this issue, one that is strongly supported by both

industry and environmental organizations, fundamentally protected and advanced Canadian interests.

What are the implications of not being at such debates? International discussions and decisions affecting our short-run and long-run interests occur whether Canada is present or not. Nobody waits for us to be there; we must ensure we are there.

In the case of bottom trawling, a badly polarized global debate was facing stalemate. This placed a UN resolution at risk, one that contained many issues of critical interest to Canada, including a commitment by the global community to advance reform of regional fisheries management organizations—a much needed reform, which I think everybody recognizes.

Promoting or defending Canadian interests in a complex international agenda requires an investment of both expertise and funds. We are guided by a comprehensive strategy that has been approved at the highest level, and we strategically engage with the right people to maximize our influence.

[*Translation*]

To conclude, I want to assure you that, as DFO's new deputy minister, I know that we must remain as cost-effective as possible, especially in these tough economic times. I know that and I understand it completely. This includes ongoing scrutiny of DFO's international activities to ensure that we are making careful choices as to where we can be most effective and produce the best results for Canadians. As we come to the start of the new fiscal year, I have asked for and have received a departmental plan for international travel for the coming year. We will be scrutinizing it carefully to make sure that we are sending the right people to the right key meetings. On that, you have my word.

That is all I have to say. We are ready to answer your questions, Mr. Chair.

•(1200)

[*English*]

The Chair: *Merci.*

Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I guess we'll hear directly from Ms. Ridgeway in the context of our questions.

What I basically want to know, Ms. Ridgeway, is if there's a particular element of your international plan that you're particularly proud of in your accomplishments. One of the things I've noted in relation to your line of duties was your help in negotiating and skilfully managing various complex and difficult files, such as the amendments to the NAFO convention, the defence of the Canadian seal hunt, the negotiations related to the WTO and fishery subsidies, and, as well, the Law of the Sea and the jurisdiction over the extended continental shelf.

One of the concerns I have is that we've had two former assistant deputy ministers of Fisheries and Oceans come before this committee and say that the amendments to the NAFO convention that have recently been negotiated are, quite frankly, destructive of Canadian international policy interests. We now have a situation where France will soon be claiming a significant portion of Canada's continental shelf and will be filing that claim with the United Nations under the Law of the Sea provisions. We have a complete ban potentially occurring in Europe on Canadian seal products. And we all know that Canada's position with regard to WTO and international fishing subsidies does not mesh with the rapporteur's recommendations or report.

For the money that has been spent on international policy development, we as a committee, or some of us on the committee, feel that we have been less than successful on those elements.

Why don't you add some input on those concerns I've raised?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: If I may, Mr. Chair, comment quickly on the division of the responsibilities, Ms. Ridgeway will answer in her areas of real expertise. Ms. Ridgeway is not responsible for the entire file.

As I said in my opening remarks, it's a collective approach, in the sense that there are people, for example, in Mr. Bevan's shop who are responsible for much of the work in the RFMOs, and that's one of the reasons why Mr. Bevan is here with us today. The seal file is one that is directed primarily by me, with the help of Ms. Ridgeway and the people in Mr. Bevan's office.

So if I may, I think it would be valuable to the committee to ask Ms. Ridgeway to speak on those areas she has direct responsibility for.

Mrs. Lorraine Ridgeway (Director General, International Policy and Integration, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you very much.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

Thank you very much for allowing me to appear here to answer your questions and explain how our international activities fit together.

With respect to how our activities fit with the activities of those who lead very specific files, I would start by saying that what we need to do in order to achieve sustainable fisheries, to achieve sustainable oceans and biodiversity, and to achieve a fair trading system—the three areas where I would be more specifically responsible at the multilateral level—is to build a system of governance that fits together. That's from the broadest set of laws, through to very specific laws, through to implementing activities

such as guidelines and other kinds of laws, and then it gets into management applications. It's a system that all works together, and it also makes sure incentives are aligned.

The part that lays out the enabling framework—the norms, the policy frameworks, the agenda-setting, and all of that in a multilateral sense—is what I am responsible for in those kinds of areas.

The negotiation of the operational regulatory management, especially at the regional and bilateral level, would, in the fisheries area, be under David Bevan. I also don't have specific responsibilities for any of the seal fishers, who are also in David's area. That's how we would fit together. We work very closely, and our stakeholders understand how we work together.

Just before I answer your very specific question about specific activities, I'll describe our strategy. We started to build our strategy in 2005 and made it permanent in 2008. It is a strategy that aligns the department behind a common vision. It builds a very coherent, competent, united team that can play for those issues coherently across all sorts of forums. That's what is going to give us international influence, because we want buy-in to our vision on these issues.

To answer your very specific question about things I'm proud of, I feel I've played a very major role in a number of activities, but you raised the one of subsidies, so maybe I should start there.

It is true, of course, that right now the international negotiations are going through a very, very slow track in the Doha Round in Geneva. The subsidies negotiations are part of that round, and the fisheries subsidies are just a small part of, or just an annex on, the rules negotiations.

