



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 108

PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT

Thursday, May 2, 2024

Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald



Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 108 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

This meeting is taking place, of course, in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

Before we proceed, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. There is interpretation for those on Zoom. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. For those in the room, of course, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

Please address all comments through the chair.

To avoid audio feedback, before we begin, I would like to remind all members and other meeting participants in the room about following important preventative measures. To prevent disruptive and potentially harmful audio feedback incidents that can cause injuries, all in-person participants are reminded to keep their earpieces away from all microphones at all times.

As indicated in the communiqué from the Speaker to all members on Monday, April 29, the following measures have been taken to help prevent audio feedback incidents. All earpieces have been replaced by a model that greatly reduces the probability of audio feedback. The new earpieces are black, whereas the former earpieces were grey. Please only use a black approved earpiece. By default, all unused earpieces will be unplugged at the start of the meeting. When you are not using your earpiece, please place it face down on the middle of the sticker for this purpose, which you will find on the table as indicated. Please consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents.

The room layout has been adjusted to increase the distance between microphones and to reduce the chance of feedback from an ambient earpiece. These measures are in place so that we can conduct our business without interruption and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. Thank you all for your co-operation.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on June 16, 2022, the committee is resuming its study of the population sustainability of Yukon salmon stocks.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

From the Watershed Watch Society, we have Aaron Hill.

From the SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, we have Greg Knox.

There is another witness who hasn't yet signed in to join us, Mr. Taylor. If he joins, we'll announce his presence.

Thank you for taking the time to appear today. You will each have five minutes for your opening statement.

Mr. Hill, you have the floor. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Aaron Hill (Executive Director, Watershed Watch Salmon Society): Thank you very much for having me here today.

I'm the executive director at Watershed Watch Salmon Society. We're a charity that's been advocating for the conservation of B.C.'s wild salmon for over 25 years. I've been with the society since 2008. Much of my work here is focused on improving the sustainability of Pacific salmon fisheries.

I have sat on many multi-stakeholder fishery management committees. I have a master's degree in biology and I spent years working as a fisheries observer with experience in all modes of commercial and recreational salmon fishing. I also grew up in northwest B.C. where my father worked as a fishing guide, so I have an intimate understanding of how important salmon are for maintaining livelihoods in our communities.

Wild Pacific salmon and steelhead populations in B.C. have progressively declined over the past several decades. In many cases, overfishing has been a factor, both inside and outside our borders.

After the young salmon and steelhead hatch in our rivers, they migrate out to the Pacific Ocean where they feed and grow for at least one year. Many of these fish follow a clockwise arc around the Gulf of Alaska before they head south along the Alaska panhandle, where they are then intercepted in large numbers by Alaskan commercial fisheries.

There is still some overfishing happening in B.C., but many of our fisheries have been severely curtailed to help conserve our stocks in recent years. Our average annual harvest from 1924 to 1994 was 24 million fish. The average in recent years is around two and a half million.

That order of magnitude decline was a major impetus for the Pacific salmon strategy initiative, which is providing a surge of \$647 million of federal funding over five years to address these declines.

However, just as we've shut down our fisheries and spent all of this public money on recovery, Alaskan fleets just across the border have not scaled back. We partnered with SkeenaWild Conservation Trust a couple of years ago to commission a comprehensive technical report on the impacts of Alaskan fisheries on B.C. salmon. The report confirmed that the Alaskan share of the catch has grown substantially in the past decade and that Alaska is now the biggest killer of many B.C. salmon populations.

In recent years, Alaskans have taken half of the entire returning adult run, in some salmon and steelhead populations, from northern B.C. rivers like the Skeena and the Nass.

Last year, two Alaskan fishing districts along the B.C. border harvested more salmon than all of the fisheries in B.C., Washington, Oregon and California combined. They are also taking 30% to 75% of the catch of salmon populations from as far south as Vancouver Island and from throughout the Fraser watershed. Over 90% of chinook salmon caught in the southeast Alaska troll fishery originate in rivers in B.C., Washington or Oregon.

A U.S. federal court recently ruled that this fishery in particular is preventing the recovery of endangered southern resident killer whales, which rely on the chinook salmon as their primary food source. Those whales move between Canada and the U.S. and we've scaled back our chinook fisheries to help them recover.

We'd like to see Alaska move its fleet out of the areas on the outer coast where most of the B.C.-bound salmon are migrating.

We'd like to see them implement basic management measures that are standard practice in B.C. and other jurisdictions. Those include collecting and sharing genetic information on their catch to determine the rivers of origin; requiring the live release of non-target species; reporting their discard numbers; and using cameras or observers on vessels to verify their catch numbers. These are all things we do in B.C. that they're not doing in Alaska.

The Pacific Salmon Treaty is supposed to address these matters, but it's not. We need the Alaskans to work with Canada to fix those shortcomings.

We need Canada to put more pressure on the Alaskans, both inside and outside the treaty process. Canada could also offer up compensation to shut down these fisheries, similar to how the U.S. compensated Canada for shutting down the west coast Vancouver Island troll fishery in 2008 to reduce impacts on fish that are migrating back to rivers in Washington and Oregon.

I know that the study was initiated around Yukon stocks, but these transboundary management issues are very severe for British Columbia as well. That's why I'm focusing on that today.

These are solvable problems and the solutions could put millions more fish back into B.C. rivers annually.

