



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 003

PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald



Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Thursday, February 27, 2020

• (0920)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)): We're back in public.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): I just want to go back and remind committee members of a little story. This is a personal thing that involved my family. One of the very first national caucus meetings that I attended outside of Ottawa happened in this lovely community called Charlottetown. My family came with me on that trip, a long time ago. My children were quite small at the time; they're all quite big now, because I've been here a while.

Now, this wouldn't be in the lovely riding of Egmont; it would be in Malpeque. I remember walking down the dock at Cavendish, a short drive from Stanley Bridge where my family was staying. These places would be very familiar to Mr. Morrissey and others at the table.

I booked a little fishing trip, and I took my two boys—if they weren't 7 and 3, they were 8 and 4—and we got on this boat with about a dozen other people. Boy, it sure looked like a lobster fishing boat, because it was.

The captain of the boat took us out on the bay and gave us fishing rods with little pink flies on them. We jigged for some mackerel, and my kids and I had a hoot reeling in a few little mackerel that we subsequently cut up for bait. He turned the motor on, went out a little further, and we jigged for cod. We caught a few cod, we caught a few other fish, some sculpins and a few other things. We had a great time.

In my conversation with the captain of the boat, he said to me that his two trips a day that he makes out there—one in the morning and one in the afternoon—made more money for him taking a few people fishing at \$20 or \$30 per person for a couple of hours than he netted from his lobster fishery, which was thousands of dollars of input costs, thousands of dollars of fuel costs and thousands of dollars of other costs, which are fine, and of course, the revenue he got from that....

So, I think, Mr. Chair, that it is only fair and reasonable that we go to see what it is exactly that people who live along the coastal communities of our country want. I think this motion will certainly enlighten this committee, and I can't for the life of me figure out why anybody at this table would be uneasy in adopting this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Beech.

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

With regard to some of the comments made previously and just now, we want to make sure that all representatives around this table have an opportunity to pass their motions.

Our colleagues in Atlantic Canada may have their concerns, and I'm sure they will share those concerns. After listening to the strong points from the Conservatives and the NDP in support, I certainly won't be stopping this motion from going ahead, but we have registered concerns about it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Beech, on the government side, we have concerns, but it's not something we're opposed to. As for the wonderful intervention Mr. Calkins made, yes, that situation exists all through the gulf region. People are licensed under particular criteria to do that. It's very lucrative, and nobody is opposed to that. It's a critical part...but there are certain species that are controlled and they can participate in that.

That is why I had asked Madam Gill if it was targeted toward a particular species, but I don't think she responded to that.

We're not opposed to it, but we have some reservations, and we'll see where it goes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Morrissey.

Madame Gill.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Since Mr. Morrissey said I didn't answer, I wanted to make clear that it doesn't target a particular species.

As I said, the purpose is to undertake a comprehensive study on what is possible, in response to what the public has been calling for, so I'm not proposing any assumptions or outcomes. I don't want to limit the study. Obviously, I want to thank those who have expressed support for the population, and I hope the committee will reach a consensus.

I'd also like to know whether I can request a recorded division at some point.

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Gill.

[English]

There will be a vote as soon as the debate finalizes.

Seeing no further interest in debating, we'll call the vote on the motion as amended.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): I would like a recorded vote, please.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 0 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Chair.

In the spirit of passing motions at the table, my motion from Tuesday was deferred until today and I would like to bring it back before the committee for continued debate.

● (0925)

The Chair: I believe Mr. Johns made an amendment to your motion.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Chair, I believe you're the head of this committee. You would know where the debate left off and under what terms and conditions.

The Chair: Okay. We will start off with debate on the amendment as moved by Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Can you repeat the amendment, Chair?

Oh yes, it was to ensure that indigenous communities were in the motion, I believe. I think that was where I asked for a change on the language from “Métis, Inuit and first nations” to “indigenous”. That was the only change. I thought we sought agreement at the table to change that language.

The Chair: Yes, but I think it was adjourned at one point.

Mr. Gord Johns: The clerk can maybe make a recommendation about where we put that in. I think we identified “the impact of this decision on small businesses, indigenous and coastal communities”. Would that be a good place for it?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl): Do you have a copy of your amendment?

Mr. Gord Johns: I don't. It's just the one word. Maybe we should put “indigenous” ahead of “small businesses”. We're talking about a very small change in language. It's “to fully understand the impact of this decision on indigenous, small businesses and coastal communities”.