That's not where it started. It started quite a long time ago, although the negotiations have been going on for seven years. It started in an area where I could say I did play a role. You've met some of my staff for now at the negotiations, but I don't go to those negotiations specifically. I'm not a detailed trade expert, but we knew this Doha Round was coming, and we needed to make sure our interests were protected. That meant getting international agreement on some parameters of that discussion, parameters that would be very important to us when the time came.

I was chair of the OECD fisheries committee for six years. That gave me a tremendous amount of influence in terms of getting items onto the agenda and getting outputs that would have a huge impact on the way the world saw those negotiations when they came.

At the time this was happening, in the early 2000s, the U.S. and some other countries had a very strict resolution that they wanted ministers to adopt. It basically said that all fisheries subsidies were bad and all fisheries subsidies had to be eliminated. We knew this idea was not in our interests, so we organized a program of work over a period of years that resulted in publications that are available from the OECD, the think tank for fisheries issues. They got buy-in to the concept of different kinds of subsidies, and we laid out an organizing framework to think about them. We started to collect data on them to show that maybe it's not such a simple picture.

I moved from that into a project on trade liberalization that showed where we really needed to fix things, and then started to take it apart, and then moved into some more analysis, which again was published, to show how to think about certain components. That's the kind of work that gets buy-in to a certain framework, which we can now rely on when we get into those negotiations. While I'm not at the table, the kinds of things that we agree, with the points that have been made here, ought not to be in the chair's text, we can now, in the way he's taken the negotiations, refer back to that literature to make our case.

•(1205)

That's how we got ahead of some issues, and I'm quite proud we did it. It's true as well in other areas, but I won't take up any more time in answering.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: In this context, I think it would be important to ask the question. All of these out-of-pocket expenses that were incurred were indeed audited, I assume, and were in full compliance with all audit requirements. Can you give just a very quick answer, for the benefit of the record?

Mrs. Lorraine Ridgeway: Yes.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I think that is very important, because there should be no supposition of impropriety here, nor should it ever be assumed, and that I think is very important for your professional reputation. I think all members of this committee recognize the professional standards of the Public Service of Canada. I want to get that off the table. You have been audited, per se, and there has been no malfeasance whatsoever—suspected or assumed.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: I did want to attest to that. Yes, all of it is audited. As we said in the opening remarks, the choice of venue is never our choice.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Then let's get to the value. That's really the substance. You obviously have taken a direct point of mine. I have questioned some of the value that has been achieved at some of these international fora. Obviously I would do that, because I don't necessarily see the results that you do.

You obviously forecast what your requirements will be for future activities. What will be the budget in future years for your activities and for your directorate in general?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: As you know, we go through this every year, and at this point in time we are looking....

As I said in my opening remarks, I just received the travel plans for everybody for the coming year, and I intend to scrutinize them carefully to make sure that we can get the results people are looking for, even though they may not be the results this year. As Ms.

Ridgeway said, sometimes it takes five years to get a result, so it's hard to show on a year over year basis whether we're making progress. Sometimes it simply means yes, we're getting along better because they like us more, which means that three years from now we can actually get an outcome.

We can, through our reports on plans and priorities, provide you with past budgets and the amounts allocated for this. It's not a significant portion of the department's budget. I'm sorry, I've forgotten the percentage. We can certainly provide you with the upcoming.... The reports on plans and priorities were actually tabled today, so some of that information is there.

•(1210)

The Chair: Thank you. Your time is up.

We'll go to Madame Faillie.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faillie (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Thank you very much. Today, I am taking a colleague's place, but normally I sit on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We have not yet had to deal with a file from Fisheries and Oceans, so I have not worked in this area. But I have worked at international level and I can understand how expensive travel can be. Logistically, too, there is the question of the availability of rooms, because a number of the places that you visited host major conferences. I just wanted to make sure that the hotels you stayed at are those suggested by the conference organizers. That would then mean that the security of all the participants, all the other aspects of the conference, and the logistic support are provided in one spot.

When you travel, do you go alone or do you take staff?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: That always depends on the trip. Sometimes, it is just one person. However, if we have a number of matters to discuss, we send the appropriate number of people. We also often try to take advantage of a person being in a certain country by asking them to attend meetings that they would not normally attend. So we try to send the fewest number of people possible, while sending as many as are necessary to do the work properly.

Ms. Meili Faillie: For the benefit of my colleagues, the total amount for Ms. Ridgeway's travel that we were talking about was about \$400,000. That probably does not represent the entire amount spent to support international activities. That could be much higher.

Can you give us an idea of how much it cost this year?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: We discussed that yesterday. It was \$2 million.

Ms. Meili Faille: The reason I asked the question is that I just came from Washington, and, on the plane, I was sitting with officials from Ottawa. They explained to me that some officials had left a few days earlier in order to do the set-up work. It was similar in a way to Ms. Ridgeway's situation. My colleagues should understand that we are not just talking about \$400,000. We are talking about a budget of more than \$2 million.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: It is just under \$2 million.

