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Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

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• (1200)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

I'd like to thank our guests for taking the time to meet with our committee today to talk about the issues in Prince Edward Island. As you are probably well aware, we're studying recreational fisheries in Canada. As I'm sure the clerk has already advised you, we generally allow about 10 minutes for opening comments and remarks. Then we have a fairly tight time constraint when it comes to questions and answers. So I'd ask you to try to keep your answers as concise as possible so members can get in as many questions as possible.

Having said all that, I really appreciate your taking the time to be here, and I'll turn the floor over to you now, Mr. MacPherson, if you want to make your opening comments.

Mr. Ian MacPherson (Executive Director, Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association): Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. At the outset, I'd like to mention to you and to the committee that we're expecting our president, Mr. Avery, to be here momentarily. Unfortunately, I don't know that Mr. Drake will make it today. As you know, we're in the middle of lobster season and there have been some challenges out on the water. But certainly, Mr. Jenkins is well versed on the issues that I'll speak to today, and I hope Mr. Avery will be here shortly.

If I may continue, Mr. Chair, my name is Ian MacPherson and I'm the executive director of the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association. My role this afternoon will be to give an overview of our organization and briefly introduce our witnesses.

The Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association would like to take this opportunity to thank the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for the opportunity to participate in today's session. The PEIFA represents over 1,260 fishers on Prince Edward Island. The main species that we harvest are lobster, tuna, herring and mackerel. There are currently 351 tuna licence holders on P.E.I., and 33 fishers are engaged in the tuna charter fishery. All fishers engaged in the tuna charter business are commercial licence holders.

Our organization comprises six local organizations that are governed by their own executive members. Two members, typically the president and the vice-president, sit on the PEIFA board of directors. The PEIFA board consists of 12 members and our president. This structure creates an organization that has island wide participation and provides equal representation around the decision-making table.

Attending today, we have PEIFA president Craig Avery, whom I hope will be here in a few moments, and our vice-president Mr. Bobby Jenkins. These gentlemen are both active fishers and very involved with the activities of the PEIFA. Our president, Mr. Avery, has been fishing for 38 years, and has been on the PEIFA executive for 20 years as treasurer and more recently as association president. He was involved with the recreational tuna fishery in the very early days of the industry and is very active in the many files that the PEIFA deals with as a significant fishing organization in Atlantic Canada.

PEIFA vice-president Bobby Jenkins has been fishing for 40 years and fishing tuna since 1979. He has also served on the PEIFA board of directors for 20 years. In addition, Mr. Jenkins has been very involved with our tuna advisory committee over the last 15 years. Collectively, these gentlemen have over 70 years of fishing experience and an in-depth understanding of both the commercial and recreational tuna fisheries.

In 2010, the PEIFA headed up a major scientific project that featured the tagging of over 50 bluefin tuna. This project featured sophisticated satellite pop-up tags, which not only showed the migration patterns of the fish but also provided significant data on the mortality rates of tuna that have been caught and released. The information obtained was vital in setting new catch-and-release standards for the tuna charter industry.

In closing, I would like to mention a phrase that is frequently used in the numerous tuna meetings that take place over the course of the year regarding the commercial and recreational tuna fisheries. "The fish must win," is a statement that underscores the desire and commitment of the many captains on Prince Edward Island to keep our commercial and recreational fisheries sustainable and financially viable.

This concludes our opening remarks, Mr. Chairman, and I respectfully turn these proceedings back to you for questions from the committee and discussion.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. MacPherson.

We are going to start with a 10-minute round of questions. We'll go to Mr. Chisholm first.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Thank you, Mr. MacPherson. Mr. Jenkins, it's good to see you and hear from you.

Before I move to questions, I am going to read into the record a notice of motion, for the committee's benefit. It is as follows:

That the Committee undertake a one day study into British Columbia's Herring Fishery and invite representatives from the Heiltsuk First Nation to appear before the Committee.

Sorry about that, gentlemen, but I needed to take every opportunity to get some of the committee's business done, especially when we are cut off like this.