• (1540)

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll now suspend for a quick moment. Our third witness has signed on, so we'll do a quick sound check.

• (1540) _____ (Pause) _____
 • (1540)

The Chair: We're back.

Mr. Knox, you have up to five minutes for your opening statement.

Mr. Greg Knox (Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust): Thank you, everyone.

My name is Greg Knox. I'm the executive director of SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, and I've been in that position since 2007. Our focus is on salmon conservation in northern British Columbia. I have a background in science and environmental management. I'm also a certified fisheries technician. I've been on the northern panel of the Pacific Salmon Commission for 14 years, so I have quite a bit of experience there.

I'm here because the B.C. salmon are in crisis, as Aaron outlined. Alaska is now the biggest impact on many of our salmon populations, and we can't rebuild our salmon without their help. I'll start with some information around some of the impacts.

In Alaska, the information is hard to get, and Watershed Watch and SkeenaWild commissioned an independent report to bring together all the best information from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans a few years ago, and that's the basis of some of this information I'm going to provide.

I'll zoom back out a bit to add to Aaron's comments. In southeast Alaska they're harvesting between 50 million and 70 million salmon a year just north of the British Columbia border, and most of these salmon are harvested from unselective seine fisheries.

I'll talk about some of the impacts now. I'll start with sockeye salmon.

Southeast Alaska catches about a million sockeye per year. About 80% of the Alaskan sockeye catch is from B.C. rivers. Up to about 30% of the Skeena sockeye run is taken in southeast Alaska each year. There are growing conservation concerns for Skeena sockeye. For example, the wild populations have declined by about 90% from their historical abundance. Often we've shut down fisheries here in northern British Columbia to protect these fish, and yet Alaska has fished status quo and there are no mechanisms under the Pacific Salmon Treaty to stop that.

The impacts are even higher for some individual populations. A good example is Lake Babine wild sockeye. They were once the largest population in the Skeena at about a million fish, one of the largest populations of salmon in Canada. They've declined by about 93%, and Alaska is taking between 20% and 50% of that population every year in their fisheries.

For chum salmon, north and central coast chum have suffered significant declines. Central coast chum have declined by about 90% since 1960. Other north coast populations have had similar declines. Alaska catches 10 million or more chum salmon just north of the B.C. border every year. We have no idea how many of those chum are bound for British Columbia rivers, but it could be significant. They're not doing the basic testing to figure that out.

For steelhead, Skeena steelhead have declined rapidly over the last five years. The sport fishery brings in tens of millions of dollars each year to the local economy, and Alaska kills between 10% and 50% of the Skeena steelhead run each year.

For chinook salmon, as Aaron mentioned, most of these that are caught in Alaska are not from Alaska, and we have severely depressed populations here in British Columbia.

There are concerns over coho salmon as well. They take about 25% to 35% of the coho return each year.

As I mentioned, I've been involved in the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The intention, the principle, set out was to prevent overfishing and for each party to receive the benefits of the number of fish originating from their rivers. The PST is no longer meeting the main principles set out in the treaty. It was never designed to deal with climate change impacts and the salmon crisis we face today. Recent attempts by Canada at the treaty table have failed to get Alaska to take action, and the Pacific Salmon Treaty in its current form is impeding our ability to stop declines and enable rebuilding.

Basically, the bottom line is that Canada has significantly scaled back fisheries and invested heavily in rebuilding salmon. Alaska is now the biggest impact on many populations, and it's impossible to rebuild these salmon populations without their help.

Thank you very much for your time.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now suspend for a moment to do a sound test.

• (1545)

(Pause)

• (1545)

The Chair: I will go to Mr. Taylor now for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Greg Taylor (President, Fish First Consulting, As an Individual): Thank you very much. I apologize for getting on late.

I'll talk about how this fishery developed over time, and my age is showing on the screen. It took me a while to coordinate with the people at the House of Commons to get the technology right, so I do apologize for being late.

As I said and as my biography points out, I started working in the fishery in 1980 and continued working through my career, ending up as vice-president of a major fishing company in British Columbia and responsible for buying all their salmon and other products from both British Columbia and Alaska.

As such, I spent a good deal of my career in Alaska purchasing fish in the areas we're speaking of. Many of you may have seen the TV show *Deadliest Catch*. I used to hire those tenders to go out there and catch fish and buy fish from the same boats that are operating in that area and pack that fish back to Prince Rupert, where we unloaded it and processed it.

Besides doing that, I spent a lot of time in an airplane out in those fisheries. I've seen those fisheries in operation. I've seen the fish being delivered, and I've seen them go through our plant. I understand that fishery intimately.

What Aaron and Greg are telling you and the data they are giving you, I can back up from personal experience. This fishery is not sustainable, and it certainly does not match what Canada put in place.

Canada, back in the 1990s, under the leadership of both a Conservative and a Liberal, John Fraser, who sadly just passed, and Mr. Anderson, reduced interception fisheries in British Columbia because they saw the decline in our populations on the north and central coast. Many of the fisheries that were in place when the fishery was signed were eliminated under their mandates.

Canada does not catch Alaskan fish anymore. In fact, it's massively reduced its own interception fisheries on its own populations. Meanwhile, Alaska has maintained their fisheries and refuses to take the same kinds of steps. We have to make clear that no one's asking Alaska not to catch their fish. We're just asking them not to operate in areas that have high interception rates.