Ms. Meili Faille: Okay, but it is around \$2 million.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: It is around \$2 million for the international activities of the whole department.

Ms. Meili Faille: For international activities, but for Fisheries.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: For Fisheries and Oceans.

Ms. Meili Faille: You mentioned that you are in the middle of preparing budgets for the coming year. But do you know what conferences you are planning to attend, in support of Canada's trade efforts?

Do you already have an idea about the extent of that?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: It will be about the same. I will not accept anything higher.

Ms. Meili Faille: Given that we have an expert on the seal hunt with us, can you tell us what has happened in the last few months? The hunt is now over.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: The hunt ended in the Îles-de-la-Madeleine yesterday. Now, it will move more to the north in the Gulf. It will get to Cape Breton by Friday or the weekend, and to the Basse-Côte-Nord after that. Later, it will reach what we call the Front of Newfoundland.

Ms. Meili Faille: How is the business end going at the moment? Can you update us on that?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: We know that the people in the Îles-de-la-Madeleine are pleased with the price they are being offered. As for the business internationally, the only reductions we are noticing are not a result of our trade disputes with Europe, but of the economic problems that people are having everywhere at the moment. I have been told that the hunters in the Îles-de-la-Madeleine were satisfied with the price they were receiving. For Newfoundland, we are not yet sure, because there is still quite a large inventory left over from last year.

• (1215)

Ms. Meili Faille: Right.

I would like to bring up a completely different matter that interests me personally. It concerns the user fees that fisherman have to pay for their licences. Members of Parliament have been receiving complaints about the lack of transparency in the consultation process. Since you are here this morning, can you tell us about the fees for getting licences? Have you held consultations recently? Can we expect an adjustment in the licence fees?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: You cannot expect one in the short term, because it is a big job. However, the former minister and the new minister have promised that consultations are going to be held. Nothing has changed at the moment. We would very much like to hold consultations and to find a little more, shall we say, commercial

way of going about it, that is to say a way to better tie the cost of the licence to the value of the product, but we have not started that yet.

Ms. Meili Faille: Is that because it is not one of your priorities? What is preventing you from doing it?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: No, it is very important and it represents a major priority for us, but it is very complicated. The minister has asked us to do it and we intend to do so very soon.

Ms. Meili Faille: She has asked you to do it, but can you be more precise? I am being stubborn about this because the stakes are high. It is very important for the fisherman. They want the price to be adjusted as quickly as possible. We have to come to grips with this file. Can you give us an idea of your timeline?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: It is not an easy job. I do not want to give you the wrong idea.

Ms. Meili Faille: You do not want to be pestered. If you say that it will be done by June, we could pester you about it then.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: Certainly, it is a job that we would like to do, but it is impossible to do by June, because then, everyone in the department is working on the fisheries. Fisheries are starting everywhere, and the fishermen would not appreciate being invited to consultations while they are out fishing.

We could start the job this summer or at least have discussions with some people. We could start it, but we would not finish it this summer. The job will take some time.

Ms. Meili Faille: Thank you, Ms. Dansereau.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for appearing today.

I always sit back and reflect a bit on the fact that it's ironic that MPs, with their budgets and salaries, are questioning the people who serve us—their budgets, and so on. I always figure the best people for that should be that single mom working at Tim Hortons or that family with an autistic child. They should question our budgets and whether or not the taxpayer got value for it.

Madam Ridgeway, I know your history is impeccable. You have an incredible pedigree, as I know my colleague and friend Geoff Regan, the former minister, would say. You should be congratulated on the outstanding work you have done.

You can help me figure this out. We have a fisheries ambassador. I assumed, especially when he was first appointed, that he was supposed to do a lot of this international work, going around and protecting Canada's interests. Then we have Madam Ridgeway apparently doing the same thing. It always makes me think about what these two people are doing. Do they ever talk to each other? Do they work together? Is there a need for a fisheries ambassador?

There was one prior to 1995, I believe, and then the position was taken away and then brought back in 2006 under Mr. Hearn, I believe. My first question is on the comparison of the two. In this time of restraint, do we have to have the two?

The second question is this. You talked about the UN and the high seas dragging issue. I remember it quite well. Some of my facts may be a bit off, but Greenpeace had started the petition—and I believe Mr. Bevan is aware of it—of trying to get high seas dragging off the unregulated areas of the high seas.

I believe, David, if I'm right, that 30% or 35% of the seas are regulated, like NAFO on that, and 65% are unregulated. I could be wrong on that.

Mr. David Bevan (Assistant Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): This move afoot is part of the work that Ms. Ridgeway was doing to lay the groundwork. We now are looking at covering virtually the entire northern hemisphere, at least, with RFMOs that will deal with this. So in the North Atlantic, we have NAFO in the west and NEAF, the Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Organization, in the east. In the North Pacific the anadromous-fished salmon are all covered, the tuna are all covered, and now there's a new RFMO being negotiated that will deal with all the rest of the North Pacific.