Mr. MacPherson, you mentioned 33 commercial licence-holders in the tuna fishery. Can you give us an example of the kind of economic benefit P.E.I. realizes as a result of this fishery?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Actually, there are 351 commercial licences and 33 charter businesses.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Right.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: In terms of financial benefit, it is a fairly new industry. It's an expanding industry. I don't have the exact numbers at my fingertips here this afternoon. However, one of the reasons the PEIFA did the study was not only to update the science, because there was a great lack of science around the catch-and-release fishery, but also to look at the opportunities that may exist as alternatives, as an option for people.

It's not suited for everyone, but certainly there are opportunities, and there are people who are well-suited to it. If it's done properly, it gives a business opportunity and another revenue stream.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: When you say that there are 33 commercial licence-holders, is that one licence per boat? What is the average size of boats, and what does it cost to fit up a vessel for this industry?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: For that particular point, I am going to turn it over to Mr. Jenkins.

I just wanted to confirm that there are 351 commercial licences. There are 33 charter businesses. You said "commercial", I believe. Charter businesses are what I believe you are referring to.

In terms of the outfitting costs, I would like to defer to Mr. Jenkins on that.

• (1210)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Okay. Thanks.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins (Vice-President, Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association): Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to respond to the member.

Mr. Chairman, as far as I know, as close as I could come to gearing up a boat for the catch-and-release fishery, for charter... Depending on how far the individual captain would like to go, you could outfit a boat for \$15,000, or you could go as high as \$70,000. The bottom line is that it's going to cost somewhere between \$15,000 and \$20,000 to gear up that boat for charter.

To respond to the other question, about the economic spinoffs and stuff like that, I am not sure what it would be for catch and release, but the commercial fishery last year brought in \$8.5 million. The landed value of P.E.I.'s bluefin tuna catch was over \$8 million.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Thank you.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: The third-party catch-and-release guys will be part of that because, you have to remember, they are commercial fishermen first, and then they are catch and release.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Right. I get your point.

Mr. MacPherson, you were talking about the work that is being done to collect mortality data, and other scientific research that is being done that affects the tuna fishery. Is all of this work done through DFO? Could you explain who is in charge of that?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Although it was headed up by the PEIFA, it was a really good joint project. DFO was one of our partners, and ACOA provided some funding for that because it involved renting boats and tagging. The cost of these satellite pop-up tags was quite significant, and that was a contribution by DFO, or one they assisted in.

It was information that involved a number of organizations. The Province of P.E.I. also had a contribution in it, and the information was shared with all those groups.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Does your association participate in the international discussions around management of the stock? I guess that would be through NAFO.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Or ICCAT, yes.

Unfortunately, Mr. Drake wasn't able to attend today, as I mentioned earlier. Mr. Drake is generally our representative at those meetings, and we attend them on an annual basis, or whenever they're called.

So, certainly we're very in tune with what's going on out there, and we take a lot of pride in our fishery and the sustainability of it. Obviously we're very involved with what's happening on a worldwide scale.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Have you seen changes in the stocks over the past couple of years?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Well, I'll ask Mr. Jenkins to answer that, because he's the gentleman who's out on the water and who has a long history in the industry.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Sure. Thank you.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Could you rephrase that question? What kinds of differences do you want me to answer to?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Well, I guess I'm just wondering about the number of fish that are around, the size of the stock. I remember reading some materials about the last meetings of ICCAT, and some issues about whether the quota would be increased or should be increased or not. So I just wondered if you could give me some sense of what it's like there on the water for P.E.I. fishermen.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: We believe there's an abundance of stock here now. We've seen a big increase in the past 10 years. When our chairperson, Ken Drake, and the commissioner, Doug Fraser, go to ICCAT, that's all reported at the ICCAT meetings. Scientists are doing their thing, as far as what the stock is. But fishermen on P.E.I. believe, as a whole, that the stock has increased, yes.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Gentlemen, could you give me any suggestions about how DFO could be of more assistance in the management of the prosecution of the tuna fishery off P.E.I.?

• (1215)

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'll respond to the member's question. We covered two big tuna meetings on P.E.I. during the past winter. What we heard from our membership on P.E.I. was that they wanted to see more DFO on-board coverage at sea, more boat checks, and more gear checks—especially in the catch-and-release fishery. As Mr. MacPherson indicated earlier, we want the fish to win, and that's the commercial side of this thing, as well as the C and R side of it.