The area that we mostly talk about is on the outside of the panhandle in district 104. That area doesn't have any Alaskan pink or chum salmon runs or any other type of salmon runs out there. This is a pure interception fishery. The boats that operate out there have permits to fish anywhere else in southeast Alaska. This is a dramatic choice by Alaska to fish in that area.

If these were Alaskan populations, it would literally be unconstitutional for Alaska to maintain those fisheries. They are required to ensure that escapement targets are met for their stocks. They're choosing to ignore what's mandated in their own constitution in the management and operation of their fisheries intercepting Canadian fish.

As Greg pointed out, in 1985, when the treaty was signed and we were balancing harvest benefits, maybe it made sense, but it does not make sense in a time of climate change. We're seeing rapid declines in our own populations, and we have interception fisheries, fisheries that Canada eliminated, continue in the U.S., and it's not sustainable. It has to be changed.

One of the more interesting things that happened this week was that Brian Riddell, eminent scientist and once commissioner on the Pacific Salmon Treaty, said in writing that the treaty is broken. The treaty will not lead us to any answers. We have to look at other alternatives, whether that be having other negotiations with Alaska, buying out those few boats—remember, only a small number of boats fish out in the offending area—getting them to move or some other approach to encourage Alaska to do what's right. We have to look at moving those interception fisheries and changing the fishery to match what Canada does in terms of building sustainable salmon fisheries so that we can protect our populations going forward.

• (1550)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll now go to our rounds of questioning.

Before I do, I want to welcome the hon. Rob Moore here today, who's subbing in for Mr. Small maybe?

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Welcome to the committee.

Mr. McLean is obviously subbing in for our buddy from New Brunswick.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): That's right.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach is joining us as the NDP representative. I understand that Ms. Barron is going to do the voting online, but you're going to do any questions here in the room.

We'll now go to our first round of questions.

Mr. Arnold, you have six minutes or less. Go ahead, please.

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

I want to thank the witnesses for their testimonies today.

I would like to go straight to questions to hear from you, but there's another issue that I have to interject here at this time.

The opening statements today draw more attention to this. We really need to hear from the minister on questions in addition to the many questions we have previously and unanimously agreed to invite the minister to answer, but she has declined five of the six invitations this year. Because the minister has repeatedly declined to appear at this committee, we have not been able to ask her questions that many Canadians have on a number of topics on the minister's portfolio.

Therefore, I move:

That the committee express its deep disappointment that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard has declined five requests to appear before the committee to answer questions on important matters related to her portfolio, and that this be reported back to the House.

This motion was put on notice on April 26, 2024.

Before my honourable colleagues speak to the motion and possibly move amendments, I suggest that if the parliamentary secretary can commit to consulting with the minister and providing to the committee by the end of the day Monday, May 6 a firm date for the minister to appear at the committee for no fewer than two hours in May, I will accept that debate on this motion be adjourned.

• (1555)

The Chair: Mr. Cormier, go ahead.

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Chair, maybe my colleague Mr. Arnold didn't hear at the last committee, but I think the clerk received some confirmation from the minister's office that she was coming to committee in a couple of days or weeks from now. Is that right?

Can you just repeat that for the committee?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Geneviève Dubois-Richard): The minister is available June 6 for one hour and September 26 for one hour.

The Chair: Is there any more discussion on the motion?

Mr. Kelloway, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Yes. I'd like to move an amendment.

I move the following amendment to the motion, to add the following after the last sentence in the motion, "That, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government provide a comprehensive response to the committee's report".

The Chair: We've heard the amendment.

Is there any discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Perkins, go ahead.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): I have a question for the clerk, if I may.

What date are the estimates tabled in the House?

The Clerk: They have to be reported by May 31.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Right. So that's the problem with the June 6 date. The number one rule in Parliament in terms of committee business is that estimates trump everything, including government legislation, in terms of appearances. To me, the minister coming after estimates is a disservice to this committee's job of scrutinizing the estimates before they're reported to Parliament. The horse is out of the barn by the time she would be coming on June 6 to talk about estimates. That would be too late. We couldn't do anything.

I would suggest that's why we need to stick with MP Arnold's motion, in order to ensure that the minister would be here before the estimates report.

She's had some notice of that for a while. We've been asking for her to come before the estimates are reported back to the House. I see no reason why she couldn't.

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Just on that point, we can certainly try to get her for next week, but at this point I can't make any promises on that, not seeing her schedule.

The Chair: Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: As I mentioned, if you can commit to getting back to us, prior to the end of day on Monday, May 6, that she will appear for two hours in May, then I'll table discussions.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I can certainly endeavour to do that.

The Chair: All right.

The motion was amended by Mr. Kelloway.

Do we vote on the amendment and then the main motion?

Mr. Rick Perkins: I thought it was tabled until Monday.

The Chair: I don't think it has been voted on.

Mr. Mel Arnold: If he's going to provide us with a date and if he's going to commit—

• (1600)

The Chair: There is an amendment on the floor. If they agree to what Mr. Kelloway has said and what Mr. Arnold is saying, I don't think we even have to vote.

Yes, Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Based on this, would it be useful if we adjourn debate?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Because we have a commitment from Mr. Kelloway—

The Chair: —that he's going to get back to us.

Mr. Mel Arnold: —to get back to us before the end of day Monday that he has requested that the minister provide a date in May when she will appear for two hours, I'll accept the adjournment of debate.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Okay. That is my mission, and I will follow up on that mission on Monday.