Much of the world is covered. I'd say most of the major fisheries are now covered by a regional fish management organization.

• (1220)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: How much of the high seas is not?

Mr. David Bevan: A very small amount right now. I'd have to get back to you with a percentage on that.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Okay, that would be great.

If I wasn't mistaken, the motion before the UN was just to stop high seas dragging on the unregulated areas of the seas. Am I correct?

Mr. David Bevan: I think you're perhaps better situated to answer that.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: We'll start with your first question and then we'll go to that one.

The first question is, do we need two people?

I'd say we need many more than two. In fact, I don't want to lead the committee to believe, Mr. Chair, that there are only two. I travel internationally and Mr. Bevan does. Mr. Bevan has a whole other team led by Monsieur Beaupré. In fact, there's a simple division in my mind, because I'm new to this job. Where we are trading in actual fish, it would be Mr. Bevan's job, and where we are working with international policy and governance issues, it would be Mr. Beaupré's shop.

The ambassador functions in a completely different sphere because he, being a formal ambassador, gets to interact with ambassadors from other countries. Certainly in Europe and all over the world there are many levels that we need to be working at. Sometimes it's at the ministerial level and sometimes it's at the technical level.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Perhaps I could stop you for one second. Don't we have high commissioners and ambassadors who do that already?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: They have many, many files that they work on. Having somebody dedicated specifically to our issues has been very helpful in the seal file, I can say.

In terms of your specific question on the bottom trawling...

Mrs. Lorraine Ridgeway: Thank you.

Probably it links back to the question I was asked earlier; if there was something I was particularly proud to take part in, that was it.

The difficulty in that issue was understanding the process. This was a debate that was taking place in public, which very much understood—and we all shared the goals—what was happening, but didn't understand the process. The process was that there was no resolution before the UN until we just negotiated one. There was only a desire for one. That didn't stop anybody from saying there was one, but there wasn't one.

What we did in the UN was come together to negotiate the resolution that everybody was talking about that didn't yet exist. The first question was, how were we going to do that? We knew the international community was completely divided. That was something that was not out there. We were being presented as if we were the extreme, but we were actually dead in the middle. We had countries that were dedicated on the two extremes of that question.

The second issue we had was that it's only a few paragraphs in a bigger resolution. There's only one resolution: it's a resolution on sustainable fisheries. That year we had had the review of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and we had pages of recommendations that we wanted in that resolution, which was usually adopted by consensus and which would then bind everybody morally to those outcomes.

What we were going to have was no resolution because we couldn't agree on those paragraphs, and if those paragraphs are not agreed to, there is no resolution at all. If someone votes against the resolution, they're not bound by anything in it, and that would have been a very bad outcome. But two things were not understood: one, there wasn't anything in front of the UN until they negotiated it, and second, we were dead in the middle. And we had a really strong interest in having that resolution adopted by consensus. Our challenge was to find a way to bring the ends to the middle.

One of the things that I thank David Bevan for was he asked me to come to NAFO and become familiar with it and how it worked, and also to start to get a bit of a feel for how we want to protect sea mammals, so that I understood the thinking about what would be the best kind of solution to get both conservation and sustainable use so I could take that and turn it into a model we could get people to rally behind.

To close off—I don't want to take up all your time—what I had said to the environmental community is that it's better to have a regime shift and management that we're accountable to than have a declaration in a resolution that is not binding or practical. There was no way under international law to actually manage a ban on the high seas. The only thing that would have happened was that markets were waiting for the UN to declare against bottom trawling. They would have shut markets against all bottom-trawled product, and it would not have been contained to the unregulated high seas.

As Canadians who believe in good sustainability but also sustainable use, we wanted a very practical regime shift that we could hold RFMOs and states accountable to, that would bring people to the middle, and that would be fundamentally different. It would be new and very important, and it would save the resolution. And that's what we did.

It took a tremendous amount of time. I was completely misunderstood in the public debate, but that was what happened there.

•(1225)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for appearing. I thank you for the clarification you've brought already.

I think it's safe to say, Ms. Ridgeway, that you're here because a couple of news articles raised some questions about your travel and whether it was good value for money. I think those questions are valid and important questions because it's taxpayers' money, and we certainly want to be assured that the activities are worthwhile and that they are done within guidelines that are reasonable and make sense, and so on.

Ms. Dansereau, in your opening comments you talked somewhat about how trips are approved and then audited and so on, so I think I understand that part of the process. I think I understand a little less better the decision-making of how we decide where we're going to go and when. For example, would the director general, Ms. Ridgeway, kind of map out her year in advance and say, "Well, I think I should go here and there", and a bunch of travellers then put this on your desk and then you take a look at it and sign off on this? Perhaps you can help me with that part of the equation.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Kamp.

I'm struck just by the way I manage these kinds of questions. A comment was made earlier when the question was put about who should be scrutinizing these things. In fact I always look at all of the expenses of a department—and I've done this my whole career—by what my mother would say. My mother raised four teenagers on a secretary's salary, so she's very conscious...and I see her as my little focus group as a taxpayer.