DFO can play a big role in this fishery, whether it be commercial or C and R. But they have to get out there, they have to do boat checks, and they have to see what's going on.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Are you concerned that, as things stand, there's a lack of enforcement?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Whatever their boardings are this year, that number should be at least doubled. I think if you have something like a hundred and some for the P.E.I. fleet this year, that probably should be doubled. There should be 200.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Right.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: That means more patrols at sea, more boats being checked—the whole nine yards.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Okay. I guess my time's just about running out.

Mr. MacPherson, you talked about the study you're doing in terms of mortality data. I gather that information is not in yet. Do you have any preliminary information in terms of what that data is telling you?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Well, actually, that study was completed about three or maybe four years ago now.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: In 2010.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: In 2010 it was completed. We did have the data, the order of magnitude, I believe the estimated mortality was up around 10% or 12%.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: That's what they came up with.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: This was based on the lack of data from before, but my recollection was that the mortality DFO was using at the time was at double digits, and our study validated that mortality was significantly lower at 3.4%.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Gentlemen, thank you very much, and thanks again for appearing before the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chisholm.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing before us. I appreciate your contributions.

I love your slogan, "The fish must win". We might have to use that.

We've talked almost entirely so far about tuna, and I want to ask some questions about that, too. Are there any other recreational species that are relevant in the P.E.I. situation?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Certainly there is some tourism built around the mackerel and cod stocks, depending on the season, but that's what a lot of the seasonal charters do in a number of the harbours.

The tuna charters are more of a specialty. They will do those other species also, but a number of the organizations focus only on the tuna. But they can do both.

The structural costs in terms of what a day costs are quite a bit higher for tuna, which is mainly related to going out longer distances and more time being spent on the boat. However, they are both contributing industries to the P.E.I. economy.

Mr. Randy Kamp: So I can understand how it works, you've said that the charter fishermen are commercial fishermen first. Do they fish commercially for tuna as well? Do they have a quota, however that system works, and then also fish part-time on a charter operation?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Do you want me to respond to that?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Yes.

Mr. Jenkins will respond to that.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

When a boat is leased with a charter, it operates under what we call a section 52. When you're operating under a section-52 licence from DFO, you're not allowed to land fish commercially under that section-52 licence.

If you're going to catch your fish commercially, you have to hail out and tell your monitor, "I'm going out to get my fish today. I will not be participating in the charter" or I will not be participating under section 52." That's how it's done.

• (1220)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you for that.

You said there are 33 charter licences. Is that a limited entry number, that there are only 33 to go around and it's a competitive process to acquire one of those?

I have a related question. Do commercial fishermen make more money fishing on a charter than they would fishing commercially, and would they prefer to get one of those licences, if they could?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: It's open to anyone. There has been a number of boats. I would say around 10 to 12 boats have been in the industry for quite a few years and built up those businesses. But I guess, as with anything, we're seeing fishers look at different streams or potential revenue streams. We have seen an increase over the last few years, up to the 33 that Mr. Jenkins alluded, up from from probably 10 or 12 five years ago.

Some people are feeling there's a future in that and that it's worth the investment of upgrading their boats and adding the additional equipment. Perhaps some of that, too, is due to social media and the declining costs of promoting businesses and things like that in recent years. I would say it would be a mix of some of those factors.

To answer your original question, any commercial fisherman can go into the charter fleet, if—

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Since we got it changed.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: I'd like Mr. Jenkins to clarify something here.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On December 7, 2011, we received a letter from Keith Ashfield, the then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

To answer your question, yes, it's open now. Any commercial licence-holder, if he wants to spend the money to gear up his boat and he has the necessary Transport Canada paperwork and stuff, to be allowed to take out charters, it's open to our commercial fleet right now.

On December 7, 2011, the door was nearly shut on that. For some odd reason, they were going to cap it at 20. The PEIFA fought all that winter and into the next spring to get it looked at again, so it was opened up after that.

It is open right now, and that's the way it should be. When we took the initiative to set up the program under C and R, it was for.... We didn't do it for a handful of guys. We did it on behalf of 351 licence-holders on P.E.I.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you for that.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: That's PEIFA's stand on it.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Do these charter operators require any kind of specialized training, either from DFO or your association, or the province perhaps?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: They need what we call a fishing master IV, which is referred to in fishing areas as "a hundred-tonne ticket," but it's actually a fishing master IV. They have to have that, and outside of that the boat has to go through steamship inspection. When you get both those components in place, you're ready to go.