The Chair: Okay. Is there any other discussion on the motion and what's taken place?

Mr. Mel Arnold: I move to adjourn debate.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Debate is adjourned.

Thank you, sir. Your time is up. I hate doing that.

Mr. Hanley, you have six minutes or less, please.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you very much to all the witnesses for appearing.

You're right. I know one of you pointed out that this is a study concentrating on Yukon River salmon, but there are definitely parallels, many of which you brought up in your testimony.

Maybe, Mr. Knox, I'll start with you.

I wonder about revisiting the Pacific Salmon Treaty. Any of you can maybe jump in to answer this question. Presumably, this is a conversation or a proposal that has happened. What would be the possibility of revisiting and revising the Pacific Salmon Treaty to address this issue, given that it's clearly not working at the moment?

Mr. Greg Knox: On the Canadian side of things, there's a lot of recognition of a lot of the challenges. I think even in Washington and Oregon, with both the panellists and commissioners, there's a recognition that there are lots of problems. Alaska is more resistant to any change.

The reason I say this is because there's currently a review of the Pacific Salmon Treaty being done by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation within the treaty. It's assessing these sorts of things, although it isn't clear whether its mandate will actually get at the heart of whether the treaty is actually meeting the principles set out in the treaty, i.e., making sure we're not overfishing each other's populations and that we're getting the benefits from our own populations.

I think that review would need to be revised to really assess whether each chapter is meeting the objectives set out in the treaty and then, from there, to recommend much stronger mechanisms to actually revise the treaty based on the current environmental challenges our salmon are facing and the efforts we're putting into rebuilding these populations.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Thank you.

How much of this would be specifically a negotiation or a conversation with the State of Alaska versus relevant U.S. federal departments?

Mr. Greg Knox: It would be helpful to have those conversations with the U.S. federal departments because they have influence on the commissioners. Ultimately, we're dealing with commissioners from Alaska, Washington and Oregon all together, not just Alaska itself. The treaty has to be renegotiated by 2028. Our Canadian commissioners are dealing with all of the U.S. commissioners in that renegotiation, and Alaska is part of the U.S. commission.

Diplomatic work in the short term to get U.S. folks on side and, at the same time, discussions initiated with U.S. commissioners at the treaty table both need to happen to create the political will to actually do a thorough review of the treaty and to make the necessary revisions in a timely manner.

Like I said, it has to be laser focused on whether we're meeting the principles set out in the treaty, because they're pretty straightforward, and the current review is not asking those hard questions.

• (1605)

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Thank you.

It sounds like that could be something our Minister of Fisheries and Oceans could take on in terms of that nation-to-nation conversation to help renegotiate the terms.

Mr. Greg Knox: Yes, exactly. It would be really helpful to have that leadership from the minister.

Alaska is interested in the health of the transboundary rivers and watersheds that adjoin B.C. One of the conversations we're currently having is with the British Columbia provincial government to see if there can be conversations about how we ensure that the water flowing down into Alaska from our rivers is kept clean. At the same time, they're doing a better job to protect our salmon and steelhead populations.

This can happen not only at the federal level but at the provincial level as well. We've seen some movement by the province on that as well.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: I'll come back to you if I get another round.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll now go to Ms. Desbiens for six minutes or less.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for being here. I have no doubt that we have a lot to learn from them. However, since it seems that this is the day for updating motions and notices of motions, I'd like to remind the—

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie: I have a point of order. We're not getting translation. It's very weak.

The Chair: Let's keep going and see what happens.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I'd like to remind this committee that I also had a motion passed to complete my study on the criteria used by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to set redfish quotas.

At that time, I had served—

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): I have a point of order.

With apologies to my colleague, the interpretation does not seem to be working on my end. Although my French is pretty good, I don't want to misunderstand what's being said. I'm not sure if my other colleagues who are with us virtually are experiencing the same thing, but I'm not getting an English translation.

The Chair: Do you want to say a sentence and see if we get translation?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I could continue.

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: It's working now.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: So I will continue.

So I, too, have given notice of a motion that I would like to see debated. I moved the motion on February 29. This really isn't new. It was a while back. At that time, I had asked the committee to consider inviting Minister Steven Guilbeault to appear and also to invite Sylvie Lapointe, who would talk to us about offshore fisheries. We need to consider that. Of course, I agree that Diane Lebouthillier, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, should also be invited.

So I, too, would like us to finally debate my motion, which proposes that we invite these two additional witnesses.

[English]

The Chair: Does everybody have a copy of the motion?

We'll resend it, but I know it was sent out some time ago.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I can read it again, if that helps.

[English]

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Chair, could the clerk recirculate it?

The Chair: She's sending it now.

Can everybody let me know when they get it?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I can fill the gap with a little song.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Can we ask for a two or three-minute break?

The Chair: A recess?

Has everyone received the motion?

Okay, we'll take a couple of minutes to talk about it.

• (1610) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1615)

The Chair: We're back.

We've heard the details of the motion.

Is there anybody who wants to speak to the motion?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Chair, may I speak?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm checking to see if anybody wants to actually debate the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I'd like to reread the motion to ensure that we're all on the same page.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll go to the vote, I guess.

You can read it out again if you want, Madame Desbiens.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: It reads:

That, as part of the present study on the criteria used by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to set redfish fishing quotas, the committee invite Ms. Sylvie Lapointe, president of the Atlantic Groundfish Council, to testify and answer questions from members of this committee for one hour; that, as part of this study, the committee invite the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Steven Guilbeault, for one hour to answer questions from members of this committee; that this meeting be held prior to the drafting of the report on this study.