I do have that kind of careful scrutiny of what we do with taxpayer dollars, and I really believe there needs to be a benefit to Canadians, as does the minister, absolutely.

The process is that each of the sectors... Mr. Bevan has the fisheries and aquaculture sector within which there's an international group, and it's the same on our policy side, where the policy work is done internationally, led by Ms. Huard. They will plan out the year to the best of their ability with the meetings that we know are coming. That is not just done from a financial perspective but a workload and work planning perspective, to make sure there are enough people in Ottawa and people who are actually working to priority. There is nobody who likes to spend money for the sake of spending money, and there's actually nobody who likes to travel for the sake of travelling—having done a significant amount of travel in my own career, I know it's physically exhausting and it's not fun. It may look like it's fun, but it's no fun. So we try to minimize it in fact to the best of our ability.

Within the department, the science ADM will look at her budget and her travel requirements for her folks to go to international conferences on science and other things. The ADMs then make those kinds of decisions for their sector within the budgets they have been allocated. Then they review against that, and it always needs to be against the priorities and what is the best value for the department and therefore for Canadians.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Can I ask if these reports have led you to review the department's travel policies, the details of how you travel, when you travel, what you can charge to what, and all of those details?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: A number of things came about at the same time. First, I became the deputy; second, the economy has been suffering a bit; and third, it's year-end. So all of those things fit well together to afford me the opportunity to ask where we're putting our energies. I think every department and every deputy before me would have looked at the overall travel plans and the priorities to make sure the money was well spent.

If we look at the percentage of our overall budget that goes to international travel, \$2 million on a \$1.6 billion budget is not very big. Considering the files that we have to work with and the real danger to Canadian industry and to the Canadian economy of us not being there, I think that's a pretty good track record set by my predecessors. So I would review it, but I suspect there wouldn't be a lot I would change. I think our policies are sound. We are governed by Treasury Board policy and we think our value for money is sound. But as in all cases, it's worth another review and I will be doing that.

•(1230)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Do you have a way to measure value for money?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: Some of it is through discussion. We have our reports on plans and priorities, a departmental performance report. We have to look at the activities and see if in fact we achieved some objective. As I said in answer to a previous question, Mr. Chair, sometimes it's difficult to say we won, that this is the year when Canada's goal was actually met because some of these.... As we know in the Doha Round, this has been going on for a decade, for a very long time. We won't see an immediate outcome. All we know is that we win some battles on, one day and if we weren't there we would have lost those. The sealing file is a case in point. It changes every single day, and it continues to change. The votes are happening as we speak, so it's hard to say.

I think the example Ms. Ridgeway has used, the bottom trawling, is a useful example, since Canada did benefit. To say year over year that Canada benefited by some amount is very hard to say. It's very hard to measure, unlike some other things we do.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Yes, I think I understand that. I think mostly what we've heard this morning is sort of on the value side, and we've heard about some accomplishments and so on. We're not questioning the value. I think we need to be assured of the value-for-money side of the equation, and so far I haven't heard an acknowledgment that maybe we could have done things a little differently or maybe we should do things differently in the future.

I think we would want to ask that question and see if there's a process in place to conduct the kind of review that would assure us and assure all taxpayers that we're getting good value for the money. Maybe there's a way to spend less money and still achieve that value. If there isn't, I understand the expenses were within guidelines, but I think the question is whether there is anything even within the department—and I understand much of it is set by the Treasury Board. But within the department are those guidelines being looked at to ensure they spend as reasonably as possible?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: Well, as I said, Mr. Chair, I have asked for all the plans myself this time, to look at them and to assure myself that in fact Canada is receiving the best value for the money and to make sure that, really, the percentage we allow for international travel is in fact reasonable, especially in these tough economic times. So the review starts with me, and I have committed to doing that and I am in the process of doing that.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Okay. Thank you very much.

Since these articles in February, has business changed at all? For example, Ms. Ridgeway, have you not travelled to some place where you thought you might have gone if there hadn't been this scrutiny?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: Mr. Chair, some of the meetings Ms. Ridgeway was intended to go to were not attended because we were waiting to come here. Because the time changed as to when we would be here, we wanted to make sure Ms. Ridgeway was in fact in Canada when we came before the committee. So some of those meetings didn't happen. But we will be looking at everything once again. I can assure the committee of that.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Is there time left that Mr. Weston might have a question or two?

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Let me ask you a question that we might be asking ourselves rather than just you. When you are approved to

travel business and first class, does that mean you feel you're required to do so?

Mrs. Lorraine Ridgeway: Certainly we would never be approved to fly first class. That's not allowed for anybody.

Business class, no, I don't feel I should, but I do feel I spend a lot of time in airplanes and airports and I need to work. I chaired or was head of delegation for more than 70% of the trips I took, so that's a tremendous amount of work, and it's not the kind of work you can get done in the office when you're running your work. So I often end up either sleeping or working.