Mr. Randy Kamp: I'm from British Columbia, but if I were to move to Prince Edward Island—and you never know—and I had a lot of money, which I don't, and I had a large boat of my own, would I be able to go out and fish for tuna on the catch-and-release system, or is the only way that I can experience catching Atlantic bluefin tuna to go on one of your charters?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: First of all, you would have to be independent core and purchase a tow licence and a boat, and then you would be ready to go. After you got your fishing master IV and your boat went through steamship inspection, you could go.

Mr. Randy Kamp: So as an individual without a commercial licence, I could fish for tuna as long as I released them?

• (1225)

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: No, you would have to purchase a towing licence first.

Mr. Randy Kamp: I have one follow-up question about the catch and release.

I understand the study that you've done in terms of post-release mortality, and we appreciate that data. Are there any other effects that might...? Say the operator releases the tuna that I've caught and say it doesn't die, are there any other negative effects? If you catch it then the next day as a commercial operator, will it look different, seem different, or affect your enterprise in some way?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to respond to that.

We're hearing conflicting reports from a lot of our commercial fishermen now. You have to realize that this is a relatively new

industry. It just got going in the last three or four years. The amount of released fish varies, but they're increasing year by year. We're hearing from a lot of commercial fishermen that they don't believe that the fish are in as good a shape as they used to be, based on the releases. We haven't done a study yet. Some of the buyers are telling us that there are fish in bad shape. They're not sure what it's all...or what have you, I don't know. It's a good question, but we don't have the answer to it just yet.

Mr. Randy Kamp: One final question. I think I'm just about out of time.

Do you have a comprehensive way of collecting data on who the customers are who you take on these charters? How many of them are domestic, from P.E.I. for example, and how many from other provinces? Do they come from overseas, from the U.S. and so on?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: I'm not involved in the catch and release. I do have relatives who do it, but as near as I can understand, they have to fill out log sheets. Just exactly what's on that log sheet, the data on that particular sheet when they're carrying a charter, I'm not sure if it's place of origin from the charter and stuff.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you very much, I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kamp.

Now, Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Am I required to address these fellows as Mr. Jenkins and Mr. MacPherson? That doesn't seem right at all.

Mr. MacPherson, I live in the area and there's absolutely no question that the catch and release has some massive effect on the economy where it takes place. Wouldn't you agree with that?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Certainly we're seeing some of the local tournaments and things like that—and the fact we alluded to earlier, that we are seeing more independent operators get into that business, would speak to it being financially viable for people to get into it. That appears to be the case.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: How many tuna licences are there on the island?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: There are 351.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: That is active and inactive.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: No, they're all active.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: They are all active.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: They're all active, and any of those 321 could be involved in the catch and release, should they decide to equip the boat like Mr. Jenkins has indicated.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: That's correct, yes. Actually the number is 351, so it is a little higher than 321, but yes, that's correct.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Of course, always the survival of the fish is your biggest concern and, of course, it is ours here too. The amount of fish is always a concern too. I'd like to ask Mr. Jenkins to comment on the tuna fishery and, let's say, allocation and how it's divided. You might refer to that and you might refer to the halibut fishery, and whether there is any recreational fishery and how that is divided.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will respond to the member's question on tuna first. The P.E.I. fleet has just about 50% of the licences.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Is that 50% of the quota?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: We have just about 50% of the Atlantic-wide licences. We get about 30% of the quota.

Do I feel it's fair? No, I don't feel it's fair. It's shameful that our fleet sector, with 50% of the licence holders here and living on P.E.I., would have to fight over 30% of the quota year after year when 30 licence holders down in southwest Nova Scotia have approximately 110 tonnes to fish every year. Our 350 guys here fish approximately 126 tonnes, so it's easy mathematics on that one.

To answer your question on halibut, it's basically the same as tuna. We have a lot of groundfish licences here and we have very little quota.

• (1230)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. MacPherson, we hear things. I live down there too, and you hear about how the tuna are fished and how the tuna are fished in different places around the world.