[*English*]

The Chair: Everybody has heard the details of the motion. Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Your time of six minutes is up, of course.

We'll go now to Ms. Barron.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to say a big thank you to all of the witnesses who are here, and for all of your very important work. Apologies for some of the interruptions here. I hope we're able to utilize the rest of our time in hearing from you and gathering this important information.

With that, I want to pass it over to my colleague, the MP for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, to ask you questions today.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to my colleague Ms. Barron for the introduction and for sharing her committee with me.

Obviously this is an issue that affects in a big way folks in the region that I represent. Skeena—Bulkley Valley comprises about 300,000 kilometres of northwest B.C. and includes all of the rivers

that have been mentioned so far and many of the fish stocks that are impacted by the Alaskan interception issue.

I want to thank our witnesses for joining us today and sharing this important perspective.

I did bring this up about two years ago in Parliament with the former fisheries minister. At the time, the minister essentially said that because it was a transboundary issue and involved the United States, the government was passing it off to Global Affairs Canada to deal with on a diplomatic basis.

For all three of our witnesses, I'm wondering, have you ever seen hide or hair of Global Affairs Canada on this issue? Is leadership being shown by Canada's diplomats in trying to resolve this important issue?

Mr. Aaron Hill: I have not heard or seen anything from Global Affairs Canada.

Mr. Greg Knox: I have not heard or seen anything from Global Affairs Canada. My understanding was that it was back with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Greg Taylor: I have not heard that Global Affairs Canada has been involved at all.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It was a disappointing response because it seemed like an attempt to sort of slough off a very vitally important issue to a department that hasn't prioritized it since then.

I'll stay on the topic of leadership. Where does that leadership need to be shown? Which department is the logical lead for this? How much leadership have you seen from the federal government on this issue?

• (1620)

Mr. Aaron Hill: I could take a stab at that.

We haven't really seen much from the current minister.

We know that the commissioners within the commission, several of whom are DFO staff, have been stepping up on this issue. Since we started raising these concerns a couple of years ago, it has now shifted the top of the agenda in the Pacific Salmon Commission. I think Mr. Knox can probably confirm that.

The previous minister, Ms. Murray, said that it was at the top of her agenda when she was meeting with the American consul general, I believe, or the American ambassador, a year or two ago, but we haven't really seen much since then. It would be great to hear the current minister speak out on this issue and further elaborate on what the department is able to do beyond what they're already doing, because we really do need to kick it up a notch in terms of diplomacy, both within and outside the process.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thanks for that.

Go for it, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Greg Taylor: Yes. My experience is that the department keeps on pushing back and pointing to the treaty as the place to have these discussions, and that is a problem, because the problem we're discussing here is with Alaska. Alaska has an effective veto over any decisions that might affect its fishery.

In terms of the context of the treaty, the treaty not only affects northern B.C., but of course our recreational fisheries are driven by the outcome of the treaty, as is our Fraser River sockeye management. You can't push and can't do too much within the context of the treaty to address specific north coast issues, and that has been a challenge. I think we have to look at solutions beyond that of trying to find an answer within the context of the treaty and overcoming Alaska's effective veto.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: How much willingness has there been on the part of the Alaskans, whether that's the Alaskans who are engaged in the Pacific Salmon Treaty or Alaskan commercial fishers, Alaskan tribes...? How much interest has there been in engaging in a really proactive way on this important issue?

Mr. Greg Taylor: I can answer that from this perspective: When I first went up to buy fish in Alaska, I really got a lesson handed to me, which was that Alaskans are not Americans. They are Alaskans number one, and Americans number two. The Alaskan fishermen in no way want to look at giving up fisheries

This is an important perspective. The fisheries that we're really concerned about occupy only a very small number of boats, in relative terms. There are 274 boats that are licensed or have permits to fish in the southern southeast. There are maybe 30 in the areas that we consider a problem.

This is an issue where the American fishermen are standing up for American fishermen, but it really is not all American fishermen. There's an opportunity there to have a discussion with the other 240 southeast permit holders about what they might like to see.

Mr. Greg Knox: Can I just add—

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we'll clew this up.

For anyone who wanted to respond, we'd appreciate it if you'd send it in writing to the committee.

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

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'm going to go to Mr. Arnold.

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

This testimony is somewhat shocking. What I just heard was someone standing up for Alaskan fishermen...those are Alaskans and so on.

Who should be standing up for Canadian fishermen, who continue to be impacted and shut down?

I'll start with you, Mr. Taylor.

• (1625)

Mr. Greg Taylor: The person who has the mandate to stand up is our Minister of Fisheries. I think she just needs some new ideas of how to address an intractable problem.

The ideas are out there, but they can't be the same old same old. A lot of the advice she's been given is to work within the context of the treaty.

As I pointed out in my opening statements, one of the leading salmon scientists in Canada and ex-lead commissioner on the treaty is saying that the treaty's broken. You can't look to the treaty to fix this problem.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I heard that in your earlier testimony.

Would you like to elaborate a little further on how he relayed how the treaty is broken and what the problems are with the treaty? How can it be corrected?

Obviously we don't have time to wait for a renegotiation of the treaty to start rebuilding these stocks.

Can you elaborate a little further?