I find that then it's not unreasonable to be in business class, especially if you're on a trajectory, a travel route, that's taking you for 24 hours in the air, and it's not inconsistent with the guidelines. I don't feel I should volunteer not to. I feel the airplane is part of my office, partly.

• (1235)

Mr. John Weston: I'm sympathetic. I've got a background in international law and I've travelled all my life, so I understand that.

Let me ask you another question. Do you ever ask what the different costs are and find that rather than—

The Chair: We'll come back again—

Mr. John Weston: In the next round?

The Chair: —in the next round.

Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Thank you, and thank you for coming before the committee.

Most of us realize that travelling is probably the least glamorous part of any of our jobs—spending time in airports and on airplanes.

I'd like to put some of this in context, so that it's on the record. You talked about spending \$2 million on international travel, and I believe Ms. Ridgeway's travel was \$400,000 over three years. I'd like to put it in perspective, so that we have a good idea of what exactly we're talking about here, and to include how many days you were actually on the road and away from your office here in Ottawa.

I'm wondering also if any other staff travelled with you. Did you travel alone on these trips? What was the number of actual trips that were taken? Did the minister travel with you on any of these events, and was any of your travel at the request of the minister, that you travel to a certain location on his or her behalf? I would assume you have some details on each one of these trips, and I don't know if you want to give that to the committee for us to look at. I know you don't want to talk about each trip and the details, but perhaps there's something you can provide the committee with on details of the trip.

I don't know if you caught all that, but do you want to give it a try to get it on the record?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: If I may, I will answer some of the questions and Mr. Bevan will answer some of them.

We have in fact produced a report that we will provide to the committee on all of the trips by category from Ms. Ridgeway, so you'll be able to track what was accomplished in each of them. So, yes, absolutely, we know exactly the number, we know exactly the place, sometimes with ministers, sometimes not—it depends on the trip—and sometimes with other people, sometimes alone, and it depends again on the trip. Ms. Ridgeway can answer the specifics of that question.

So there is no money spent by a public servant that is not on record somewhere with an explanation as to why they were there. As we said earlier, those expenses are all audited and then they're all approved prior to departure and they're approved post-return. No cheque is given until all of that has been done. I'm sure you've heard complaints about the slowness of that process, and it's in part because of the due diligence that we do around literally every penny that is spent.

Lori, do you want to speak to some of the specifics of the number of trips you have travelled with ministers?

Mrs. Lorraine Ridgeway: Yes, thank you.

I don't know which order to do it in. The number of trips each year was in the range of 13 to 15 to 20. Let's say it's just a little bit more than a dozen trips a year.

I just wanted to put that in context, if I may. Sometimes they're long. The reason is that we're in a global forum. The meetings I go to are multilateral. We have two summer periods to handle; you have the southern summer and the northern summer, so that squeezes all the meetings into the spring and autumn. That means the international agenda is often quite linked up and countries actually demand that meetings go so that they can be combined, especially if they can be adjacent. That kind of thing is out of our control. It makes a very, very busy spring and fall. That's why some trips are joined together, and they can be quite long.

It's about 150 days a year in the last three years. It has been an extremely busy agenda. One of the reasons is that we're implementing much new regulation and legislation on the fishing side, and the biodiversity side is heating up very strongly because we're coming to a big landmark year in the UN in 2014-15 when the UN Commission on Sustainable Development will look at what's going on in oceans and it will make recommendations. Those recommendations will be very big agenda-setting recommendations. They will be the kind that will have a decade's worth of influence.

So everybody's getting their positions ready and getting the international framework sorted out in a way that will end up in certain directions or other directions. It's quite controversial, and those meetings are heating up. That's where we get pulled into different kinds of defensive interests, as well as offensive interests.

With respect to the minister, I have travelled.... In the case of the trip that was highlighted in the press that took place in APEC, it was a ministerial meeting in Bali, co-hosted by Canada and Indonesia. Minister Regan was the minister's co-chair and I chaired the senior officials' meeting that produced the products that the ministers were adopting. So of course, I was travelling with the minister there. He was there as the ministerial lead.

I travelled with Minister Hearn on what I believe might have been his first international trip when he was a member of the High Seas Task Force on combatting illegal fishing under the auspices of the High Seas Task Force. I had been his senior official preparing for that and I was with him on that. Other times I have replaced him when he's been invited; I went to a high-level segment on his behalf.

In relation to the ministers' tasks, those are the three that I would highlight.

● (1240)

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Pomerleau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to our guests for being here today.

I come from a constituency that is not particularly affected by fishing. There is not a lot of deep-sea fishing between Montreal and Quebec City. So my questions will be more general and theoretical.