The Chair: I'm going to suspend for just a moment to allow the clerk time to go back to look at the blues to see the exact wording.

● (0925)

(Pause)

● (0930)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone.

We have found the exact amendment that was moved by Mr. Johns. The amendment was, “that the department give a full briefing on all public consultations that took place on the west coast with the affected fishers.”

Mr. Gord Johns: That's correct. Thank you.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: I'd like an additional amendment. After “2019 to fully understand the impact of this decision on”, I would like to identify specifically “indigenous”, and then “small businesses and coastal communities”.

Hon. Ed Fast: Just so it reads properly, “indigenous” should probably come after “small businesses”, because “small businesses” is not a community but the other two are.

Mr. Gord Johns: Sure.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I think it should come after the “and”, if that's okay.

Mr. Gord Johns: It's your motion. I'm fine with wherever you want it.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: It should read “and indigenous and coastal communities”, something to that effect.

The Chair: Is there any debate on the proposed amendment?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: It's a wonderful amendment.

(Amendment agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I'd like to propose the following amendments to the motion.

The first amendment would change the last bullet under “Whereas” that now reads “since 2016”. I propose replacing that with “since 2016, the public fishery in British Columbia has been affected by record low returns of salmon, but a report”—

The Chair: You're on the wrong motion.

The Clerk: Preambles are not part of the motions.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Sorry. It's good that you pointed that out.

I would propose replacing the words after the “Standing Committee” so that it would read “That the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans undertake a study of the socio-economic impacts to recreational and commercial fishing communities on the south coast of B.C. resulting from the decision by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to implement closures due to conservation issues and record low salmon returns; and the committee also explore how the government can balance salmon conservation needs with the socio-economic needs of the fishing communities who depend on the health of the stocks.”

The rest would stay the same.

The Chair: Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, if we were to adopt this amendment by Mr. Morrissey, then the committee wouldn't need to do any work, because the presumption has already been made of why the closure has actually happened and the impacts that flowed from it.

There is great debate and great consternation amongst the community along the coast of British Columbia about whether there are actually record low returns of certain stocks of salmon. It would be presumptive of this committee to actually put the conclusion of the study in the motion of the study itself. Therefore, I would not recommend that we accept this amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Could we suspend while we get a copy of the proposed amendment?

• (0935)

The Chair: I will suspend the meeting.

• (0935)

(Pause)

• (0935)

The Chair: We're back.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Upon reflecting on this further, I'm going to withdraw the proposed amendment.

The Chair: All right.

Now we're back to the motion as twice amended.

Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: I think my amendment should cover off what we're wanting to do, which is to get a full explanation from the department to make sure we find out what consultations they made.

I appreciate Mr. Morrissey's motion. I just think it will water down Mr. Calkins' motion quite a bit to get to where we need to go. It's perhaps like a new motion.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, I would like a recorded vote.

The Chair: Hearing no further debate, we have a request for a recorded vote on the motion, as amended at least twice.

Mr. Arnold.

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

I believe we suspended until we could get a—

• (0940)

The Chair: Mr. Morrissey withdrew his amendment.

I believe that's why Mr. Calkins said that makes things easier.

We're voting on the main motion, as amended twice by Mr. Johns.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

Now we're back to committee business. I believe we had started to talk about the schedule. Mr. Hardie mentioned a couple of important studies. I believe he mentioned the Big Bar salmon and the herring.

Mr. Hardie, do you have anything to add or clarify?

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Well, as I said off the top, the two that have some time sensitivity would be the

Big Bar, because of the spring freshet. We need to see what the status of that is and hopefully arrive at some comfort that the right things are being done at the right time, or not.

The issue of the herring stocks on the east coast is also time sensitive because of the fishing season coming up in May. I believe they would like an examination of that. Herring used as bait is becoming problematic because of the health of those stocks. We could dedicate a couple of meetings to that.

Following that, we should delve right into the Pacific salmon study. The Big Bar review will be a prelude to that.

Following that, Mr. Fast's motion on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is what I would suggest.

In there somewhere, at the appropriate time, we'll take a few moments—and that's all it would take—to adopt again the reports from the last Parliament, which Mr. Arnold suggested we bring back.

The Chair: Mr. Bragdon.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Seeing as the retabling of the documents from the previous Parliament is something we can handle relatively quickly, could we do that today or do that quite early on and have that taken care of and put back before Parliament?