Do you attend the ICCAT meetings? Are you aware of what takes place? What I'm getting at is how the tuna are fished away from Prince Edward Island, away from Atlantic Canada. We seem to fish rod and reel, and it's fished in an altogether different.... I'd like you to explain to the committee—if true—some of the complaints I hear about the fish being a migratory species. I'd just like you to elaborate on what takes place in the fishery as it moves towards Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Certainly, it's correct that rod and reel are used. It's a method that a lot of people are familiar with. It gives the fish a fighting chance. As we know, there are other areas of the world that use seining techniques or nets or other things—

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: That's what I was referring to, Mr. MacPherson. Is that taking care of the fish first, as you referred to when starting, or is that the way you look at it? Is that the way the PEIFA looks at it, or how Prince Edward Island fishermen look at it or Atlantic Canadian fishermen?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: I can just speak for P.E.I., but I know we have a very passionate group over here that's very focused on sustainability, and the people who are going into the charter business, for example, are not going to recoup that money over a few years. They're looking at the long term, so preservation of the stock, sustainability of the stock, and giving the fish a fair chance are all key factors when we look at it.

I'll just to allude to something that Mr. Jenkins mentioned earlier. There was some unnecessary concern a few years back that, if the charter fishery were opened up, there would be this huge flood of people getting into it, and then no one would be making a decent living at it. That certainly hasn't been the case. I think the fishing community has a good ability to judge where there's a good business opportunity and how they want to pursue it. If there are those opportunities out there, then they will pursue them.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: What I'm trying to get at is that you mentioned briefly in one of your remarks—either you or Bobby—

that nets are used and that there are other methods of catching the fish. This is a migratory source. The only thing that's sure is that people in Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canada fish it properly, but it's not much different if the fish are mostly all gone before they get there. That's what I'm getting at.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll respond to the question.

You're absolutely right to bring that up. We probably have the most sustainable fleet going in Atlantic Canada—the P.E.I. fleet. We can take 350 guys off the water on two hours' notice if we get close to catching our quota. In other countries, yes, there are hundreds and hundreds of miles of longline set, there are gigantic drift nets, there is everything you can imagine. When the fish leave here they have to run the gauntlet to get through that stuff. Absolutely, they do. Do we practise any of that stuff here? Absolutely not, we don't. We put the fish first. We always have.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I have never been at an ICCAT meeting, but, Mr. MacPherson—the Canadian government, or whoever represents, or your group or whatever, who goes to the ICCAT meetings—are there discussions on how the fish are fished when they leave the Atlantic waters? That's what I'm trying to get at. If you have a migratory source—and we do it as efficiently as possible—and somewhere else they're netting them all up, to me that's not fair. Is that brought up at the ICCAT meetings?

• (1235)

Mr. Ian MacPherson: As I mentioned, I don't attend them personally, but certainly Mr. Drake makes a full report when he gets back. Those types of concerns are passed on from the Canadian delegation, in terms of how we conduct our fishery and the concerns about how some of the other fisheries are conducted. To answer your question, yes, those are topics of conversation at those meetings.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: It's not easy to deal with because you're dealing with an international area, and other countries can make their own laws. We make our own, and that's what we're dealing with effectively. What gets me is that we hear this talk about tuna, and the quota being cut, because the numbers are down. With the way we fish in Atlantic Canada, and the way it's fished around the world, it is not fair. I want to be sure it's on the record here that you feel there's a problem in this area. It's not due to any government in particular; it's all governments here in Canada. Over the years it seems like we're at the mercy of other people taking stock in a much more efficient way than we do. How do we deal with that? Is it a matter for the government to deal with? It's no good for DFO, or your committee, to go to the ICCAT meetings. There's no way at all, I guess, to deal with this other than let them take it. Is that the way it is?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll respond to the member's question.

I'm glad you brought that up, Lawrence. It wasn't very long ago there was an article in the *National Geographic* about Libya trading tuna for guns. It was there for anybody to read. I read it. It didn't shed a very good light on the fishery. You're right to bring it up. Some of the stuff has to be done at an international level, and it has to be done by the highest levels of government.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Okay.

Bobby, I think you feel that this catch and release is economically good, but there's some strain between the commercial fishery and the catch-and-release fishery. With this 3.4% figure that we have—and then there was a double-digit figure that was used—I think it's important that somebody does a study and makes sure that the proper... We have had people before us here indicating figures of basically around 3% or 4%. We need to get that established. We can't have this strain between the two types of fisheries. What do you suggest to the committee?