Mr. Greg Taylor: Yes. Maybe the most effective way is if we send his statement to you and you can read it.

In essence, he's saying that we're in a new world with climate change. Populations are crashing. The treaty is no longer the framework with which to deal with the problem of Alaska continuing to intercept Canadian fish.

He does not necessarily point to what the answer is, he just argues that we have to look at alternatives to deal with this issue, rather than just the treaty. It's not to say the treaty is not part of the solution, but we're not going to move past Alaska within the context of the treaty. Canada has to stand up and look at alternatives.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

This question is possibly for Mr. Hill or Mr. Knox.

Do you have any comments on the status of stock assessments and determining which stocks are being caught in non-selective fisheries? How is that impacting the stock assessments and season openings?

Have those stock assessments actually been done?

Mr. Greg Knox: Yes, I can answer that.

If we're talking about Alaskan fisheries that are intercepting British Columbia stocks, they are collecting some information. They're doing DNA analysis on the sockeye that they're catching, but they don't provide us with population-level information. They only provide an aggregate of Skeena populations, for example.

For chinook salmon, they're collecting DNA and it's pretty good. For chum salmon—which I mentioned are in extremely low levels; they're an extreme conservation concern—they're collecting no information and they could be doing DNA analysis.

For coho populations, they could be collecting DNA, but they're not. For steelhead, they're collecting no DNA and they're also not collecting any information on how many steelhead are being caught and released, or are dying.

For pink salmon, they're not providing any information on how many B.C. pink salmon are being caught.

It's poor. Then on—

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you. It's poor.

Can you explain a little about how that data could be obtained? Is that through sampling bycatch? Is that bycatch going to waste?

I think we only have about half a minute.

Mr. Greg Knox: They can collect it. They can do DNA analysis on it. It's a common practice in most fisheries. They even have money within the northern fund of the Pacific Salmon Treaty to do that analysis. The money is there and they can do it. They already have sampling programs in place. It's just a matter of adding more sampling.

It's totally doable. It's done in a lot of fisheries around the world, including in British Columbia.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arnold. You had three seconds to spare.

We'll now go to Mr. Hardie for five minutes.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I'll take Mel's three seconds.

There's a pattern developing here. We heard from one of the first nations chiefs on Tuesday that there is abundance at the mouth of the Yukon River going into the Bering Sea, but very few fish are making it past the Canadian border. It seems that we have the same phenomenon happening in the waters leading to British Columbia. We also see what's been going on with mackerel on the east coast. You can even throw in softwood lumber. I mean, the Americans are increasingly difficult to deal with.

I guess the question to you, Mr. Taylor, is this: Why should we keep up our end?

No, pardon me. Let me go back.

Is Alaska keeping up its end of the Pacific Salmon Treaty? Are they abiding by the terms and conditions of that treaty?

• (1630)

Mr. Greg Taylor: The short answer is yes, they are abiding by the treaty. They operate precisely by the treaty. In fact, by their accounting, we owe them more catch rather than less.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Is it fair to say, then, that we negotiated a pretty bad treaty back in the day?

Mr. Greg Taylor: Well, climate change has wreaked havoc. The treaty was never supposed to be about conservation. It was supposed to be about trading and balancing each other's harvests. We don't harvest any Alaskan fish to speak of any longer.

Mr. Ken Hardie: They shouldn't, either, if it's going to be balanced.

Mr. Greg Taylor: That's right.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Anyway, that's beside the point.

Mr. Greg Taylor: Thank God.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Jim Pattison moved the Canfisco plant from Prince Rupert up to Alaska.

Do you know what percentage of the Alaskan catch Canfisco processes?

Mr. Greg Taylor: They are a major player in southeast Alaska. There are several major companies up there, of which they are one. They are a major remaining canner up there.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Okay, that's fine. I don't need to go too far down that particular rabbit hole.

There has been a new agreement—a moratorium on fishing on the Yukon River.

How much of that are you aware of? Are there essential elements we could take and apply to a new Pacific salmon treaty?

Mr. Greg Taylor: I'm disturbed by where the agreements on the Yukon River are going because, listening to the first nations there, they are paying most of the price. Fair subsistence fisheries are being compromised.

If these were Alaskan stocks.... The last thing Alaska would do is compromise their subsistence fisheries. Those are paramount in Alaska.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Sir, the Alaskan fishermen are doing to the first nations of the Yukon River the same as they are doing to fishers in British Columbia—scooping them up at the oceanside.

Mr. Greg Taylor: It's a very similar issue. Their fisheries are intercepting them in the Bering Sea and in the pollock fisheries, right down into the big gillnet fisheries that operate outside that area and intercept key populations going to the Yukon.

Yes, it's an interception fishery. It's the same issue. Stocks are declining in the Yukon and fisheries are not responding appropriately.

Mr. Ken Hardie: We have the Pacific Salmon Treaty, which has outlived its usefulness. Perhaps we have a moratorium on the Yukon River that will be toothless simply because the damage is done before any fish actually get back to the Yukon River. It would seem, then, that we've done a pretty decent job of identifying where the problems are.

What do we do about that?

Mr. Greg Taylor: I think there are a few different ideas.

Aaron, you had a few ideas that you were talking about. Maybe you want to go through them.