The Chair: It was agreed that they would all be adopted again, so that's done. It's just a matter of now presenting them back to the House, as requested in the motion.

Mr. Ken Hardie: We had a motion. We voted on the motion—

A voice: The motion was agreed to with a dissenting opinion.

The Chair: Yes, and we even agreed on the dissenting report, if any are going to—

Mr. Richard Bragdon: As soon as we can get that done, that would be great. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: I think that's great. Obviously the minister will be coming before us, so that will be a lot to fit in.

The Chair: On that note, the request has been sent to the minister's office or to her directly.

Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Because of the scope of the Pacific salmon study that Mr. Hardie put forward, I believe we may be better to start that. It was in the motion, I believe, that it would be the first study we do. Considering the herring stock issue, we may be able to find time to fit in the two or three meetings, if we aren't able to get witnesses on the Pacific salmon study. I believe you said a minimum of three meetings. We could fit that into the schedule in the spring session so we may be able to wrap up those two studies before the end of the spring session.

As for the motion that Mr. Fast put forward on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, I believe it would be paramount to start that study as early as we can, when we get back in September or October. We would look at some of the issues, not just with the off-shore and international fisheries but also some of the inland fisheries that are potentially being impacted, from anecdotal reports we're receiving. I'm not sure whether we need to have travel specifically indicated in the study motions or if the committee is able to consider travel. Even if it's not in the motion, we should include travel in it.

During that study, we may also be able to fit in some of the other issues. If we do decide to travel to the west coast, we could see on the ground some of the issues with the steelhead motion. We could also possibly see some of the pilot projects that are being looked at on the selective gear fishery as well. I would really encourage that the IUU fishing study be paramount to be started early in the fall session.

● (0945)

The Chair: You are correct, the salmon study was passed in a motion to be the first one to be started.

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I have two quick things.

I think we generally agreed that the time sensitivity of the Big Bar situation leads us into the salmon study, so we can start by talking about Big Bar, get that dealt with, and then segue into the rest of the salmon study.

I understand we would try to find some time in the schedule to deal with the herring as a sidebar issue. Was that your intention, Mel?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Not necessarily a sidebar, but if we are having difficulty coordinating witnesses and so on with the salmon study because it's a much larger study.... I recognize that during the last session, there was a point when we were in the process of looking at two different studies plus government legislation all at the same time. It got to be a little confusing and it dragged out some of them. I'd like to avoid that as much as possible.

If we can identify the herring stock study, as it is a time-sensitive issue, we could possibly fit in the three meetings required for that. Then, as we're working on draft reports, often we need time for the analysts to do the redrafts or prepare the draft reports. That second study could fill in some of that time while we're waiting for draft reports to come back.

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Fast, I don't want to get too far ahead on what we're doing and when we're doing it.

We're agreeing to start that one first. The clerk is going to need a date really quickly for the time frame for submission of a witness list, because next week is a constituency week, and we're back the week after. If we're starting something, that's when we'd probably like to start it, instead of continuing with committee business every day until we get to something.

Would it be the wish of the committee to invite the departmental officials first? We could get that out of the way. That would probably chew up most of the first meeting, I would think.

We could select a date for submission of other witnesses to be in by a certain date. Does anybody want to suggest a date?

Gord.

Mr. Gord Johns: We're just specifically going to focus on this first round of witnesses and dates on Big Bar, correct? Then we'll do the rest of the study and witnesses later. Does that sound reasonable to everyone? It gives us time on that because it's quite a bit more complex. I think we should even have a deeper conversation of what that schedule should be like on that salmon study. We could maybe do that at one of the meetings when we return. We're only going to have so many meetings, and we don't want it, as Mr. Fast said, to turn it into another Cohen commission. We want to make sure we are specifically on the emergency in British Columbia regarding Pacific wild salmon.

I support that, and maybe the clerk has a recommendation of a date because she's the one who has to put it together for really only two weeks away.

The Chair: In order to have witnesses for the 10th, if we say it's going to be the department first, fine; we can invite the department for the meeting on the 10th.

Again, we'd like to have the ability to contact other witnesses as well, because if something happens that the people we want to talk to in the department are travelling, or whatever, that will fall apart and we'll have nobody. I'd rather have by maybe Wednesday March 4, if possible, the submission of witnesses to start the study. That would give the clerk time to contact them and see if they're available, if we have to make arrangements to bring them here to Ot-tawa.

Mr. Calkins.