We have read in the papers that the budget for the Department of Foreign Affairs has decreased by 20% since 2006 and that it will continue to decrease. Does that affect your operations indirectly? Does it concern you?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: No, it does not concern us and it does not affect us at the moment. But we work closely with our colleagues in Europe and in other countries. We contact them frequently and they are of great help to us.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: In 1993-1994, when they were travelling a lot, a number of members of Parliament decided to collect all their Air Miles points in a common pot so that they could save money on tickets. Do you have a similar system when you travel?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: We follow Treasury Board policies, and that is not one of them.

When we travel a lot, we receive passes. So I have asked employees to use them whenever possible in order to save money.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: Has that been done?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: That is what I just said. I do it myself.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: It is something that you are just setting up.

I have another more general question. France wants to expand its fishing zone around Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, and that would affect us directly. How do we start international negotiations like that? What role do you play? How do we reach an understanding on that?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: The stakes are high there, so we would begin by working closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs. We would be providing technical support. They need us to give them information. We also have our own resource people. That is how we go about it.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: Have you had a meeting about it?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: We have discussed it with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: A few years ago, a Spanish vessel was boarded because it was fishing on the open seas in our zone. I followed the case for some time. There were political consequences. Even “Captain Canada” was involved.

How was that resolved?

• (1245)

Ms. Claire Dansereau: I am going to ask Mr. Bevan to answer that question, Mr. Chair.

Mr. David Bevan: There have been major changes in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, NAFO. We found a way to improve conservation and regulatory measures in NAFO zones.

Unfortunately, after a few years, we came up against some problems, but having met with NAFO, we found another way to solve them. We increased the number of inspections in NAFO zones. We also tightened the requirements on trawlers fishing in that zone, and that has produced good results. Fish stocks are increasing and there are no longer any problems. What caused the problems in 1995 has been fixed. At the moment, everything is going well in NAFO zones.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: Because you became involved, illegal fishing has decreased.

Mr. David Bevan: Yes, it has decreased a lot. Because of other programs, such as the meetings Ms. Ridgeway has attended, we have found a way to close ports to trawlers that fish illegally and to put a stop to all assistance to fishing of that kind. So, at present, there are not many problems in the Northwest Atlantic.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you very much again, Mr. Chairman.

I have a question, out of ignorance. A few years ago some officials from Nova Scotia and DFO went to New Zealand and talked about the ITQ systems. Madam Ridgeway, do the systems of management of fisheries—ITQs, IVQs, and so on—fall into your portfolios in any way? We have a common property resource. New Zealand and Iceland have ITQ systems in that regard. Does that fall under your jurisdiction at all, in that regard?

Mrs. Lorraine Ridgeway: To the extent that we're trying to build a common understanding about how different kinds of tools could be applied and what they might give you, yes. For instance, in the OECD we undertook a very interesting study—I was chairing that committee at the time—to try to demystify the question of market-based measures, because the term is often used and it's explained as being the answer to getting better fisheries management. But it's always, or often, associated with only a particular kind of tool. What we did in that work was to work with all the committee—which was all of the OECD countries. We looked at the literature. We took apart the different characteristics of different measures. We mapped the fisheries management of different OECD countries against that to show that it's the characteristics that matter in changed behaviour; it isn't necessarily the instrument.

What we found was that some countries that said they actually had a law against some of these measures actually had the purest forms.

They didn't know them. They called them something different. We mapped those collections of characteristics against different kinds of behaviour to show that there's a whole range of things that you can do that are not all the way to a tradeable quota—it might be a community quota, or maybe even a Japanese-type co-op—that can give you some of those same outcomes, but they could be mainstreamed into the kind of culture and values of a particular country.

We felt that was a contribution to understanding how those tools can help, but the pickup of those is for the managers to do. What we were doing was providing some of the analysis that would help demystify some of those concepts.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

First of all, Deputy Minister, as you're now the Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and your mother raised you and three others on a secretary's salary, she must have done one hell of a job for you. Give her our very best.

What we hear from people like Dr. Boris Worm is that fish stocks are on a rapid decline. We heard Wendy Watson-Wright the other day talk about the carbonization of our oceans and the fact that the crustaceans now are having difficulty getting calcium for their shells. We hear about overfishing. We hear about unregulated fishing. We hear about all kinds of nasty things happening out there. Then we hear at world trade talks that our employment insurance or our work on wharves may be considered subsidies on all of this.

I'll go back to my colleague, Mr. Kamp, who was talking about the value for it. We've heard what you said, but I guess there are no yardsticks. You indicated that sometimes those measurements can take years. If you do something now, you plant a seed, you may get the reward five years from now, but then most of us have changed and we've all moved on to other things.

I'm concerned about what we hear in the public realm from other sectors. We heard the other day from former senior officials, Mr. Applebaum and others, regarding their serious reservations about the NAFO discussions. So we have all these experts—scientists and other officials—saying that things aren't all that great out there and that we're not doing all that well. Yet we hear that part of your role, Madam Ridgeway, is to go out and reach compromises and consensus, and that hopefully we can get value for the money and be successful on some of this.

In my mind, and I guess for Canadian fishermen and their families, we need to hear a lot more of the successes and of where we're going forward, not necessarily backward, when we hear from various officials out there.