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My response to what we could do... I mentioned earlier it's a relatively new fishery, the catch and release. We probably have to go back to the drawing board and maybe do some more tagging and stuff just to see what's going on. There are a lot of people that aren't buying 3.4%, okay? We believe the mortality rate is probably higher than that. How much higher, I don't know. Until we do a comprehensive tagging review on that it will stay at the 3.4% because that's what came out of that in 2010.

In the P.E.I. fleet sector we were instrumental in doing these guidelines. We worked all winter at doing them. If the guidelines are followed the way they should be followed, and it's two hookups a day or two fight times a day on fish, that will decrease the mortality, too. If a boat goes out there, hooks six fish, and allows his charges to have a blast with six fish instead of what he's allowed, which is two fish, then you're going to have problems. It's like any other fishery and you'll have problems.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Bobby. We just have to follow the rules.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: That's right.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

Now to Mr. Weston.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

It's great that you're here, Mr. MacPherson and Mr. Jenkins. I have to say that you bring out the most eloquence from our Prince Edward Island member of this committee, and it's great to hear the exchange.

I'm from British Columbia, as well as Mr. Kamp, so I hope you'll forgive some of my ignorance about your local fishery in the questions I ask. I'm going to let you know what my four questions are and we'll see if we can get in your answers.

The first one is, can you tell us what river fishing there is? Are we talking about that at all when we talk about your fishery that you've been discussing? As a British Columbian, when we talk about a recreational fishery we're very much focused on our streams and rivers.

Secondly, I'd be interested in your commenting on what sort of culture is around this? It's very much a known fact that for British Columbians, our fish, our water, our salmon are very much core to our culture. It would be interesting for you to just comment on that.

Thirdly, you touched on this indirectly a little bit. I chair at the British Columbia tourism caucus and I'd be interested to hear what you have to say about how tourism intersects with your fishery. A few minutes ago you were referring a little bit to where people come from.

The fourth thing may be the most controversial. I love your slogan, "The fish must win". I think that's great. You said at one point, Mr. Jenkins, that DFO should double whatever it is. I'm going to put back to you that it's probably true of any government service. We would all like to do more, but we have to arrange priorities. I'd like you to reflect on that a little bit. How can you say that it should be doubled if you're not even clear what there is already?

I wonder if you'd touch on those four things for us.

● (1240)

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll respond to that.

What I meant by saying that it should be doubled, Mr. Chairman, is that if conservation and protection boards go aboard a hundred boats a year—and I'm not sure what the figure is for last year—to me, that probably should be doubled. If it was a hundred last year, it probably should be two hundred. Because we have people who are abusing this catch-and-release program, and the only way to stop it is for DFO to show presence on the water, be out there on a daily basis, checking things out, going aboard boats to make sure the guidelines that we have are being followed. That's what I meant by that.

Mr. John Weston: We had a very interesting statement from the Manitoba recreational fisheries just a few days ago who said that you can't have a police person or an enforcement officer on every boat, on every foot of river, but what you can have is a culture of people who are together themselves doing their best to conserve and enhance the fishery. For me, it was a very refreshing perspective that it's not all on the shoulders of government or the purse of taxpayers, but we have to build up a whole culture of people who are educated about why we're doing the conservation and who will take matters into their own hands, to some extent, in helping to conserve the fishery.

Would you like to comment on that.

Mr. Bobby Jenkins: If I may, Mr. Chairman, yes, we have commercial fishermen in P.E.I. who have been heavily involved in working with DFO. In particular, I know of fishermen who have offered to take DFO officers out on their boats so they could observe what was going on in relation to the catch-and-release fishery. We do have people who would help.

Mr. John Weston: Do you want to add to that, perhaps, Mr. MacPherson?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Just to follow up on what Mr. Jenkins just mentioned—and I understand what you're saying—I think that resources don't tend to be unlimited. They are finite. But because this is a growing and expanding industry, if there are other fisheries in decline or if they're fairly static, then maybe more enforcement needs to be put on the catch-and-release fishery or the tuna fishery because it's a growing sector.