● (0950)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, you're in an unenviable position and I know there are a lot of serious things going on here at the table.

From my conversation with some of my colleagues across the way, I do believe that there is an urgent need to at least hear and get an understanding of what the commercial fishery is going to be facing if they don't have adequate bait for their crab traps and their lobster traps. Not knowing for certain how this is going to play out, it seems to me as if there are some relatively quick solutions to this. I would like at least one of those meetings in the week that we come back. I can't speak for everybody else at the table, but I would even be willing, as a matter of urgency, to have a meeting outside of the regularly scheduled hours if we decide to pursue the Big Bar issue, which as a western Canadian I find very disconcerting.

I find those two issues to be the most time-sensitive and pressing issues. I think it's a matter of urgency. I'm not casting any aspersions here, but this committee has not actually heard a witness since June of last year, because of elections and everything that's happened and standing up a minority Parliament. I get those things and I'm not blaming anybody, but that's the reality that's facing this committee. I think we have some very serious work in front of us and we need to address this issue because those fishermen in Atlantic Canada need a reliable source of bait. I want to make damn sure that, if this committee is an obstacle, we remove whatever obstacle that is, so they can get out there and fish.

The Chair: Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: In the interests of efficiency, I noticed that many of the witnesses we'll be bringing to these studies will be providing comments on the recreational fishery side. Could we ask staff to try to rationalize how and when these witnesses are called? There's a whole bunch of studies we're proposing to do: selective fishing, the broader Pacific salmon study, etc. When we have representatives from the recreational fishery here speaking to one study, if it's highly likely they will be called again on other studies, it would be very helpful if we had an opportunity to ask questions on those as well.

I know typically that wouldn't be allowed, Mr. Chair, but I'm wondering why we would have witnesses travel here many times, or try to co-ordinate them in video conferencing, when we can do it one time and say, "Hey, we have three studies coming up; you're likely going to be witnesses at all three, so let's ask questions on all three." I know that might complicate matters somewhat, but it's just for your consideration.

The Chair: The only thing I worry about is that I would want to make sure the analysts were okay with that. They're the ones who are putting it together afterwards. To have testimony coming at them from two or three different studies, depending on who the witness may be, they'd have....

Hon. Ed Fast: We would have to be very clear, Mr. Chair, as to what they were speaking to at any given time.

The Chair: Yes, that's what I was saying. They would have to know that this doesn't apply to the question that was just asked, but to the study we're doing next week or some days down the road. I just want to make sure they would be able to follow that.

Madam Gill.

● (0955)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: On the topic of bait, we had proposed an amendment last time. The problem isn't exactly the same, but it exists in Quebec as well, and the fishing season starts a bit earlier there.

If we want to hear from witnesses on the issue of crab, I'm in favour of meeting outside the committee's normal hours and holding a meeting on the issue as soon as possible.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Given the staging of our various issues, I think we should establish a March 4 deadline for witnesses for the Big Bar, which I think was suggested by the chair. I think we agree with that on this side.

Then, for the rest of the Pacific salmon study, we could make it for March 11, to allow time to pause and recalibrate. What have we heard so far? Are there other witnesses we should talk to?

This would be preferable to holding to an initial stack of witnesses who may not be as valuable as other people we think about later. I would just put that out there. We could allow for that provision as we go forward.

Based on the urgency of Jaime's situation, and Madam Gill's interest as well, we need to set a date for our witnesses. To Mr. Fast's point, at the very least when the department staff comes in we can deal with Big Bar and perhaps the herring issue. They should be told in advance to be prepared to talk to us about those two things.

The Chair: Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: Yes, I think he was going where I was going to go. Maybe the first week back we should spend one day just on Big Bar, getting the briefing from the department. The next day we could go right to Mr. Battiste, because of the urgency of the situation, getting a briefing on the herring so we can get prepared.

We are open. I know I put forward an amendment that the salmon should be first. Given the pressing situation, maybe there's a way we can triage it and weave it in.

The Chair: Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: There's lots of discussion around the witnesses and bringing them in for more than one study at a time. We have a number of studies now in the queue. When the time comes to hear testimony that we feel may be pertinent to another study, I hope that we will make note of that, ask the analysts or seek the support of the committee to include this testimony in studies further down the road.

We did some of that in the last Parliament with the study on marine protected areas and the study of government Bill C-55. We shared that information back and forth between those studies. I believe there was one other. Hopefully we will be able to get agreement within the parties to share information and testimony between studies.