•(1250)

Ms. Claire Dansereau: Mr. Chair, one of the examples that was just raised is a useful one. I know the committee was very concerned last year with some of the proposals that were being made regarding subsidies, including even small craft harbours, and that some of the international fora...and it was in the Doha discussions, and the president's text...was of great concern to the committee. Had Canada, through Lori's presence and the presence of others, not been there, we would be in a different situation today. The fact that there is no language at this point is in fact a success, because the language that was being presented was language that was very negative to Canadians and to the right to fish and the right for various subsidies, as we call them.

The successes are there. We are Canadians; we don't boast about them. That's a little bit a part of the problem. It's not part of what we do to boast, but I do think there is evidence that there are successes.

As I said in my opening remarks, if we hadn't been there, things would be much worse for us.

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

Mr. Weston.

Mr. John Weston: I want to thank you again for coming.

For a government that came in on the wings of accountability in 2006, you offer an opportunity not just to answer questions on the hot seat, but to promote best practices across a much broader domain that we may even be thinking about here. Thank you for coming.

Perhaps we'll start talking about the Dansereau model: would your mother approve it?

I'd ask you this. When you do book travel, do you ever ask whoever does that in your office about alternatives—in other words, is there a cheaper way to do it, Sam or Sally or whoever?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: Thank you.

If I may answer, I must say, partly in answer to a previous question, that the minister has asked me to look at this. The minister was concerned with some of what was heard and she wants to be assured that what we are doing in fact makes sense and that the value is well spent. That is, in part, another one of the factors that triggered me to look at all of this.

We need to be fair. On the international work, as we said earlier, I know it's hard for people to understand that it's not a luxury. It appears to be a luxury and it appears that travelling business class is a luxury, but very often we will be travelling through the night. To get to London now, you travel through the night. To get to Prague, you arrive in London, spend some time at the airport, and then go off to Prague that same day. Sometimes we will do that. We'll be in Europe for two days and then turn around and come back because we can't miss more time at the office.

We have a certain responsibility for the health and well-being of the civil servants as well, and to put them in a position of great physical difficulty in those kinds of circumstances is I think why the Treasury Board is the place where that kind of conversation happened regarding the overall guidelines. It was to make sure that Canadians get best value for money, but that public servants are

treated in a way that is careful with regard to their health and well-being.

Given all of that, as I said earlier, we are now seeking alternative ways, such as using our upgrade vouchers and those kinds of things when we travel. There are very few alternatives to go to Europe, other than by plane, so....

•(1255)

Mr. John Weston: As a suggestion, there's something we've started in our office. When we do find a cheaper way, we're keeping a record, just for me and my staff. Every time we save some bucks for the taxpayer, it's a little hurrah, and we feel like we've done our thing. It may sound trivial, but it's an idea.

Ms. Claire Dansereau: No, it's very true.

Mr. John Weston: In that vein, is there a budget? When you travel, do you say, okay, we have a budget, and then we have to measure to see if we're under, at, or above budget?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: All travel, as I said, is pre-approved, Mr. Chair, and approved post-return. There is a preliminary or approximate budget that is established for the trip and approved by the manager, and then the trip is done within that travel allowance.

Mr. John Weston: Are some proposals to travel turned down because it's just too expensive?

Ms. Claire Dansereau: Mr. Chair, I will ask Ms. Huard to answer that question. She clearly wants to.

Mrs. Michaela Huard (Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Sector, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): I've been trying to jump in on a couple of them.

Yes, some trips are turned down. Usually, though, it's a question of us having planned it out. We know what the meetings are going to be in the year, we know where we think we have to play, and where we think we'll get the biggest bang for the buck. It's that kind of thing, but from time to time....

I go through it very seriously. I assure you completely that I go through it very seriously. I have my own thing. It's not quite my mother, but I have my own little focus group. I look at whether there are cheaper ways. Do we need everybody to go? Can fewer people go? Can we combine meetings? I have a number of things I go through. In fact, Lori's group has actually developed a little thing because they were so concerned about my questions around the types of travel. They just knew I would be asking the questions, so they do that.

Absolutely, we do have a budget. We plan out what it is. We look at getting the best value. There are things where we're required to book through; there's a contract that Treasury Board has that we have to book. From time to time, we know that you can get a cheaper rate and we will challenge them on it, but there are certain restrictions around these guidelines and policies that we do have to follow through Treasury Board.

So absolutely, personally and professionally, I do my best to ensure that we are getting the biggest bang for the dollar.

Mr. John Weston: Great, and *vive Mme Dansereau* and the Dansereau model.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you.

We're out of time.

Thank you very much to the officials for coming in today. I appreciate your time and your efforts to answer these questions for all members.

If members could hold back for just a couple of minutes, I want to chat with you about issues for the committee in the next few days.

● (1255)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (1300)

The Chair: If we could resume quickly, as we're pretty well out of time, it won't take very long to have this discussion.

If we could, we'll have others leave the room so we can have this discussion in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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