Mr. Aaron Hill: You have to look at specifically what the federal government can do. It has to be in Alaska's best interest to reduce these interception fisheries and put in better management practices, such as counting the fish they're discarding and requiring live release of the non-target species like we do in B.C. We're spending tens of millions of dollars buying out fishing licences in British Columbia as part of the Pacific salmon strategy initiative. A lot of those licences aren't even being fished anymore. I'd argue that it would be potentially as good, or be better use of public money, to offer up the Alaskans a compensation package to move those fisheries out of the interception zones.

There is precedent for that, as I mentioned, with the way that Canada was compensated in 2008 for shutting down our west coast Vancouver Island troll fishery to reduce impacts on Washington and Oregon state populations.

There are other solutions, but I suspect we're running out of time here.

• (1635)

The Chair: Yes. We've gone a bit over, actually.

We'll now go to Madame Desbiens for two and a half minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are similarities between Atlantic salmon and Pacific salmon. I would have liked to have a little more detail on the obstacles that salmon face at various points in their lives. There are times when they are more vulnerable. We know that Atlantic salmon go from freshwater to salt water and then come back to freshwater.

What's the biggest threat to Pacific salmon at every stage of their lives? Is there a more critical time? How can the department's and scientists' involvement help the salmon at that time?

I don't know who's in the best position to answer that.

[English]

Mr. Greg Taylor: That's a very complex question. It involves an animal that has a life history that spans the far ocean reaches right up into natal rivers 1,000 kilometres upstream from the tidewater. However, one thing we do know is that if you do not get a spawning fish onto the spawning grounds, you don't have a chance to recover these populations or conserve them. The first thing you have to do is make sure the fish get back that are necessary to spawn and conserve a diverse population.

That's the first step. After that, there are many steps, especially in terms of adapting to and mitigating climate change impacts. We need to be investing in this. Canada, unfortunately, does a pretty poor job of managing its salmon populations. A lot of work needs to be done. Canada's failure to manage its stocks properly is why we lost our marine stewardship certification for our salmon industry in British Columbia.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Barron, please go ahead.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I will pass my time to my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Thank you.

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

There are lots of different groups impacted by this issue in British Columbia. We've heard about the impact on rebuilding salmon stocks. We could talk about the impact on B.C.'s commercial fishery. Of course, there's the sport angling and commercial sport angling aspect of the picture.

I wanted to pick up on what Mr. Hardie was asking about when it comes to indigenous groups and first nations. We had hoped, I believe, to have indigenous witnesses at the committee. Unfortunately, we weren't able to confirm any attendance.

Mr. Taylor, I understand that you work as a consultant with several first nations. I wonder if you could talk about the impact of Alaskan interception on their efforts to rebuild stocks in their territories.

Mr. Greg Taylor: Well, I can tell you a story that I think really captures it. I work with the Lake Babine Nation. Eighty-five per cent of Skeena sockeye return to their territory to spawn.

Sockeye stocks in their territory are composed of a large, enhanced component and wild populations that they've relied on from time immemorial. They are at a point now where they're seriously considering shutting down their enhancement facilities because all the enhancement facilities are doing is driving fisheries in Alaska and in British Columbia, which in turn is depleting their wild populations.

This is having a serious impact. First nations in Canada are being forced into untenable decisions and considerations by these harvests in Alaska. Other first nations I deal with are also having the same issues in terms of the interceptions of their wild populations coming back and not even reaching Canada. When they do, their subsistence fisheries are being compromised.

First nations in Canada, whether they be on the coast and rely on commercial fisheries that are no longer really.... They're a shadow of what they were in the past. Whether they're food fisheries in the main stem or... People in the spawning territories are seeing such depletion that they don't even want enhancement because enhancement just begets more harvest, which begets more depletion of their wild populations. These are the kinds of very difficult decisions first nations are facing.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you. We're a little bit over time.

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

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, witnesses, for the testimony.

Taylor, on Tuesday Chief Frost was here, and she said that DFO had not had any enforcement on the Yukon River that she is aware of and, in the past number of years, had in fact requested enforcement from C and P on the river. What is your experience, and what would be the impact of no enforcement on the river?

Mr. Greg Taylor: Well, this is going a little bit further afield, but we see it on the Fraser River, where there are high levels of illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries, and where there are illegal fisheries that are impacting endangered stocks. There is literally no enforcement.

There are other issues on the north coast, where we see a lack of monitoring in commercial fisheries.

Canada is not putting in place its own policies in regard to monitoring, management and enforcement of fisheries, and it's unfortunate. Canada just needs to institute its own policies.

Just implement your policies, Canada, and we'd be in good shape. It's just that DFO refuses to do it. It's as simple as that.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Taylor.

The witness testimony is great, but I did give notice—and I apologize to the witnesses—at the end of the last meeting that I would move to continue the discussion on my motion of April 18 on elvers, and I am doing it today.

Perhaps we can have a quick discussion and a vote on MP Kelloway's amendment to the main motion. We can do this without disrupting the witnesses too much, so I'll put forward a motion that we resume debate.

The Chair: I'll ask the clerk to record the vote.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I just want to make sure I'm voting on the right thing.

Are we voting to resume debate or are we voting on Mr. Kelloway's amendments?

The Clerk: We're voting to resume debate.

• (1645)

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Okay, I understand.

That's why we're debating it.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm going to you, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: It's on my amendment. I move the following amendment:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government provide a comprehensive response to the committee's report.

The Chair: That's not the amendment you made.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: That's the one I'm going to make. I jumped the gun a bit. Do you have the...?

The Chair: Rick will give it to you.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Can we suspend for a couple of seconds, please?