I think we should get the salmon study and the herring bait study under way as soon as possible in order to make the best use of the analysts' time and ours. That's what I would support.

The Chair: Jaime.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): I think we're on the same page. I would just say that we're looking probably at the first week or second week of April when snow crab season starts in the Atlantic. I would like to have the ability to have some of the department respond to the study, so that we can understand any hesitations they may have about bait and so that we can call witnesses. If we could at least have two before mid-April, I would appreciate that.

I understand the urgency of the salmon and believe that's a good starting point.

The Chair: Could I suggest that we invite the officials for the meeting of the 10th? We'll tell the officials that they will be here to answer questions on Big Bar as well as on the herring issue on the east coast.

Instead of getting officials back, we're talking about giving them the heads-up that questioning may be on both on that one day.

Mr. Calkins.

• (1000)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, it's very common that, at the start of a new Parliament, the very first witnesses are department officials to talk about the broad range of issues the department is facing and to give the committee instructions on some of the things that we could look at. There's no reason at all to think that the department officials shouldn't be prepared to come here and speak on a broad plethora of issues that are currently facing Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

I would like to, for the record, state my complete confidence in our analysts being able to decipher where testimony from our department officials ought to go.

The Chair: I'm just going to ask a question for the sake of having it on the record. Does the committee agree that, when witnesses are appearing, whether officials or otherwise, if any information is identified as being relevant to another study that we're doing, or going to do, the analysts have the permission of the committee to put that where it belongs in each of the studies?

I just want a consensus. I don't want somebody to come back after the fact and say, "No, this is not what we agreed to." I just want it on the record.

I'll assume we have that consensus.

Let's go back to the deadline for witnesses other than from the department, because next week we're not here. We want to give witnesses at least a week to make travel arrangements. Could we say the deadline is 4 p.m. on Monday, March 2, for the list of the witnesses for the meeting on March 12 on Big Bar?

An hon. member: Agreed.

The Chair: We can go further than that the next week we're back, okay?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Could you just repeat that?

The Chair: Yes, for the meetings on March 10 and 12, on the Big Bar and the herring, we'd like to have a list of witnesses other than officials by Monday at 4 p.m. We know we're inviting the offi-

cial, but if there are any other relevant witnesses, we'd like to have that list submitted to the clerk by 4 p.m. on Monday, March 2.

Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: You said the deadline was just for Big Bar. Are you now saying herring as well?

The Chair: Yes, because we agreed that we're going to do herring ahead of your salmon, or at least have a day of it.

Right after we're back for a week, we have another constituency week right behind it, so that gives us time to line up witnesses going forward.

Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: This pertains to further down the road. In reference to Madam Gill's motion to study the fisheries in Quebec, it's important to get those previously tabled reports retabled and submitted so that we can get the government response back to that British Columbia licensing report. I think they will be very pertinent to the study that Madam Gill put forward. We may not want to start that study until after that government report comes back.

• (1005)

The Chair: That's duly noted.

We've done up to the 12th. Do we need meetings on the 24th and 25th, in that week?

Mr. Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech: Could I just clarify? I'm sorry if this redundant. I want to make sure. There will be departmental officials on Big Bar coming on the 10th—

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Terry Beech: —and there will be departmental officials attending for the herring issue on the 12th.

The Chair: No. The same departmental officials will probably be the people answering questions on both, so we will take—

Mr. Terry Beech: I'd actually suggest that the departmental officials will probably be different. Also, I think we probably have a full meeting's worth on Big Bar and we probably have a full meeting's worth on herring.

The Chair: We will send the invitation to provide the departmental officials for both cases. There may be overlap to some degree. We don't know.

Mr. Terry Beech: Well, just in hearing from my colleagues across, is it possible to set it up that way? The 10th totally for Big Bar and the—

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you.

The Chair: It's the 10th for Big Bar and the 12th for herring, with officials on both days.

Do we think we need two hours with the officials in each case?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. We don't need any other witnesses on those days, so there's no panic to send out—

Mr. Gord Johns: Knowing that, can we have a bit of an extension, then, on getting you the witnesses for the week after the second break week?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Gord Johns: What dates would be best for the clerk, given that we're not going to need witnesses for our first week back, so not until the week of the 24th?

The Chair: Why don't we suggest 4 p.m. on Monday the 9th for Big Bar witnesses?

Mr. Gord Johns: Can we do salmon a week later?

Does that work for Mr. Hardie?