Just to respond to some of your other questions, in our organization we don't have anything to do with the river system so I won't speak to that. You certainly have a beautiful and bountiful system in British Columbia, but different organizations are more involved with that than ours—

Mr. John Weston: Mr. MacPherson, are you saying that yours are all ocean related?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Yes. Inshore or ocean related is the category of our fishery, versus the great big ships out in the far Atlantic.

In terms of the culture, absolutely, the tuna industry did suffer a decline a number of years ago and has bounced back quite significantly, as we alluded to earlier. Certainly, fishing is a big part of the P.E.I. culture. We're known for our lobster and some other things, and certainly we want to have a positive image out there. We want to have a sustainable image out there. We want something that's going to create a future for the young fishers in our communities and on our island.

To address your third point on the intersection with tourism, we're certainly starting to see more of that. I think you will see more coordinated data collection on who our customers are and who are the target markets and whatever. As I mentioned earlier, there was a core group that had probably been keeping their own personal data, but they're starting to operate more as a collective group. That information really helps us, because experiential tourism and culinary tourism are certainly two very significant parts of the P.E.I. landscape, and we would like to see them expand and create jobs and have all the other positive impacts.

●(1245)

Mr. John Weston: I could imagine that in an ideal world there would be a meeting of the local chamber of commerce, the Prince Edward Island tourism authority, the recreational fishers association, and perhaps the commercial one as well. Is that the kind of thing that happens?

I'm not saying that it necessarily happens to my satisfaction in British Columbia, so please don't feel you're being put on the spot. I'm just trying to get a sense of whether there's a common mind or at least a common group of minds that try to bring these things together, and for the benefit of all of Canada, really, because if we're bringing people to our country who are seeing your beautiful province, predictably they're going to want to come back and perhaps visit other places in the country.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Yes, absolutely. Because we're an island, every day that someone stays here longer—I guess it's like any other destination in Canada—has a significant positive impact.

Although it's more of a provincial initiative, one of the good examples of that is provincial tuna cup that we have every fall. Teams enter from all over the world. Every year it gets bigger and better. There's a lot of repeat business, but people are also hearing about it through social media. Those are the types of things that we want to see grow. It helps everyone, because it's a huge shot in the arm for the economy.

Mr. John Weston: That's great.

I'm going to share the rest of my time with my colleague, Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you very much.

Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you very much for your presentation today.

My riding is in southwestern Ontario, so I come from a very different background when it comes to the fishing you've been talking about today. It has been a real education listening to you.

When I think of recreational fishing in this country, I think of having a fishing licence from the time I'm 18 until I'm 65, getting in my boat and going fishing on the Great Lakes or, if I want smaller waters, going to an inland lake or river. We buy a licence, we pay the licence fee to the provincial government, and we carry on our way and teach our families all about fishing. It's a culture that many of us have grown up with.

I don't hear that coming from you today. I don't hear about the small family getting out and fishing. It's more business oriented. Although you have alluded to the fact that your organization deals with the commercial fisheries, is there somebody who deals with these fisheries, or are there recreational fisheries inland so that the person who lives in P.E.I. can buy a licence and go fishing for mackerel or whatever? I don't know. What do you have that they could fish for?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: Trout.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Trout?

Mr. Ian MacPherson: To answer your question, yes, there are. Generally, we have quite a significant freshwater trout fishery here, too. Those are very popular and family-focused.

I did mention earlier some of the charters that go out for mackerel and cod, if it's the proper season. Those charters tend to be very reasonably priced. Before I moved to P.E.I., I always took a number of my family on them because of the cost and the experience. I think one of the key things to remember is that it's important that the captains are involved, because it is the oceans and there are...even around P.E.I. we can get significant different weather systems and things like that. Of course, safety is paramount. Certainly, there are options out there for families, and that needs to be part of the mix as we move forward.

As I alluded to earlier, the cost to outfit a tuna boat and sometimes the distance to where the fish are and things like that make it a pricier option for a day of fishing.

● (1250)

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: I'm glad to hear that there's that mix.

The Chair: You're out of time.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: I'm out of time. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Davidson.

Gentlemen, on behalf of the committee I'd like to thank you for taking the time today to meet with us and to discuss the recreational fisheries in Prince Edward Island. We certainly do appreciate your taking the time to answer our questions and to make remarks to this committee.

There being no further business, this committee stands adjourned.

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