Mr. Terry Beech: What about the end of the week, Friday the 6th?

Mr. Gord Johns: Is that Big Bar and herring next Friday, and then a week later for the salmon study?

Does that work for you, Mr. Hardie? Great.

We're talking about March 6 for Big Bar and herring and the 13th for the salmon study.

We agree now that we're going to study and have the department officials on the 10th on Big Bar and on the 12th on herring.

The Chair: Yes.

March 6 is the deadline for witnesses for whatever we're doing on the 24th.

Are we still on herring on the 24th, or are we on Big Bar, or are we going to salmon, after the officials for the two meetings?

Mr. Gord Johns: I suggest that we get Big Bar out of the way, because we'll have one meeting with the department officials and then we'll have one meeting of witnesses. That way, we can get the two meetings done as we agreed so we can get the government response from that.

Does that sound good, Mr. Fast? I know that you talked about getting the two Big Bar meetings in early on.

Or Mr. Arnold? Yes, okay. That way, with the 24th, we can get Big Bar witnesses done.

Maybe on the 26th we could revert back to the herring. Right now, that would be the first meeting where we'd have witnesses. We're going to have the department come to testify. It gets Mr. Battiste at least some witnesses on record prior to the season opening. We'd be open to that.

The Chair: Okay.

It was suggested as well that Friday, March 6 would be the deadline for witnesses for Big Bar on the 24th.

Could we say Wednesday, March 11th as the deadline for witnesses for the herring on the 26th. Okay.

I'm going to get Thai to comment on something.

• (1010)

Mr. Thai Nguyen (Committee Researcher): Good morning, members.

I don't know if members are still in favour of having an interim report after the two meetings on Big Bar or not.

If we're still planning for an interim report after the two meetings on Big Bar, then Michael and I would need a meeting for drafting instructions, so that you can give us instructions for the interim report after the Big Bar hearings.

The Chair: Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: What I'm hearing the analyst say is that they need drafting instructions. I'm not sure we need to actually assign full meeting times to do that. As long as this committee is prepared, we could take 10 or 15 minutes at the end of a meeting, or whatever the case might be. I think, colleagues, that allocating time aside just for the purpose of drafting instructions might not be the best use of our time, given the urgency of other issues that we have right now.

As long as we're prepared, at the appropriate time, to give drafting instructions, I think this would be a relatively straightforward thing that we could probably do at the end of a meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calkins.

For the meeting on the 24th, we have two hours set aside for witnesses. Could I suggest that, if necessary, we'll add a bit of time to it, to give any discussion over to the analysts on what would be seen as necessary for the interim report?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Yes, thank you.

The Chair: All right.

Do we want to schedule any further than that? The 31st is our next meeting and then after that, those four meetings are done.

Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: It's totally going against my motion to do salmon first. Given that on herring, we already have two meetings out of the way, on the 31st, if we go to herring, we're done. We have three meetings done on herring. We could at least get the wrap on that. I think we should use the 31st for herring, and then start salmon on the 2nd, the full salmon....

The Chair: On that note, we have an invitation sent to the minister. We don't know what day or when that's going to be, so that could make things bump one way or the other.

Mr. Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech: Just for clarification on that, we've just received confirmation that the minister intends to visit the committee on the 26th.

The Chair: Okay.

Well, then, I suggest we move what was supposed to be the herring witnesses from the 26th to the 31st.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Would that be before department officials comment on it?

The Chair: No, department officials for herring come on the 12th.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Okay, that's fine.

Mr. Gord Johns: I'd just add that I love that.

If we do herring on the 31st and the 2nd, because we agreed to three meetings for herring, then we'd have the department during the first week back. Then we've wrapped up herring by early April; we have it out of the way. Then when we come back from our two break weeks, we can start salmon fresh after Easter, and just focus on getting salmon done.

Does that work for everybody?

Voices: Yes.

The Chair: Madame Gill.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: I want to come back to what I was saying earlier about the fishing season in Quebec. Fishers in eastern Quebec will already be working when we hear from witnesses. People eat crab as early as Easter. Earlier, I thought I sensed a willingness to invite witnesses ahead of the set schedule. If possible, I'd like to do that.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll get to that in a second, Madam Gill. I just want to get a clarification from the committee.

We've said that we'll add some time for drafting instructions for Big Bar on the 24th. Do we want to leave the drafting instructions for the interim thing to after the minister appears before committee?

Mr. Gord Johns: Yes.

The Chair: Obviously, she's going to be questioned on something.

We'll do it right after the meeting with the minister instead of on the 24th.

Madame Gill, I understand your conundrum completely with the fishery starting. Yes, in April people are putting pots in the water if there's no ice obstruction. Maybe we can have a look at it. If I can get an extra meeting in there somewhere I'll try to see what day would be best for it and come back to committee early with a pro-

posed date or a proposed schedule when we come back after constituency week. Maybe we can add in an extra two hours just to get that started for you.

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Another option would be to move the second Big Bar meeting to after we've heard from the minister and move the herring up to the 24th. That gives Madame Gill's fishers the chance to participate before they're actively fishing. That gives us the opportunity to question the minister directly on Big Bar and have that factor into whatever we send back. It's just a thought.

The Chair: You're suggesting that we swap Big Bar on the 24th to the 31st and put herring on the 24th.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Then we can talk to the minister on the 26th on both issues.

The Chair: Yes, okay. I understand what you're saying now.

Is everybody in agreement with this before we get too far ahead?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Ms. Gill, when does the fishery actually open? Is it around April 8 or 9?

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Yes, sometimes it's the end of March or the beginning of April. I don't know this year.

The Chair: If you could confirm—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Last year, it was March 30.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right, I'll still look at what I originally said about trying to fit in some time. We'll talk about that when we come back to our first meeting on March 10.

Mr. Arnold.

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

I just want to clarify something. Can the parliamentary secretary confirm whether, when the minister intends to be here on the March 26, it is for the full two hours?

Mr. Terry Beech: I don't actually know that. That's what we invited the minister for. I've only received confirmation on the date. I can inquire on that for you.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Okay. Thank you. That's what I wanted to clarify.

We specifically asked for an appearance on Big Bar, but I would assume that, with the minister, other questions are open as well. I just want to confirm that with the chair.

The Chair: It is your question time, not mine.

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

The Chair: Do we want to go beyond March 31?

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Chair, I think you have a very good sense of what the priorities of the committees are. Given the fact that, as you get responses from witnesses, as long as this committee believes in good faith that you're pursuing witnesses in accordance with the priorities of the committee, I would like to assure you that if something that we're scheduling cannot go directly as planned, you have my support in scheduling whoever you deem necessary to make sure that we don't waste any of the committee's time and that we have witnesses coming in to at least address one of the studies, based on the priorities you have picked up clearly from this committee.

• (1020)

The Chair: I appreciate that, sir.

Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I believe the supplementary estimates are also out. We would be requesting a meeting with the minister and officials on the supplementary estimates before they have to be signed off on. That may juggle the schedule around as well.

The Chair: The only thing is—and I realize the minister has responded to the first invitation—I don't think there's much time. If the minister was available earlier, she probably would have come earlier than the 26th, so we're probably not going to get the minister in between this. It's going to be sometime after March 31, I would think, but we can send another invitation, as requested, and see where it lands and what kind of a response we get.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Do we have a deadline for when the estimates have to be approved by the committee?

The Clerk: The deadline is floating because, as it is written, it is three days before the last date of the supply period, which is the 26th. Three days before that would be the deadline to report or three days before the last supply day, which at this time we don't know. So this date is unclear. That does not prevent the committee from inviting the minister in question on the supplementary estimates. It's just that the committee would not be able to report officially to the House, but the subject matter of the supplementary estimates can be studied anyway.

That being said, I believe the main estimates are also coming very soon.

The Chair: Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I would request that the chair also send the request to the minister for her and her officials to appear on the supplementary estimates or the main estimates if that happens to be the case, whichever happens to fit into those deadlines.

The Chair: All right, understood. It will be done.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Just for the record, Mr. Chair, these are predictable, scheduled things. This happens every year. While the dates might be somewhat flexible due to the parliamentary process, it should come as no surprise to this committee or to the minister that a request to appear to discuss the supplementary estimates or the main estimates ought to be expected. My hope is that the meeting that we already have the minister confirmed for isn't to discuss the main estimates or the supplementary estimates, but to discuss the issues for which she was invited to the committee and that we

would have a further opportunity to discuss the estimates with the minister prior to the date that we need to, whatever it happens to be.

The Chair: We'll do our best. We'll send the invitation as soon as possible and hopefully get a response very quickly.

So again, do we go beyond the 31st? We haven't got to it because Mr. Calkins put faith in me to know the priorities and determine what days we're going to do what. Thank you for that again. I just wanted to mention that again and get it on the record.

Mr. Gord Johns: We go to break week after April 2nd for two weeks. If we can get herring wrapped up on the 2nd, then at least we have drafters working on that report so we can get it in to the government and get the response that we need. If we can shoot for that target, then we go to break week for two weeks and start salmon following Easter.

• (1025)

The Chair: So we'll leave the 2nd open for now as we go forward and use it as I see fit.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I just want to be clear, Mr. Chair, that my faith in you to adapt the schedule only extends to the season ending March 31. After that, we will have a new season, in which case we will have new regulations and requirements for you to follow.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Before we close, I would like the clerk to read what we have once more so our staff is very clear on deadlines for witnesses and what is drafted so far.

Beyond that, I'd like a little clarity from Mr. Hardie, if we could. Do we expect to have his salmon study completed before the end of the spring session? I realize it won't be the end of our study on salmon, because we have a lot more specific, targeted studies on specific issues after that point, but was it Mr. Hardie's intention to have that wrapped up so it could be submitted to government and expect a response before we come back in the fall?

The Clerk: I will present, as requested by Mr. Arnold, the update on the calendar. Because we have changed the calendar, at the end we may want to discuss again the deadlines or witnesses, because they have all changed.

On March 10, we have officials for Big Bar. On March 12, we have officials for herring studies. Then there's a break week. On the 24th, we have witnesses on Mr. Battiste's study on herring. On the 26th, we have confirmation that the minister will appear on Big Bar. On the 31st, we changed and now we agree that the witnesses on Big Bar will appear, and I assume the drafting instructions would be at the end of that meeting.

Then we also agreed that we would look at a time for potential witnesses for a study from Ms. Gill.

Mr. Gord Johns: Just for clarification, earlier we talked about the 13th for salmon, but why don't we leave salmon—for witnesses—until early April, since we're not going to study salmon until after Easter?

The Chair: We don't have anything scheduled in there for witnesses for salmon.

• (1030)

Mr. Mel Arnold: We have the 13th for the salmon.

The Chair: Yes, it went off on another path right after that.

The Clerk: Do you want to keep that, or do you want to change it?

The Chair: I don't see any sense in a deadline for witnesses for salmon on the 13th, when we're not going to get to it until after Easter.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, not to throw a monkey wrench in the plans, but if there is an intention to draft a report at the conclusion of the herring study once the three meetings have concluded with witnesses, then we should be allocating time for the consideration of the draft report. If the matter is urgent and that report needs to be—

I guess what I'm saying is that I need some clarification from the mover of the motion, Mr. Battiste, as to whether he will be satisfied with the hearings. Then the report could come at some time afterwards; or if the consideration of the report and the tabling of the report in the House of Commons is paramount, I think we need to take that into consideration. I don't think we've talked about that.

The Chair: Mr. Battiste.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I think that's a good point. I was under the assumption we were scheduling things up until March 31 with the chair's discretion. I would definitely like to see, at some point, a report back. Are we in the process of scheduling that because we're going past April 2? Where would the chair be able to fit that in?

The Chair: If we leave it as is now, we would use the end of the meeting on April 2 for drafting instructions.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Okay.

The Chair: Keep in mind that we're not back again until Monday the 20th, because we're away for two weeks in April.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: This was my question, Chair.

If the important matter is to simply hear witnesses and hear from officials on the issue regarding bait, then we're fine. But if the real goal is to have a report tabled in the House as soon as possible, then we need to incorporate that goal into our work plan.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I agree with that.

Do we want to leave that to the chair's discretion, or do we want to say this is the date that we would do it?

The Chair: Well, you have to decide the deadline date for the report to be presented or tabled in the House. It's next to impossible to get it in any faster unless we put in an extra meeting.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: We're fine then, Chair.

The Chair: Yes, but we can't confirm a date to present or to table. There are drafting instructions, and then we go on a list. So do we leave it as is?

A voice: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I have two things. First, to respond to Mr. Arnold's question, yes, I would see the salmon study being done before we rise in June. If we were to start it the week of the 21st, let's say, we'd have 14 to 16 meetings available.

Second, with respect to the herring report, if we do the final session on herring on the 2nd, could we not provide drafting instructions at the end of that meeting? That would give the analyst two weeks.

A voice: That's what we just discussed.

Mr. Ken Hardie: All right. Good.

The Chair: Hearing no further business, I will call the meeting adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>