The Chair: We'll suspend.

• (1645)

(Pause)

• (1645)

The Chair: We'll go to the vote on the amendment first.

Do you want to read it out?

• (1650)

The Chair: Okay, we'll go to the vote.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I'm sorry, but I was expecting Mr. Kelloway to reread his amendment before we voted on it.

The Clerk: He chose not to.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Okay.

So I will have to look through my papers to read it again.

I was told that abstaining was a vote. I'm just trying to determine if my amendment still stands if I vote in favour.

[*English*]

The Chair: Do you need a moment, Ms. Desbiens?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: If I abstain, I think it will be all over.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll wait for a moment while Ms. Desbiens gets up to speed.

(Amendment negated: nays 6, yeas 5)

The Chair: Ms. Barron, go ahead.

• (1655)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to put forward an amendment. It has been sent to the clerk, and I'm going to ask the clerk if she can distribute it, but I also know my team member has the amendment in paper copy, which he will be circulating.

It begins with, "That, regarding Minister Diane LeBouthillier's decision to close the legal elver harvest of 2024, the committee finds that:".

The amendments that are made here are specifically that paragraph (b) will read that: "Since the closure of the elver fishery, criminal activity and violence has not decreased as evidenced by witnesses" and so on.

In paragraph (c), it's to add "according to the witnesses" prior to the remainder of the point.

In the final paragraph—and this will make more sense once people have the version in front of them—I'm amending it to add, after "Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and Canadian Coast Guard" "to do the work required across jurisdictions to make sure that public safety is maintained, first nations' moderate livelihood rights are protected, and a plan is developed for the the long-term sustainability of the elver fishery."

I notice there are a couple of small grammatical pieces in there. I apologize. I'm happy for those to be corrected. I notice "the" is in there twice. Otherwise, those are the amendments that I'd like to put forward.

The Chair: Everybody has a copy of the amendment as presented by Ms. Barron.

Mr. Serge Cormier: There are two things, Mr. Chair.

First, I'm not sure if we want to keep the witnesses online. I'm not sure what time we were going to go until, and we're going to ask for a little recess just to go through the—

The Chair: Is everyone in favour of letting the witnesses go?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach, go ahead.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: On the point of whether or not to excuse the witnesses, I'm trying to get a sense of whether or not this motion in front of us will involve a half-hour of debate. I think some people around the table might have a pretty good sense of that.

The Chair: We probably won't know that until we see how many people want to speak to it and whether they're long-winded.

Is there any discussion?

We'll suspend for a moment.

• (1655) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1700)

The Chair: We're back.

Does anybody want to speak to the amendment?

Madame Desbiens.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I'd like to move a subamendment to Ms. Barron's amendment to add a paragraph (e). It reads:

(e) that, as part of a reopening, a crisis unit be set up beforehand made up of the various intervention units concerned, border agency, Coast Guard, public security agency, scientific representation and legal fishermen, to act not only in observation and surveillance but also to act in protection and intervention in the event of force majeure to promote a resumption of fishing that is adequate, egalitarian and ensuring increased safety.

[*English*]

The Chair: Has everybody seen a copy of the amendment?

Okay. We'll suspend for a moment while we get some copies done.

• (1700) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1705)

The Chair: Madame Desbiens, are you making a subamendment or an amendment? The clerk needs to know.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I don't know what I said. I can skip my turn and move it as an amendment afterwards.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you amending the amendment? If so, it would be a subamendment.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Look, I'll move it as a subamendment. Let's face it, it's 5:10 p.m.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. It's a subamendment.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I'd like to amend the amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: We need to vote on the amendment first, and then the subamendment.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I think she's trying to amend the main motion, not the amendment. I know she can't because we're dealing with the amendment.

Anyway, I'll leave it to the clerk.

The Chair: Okay, we'll vote on the amendment first and then the subamendment.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Shouldn't it be the subamendment and then the amendment?

The Chair: No, the original amendment hasn't been passed yet. That has to be passed in order for a subamendment to take place.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Okay. We have to vote on Lisa Marie's amendment first and then Caroline's. It seems backwards.

The Chair: What we're voting on is the amendment, which, if you look at the motion as it was distributed, is what's in red.

An hon. member: This is Lisa Marie's amendment.

The Chair: Yes.

• (1710)

Mr. Ken Hardie: Is Madame Desbiens' motion amending Ms. Barron's motion?

The Chair: Yes. That's what she said.

Mr. Ken Hardie: We have to vote on that first, don't we?

The Chair: No, we don't.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Yes, we do.

The Chair: We'll get to a vote on the subamendment first. Okay.

All right. I'll ask the clerk to do the vote on the subamendment that's been presented by Madame Desbiens.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: On a point of order, for clarification, do we have Madame Desbiens' subamendment? Was it circulated?

The Chair: It's been sent. It's in French only.

Can we ask Madame Desbiens to read out the amendment so that the interpreters can interpret it for everybody who doesn't speak French?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Of course.

I'll read it slowly.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Begin when you're ready.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I move to amend Ms. Barron's amendment by adding the following subamendment:

(e) that, as part of a reopening, a crisis unit be set up beforehand made up of the various intervention units concerned—

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair.

There's no interpretation coming through.

I can hear it now. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I will continue reading. Thank you.

(e) that, as part of a reopening, a crisis unit be set up beforehand made up of the various intervention units concerned, border agency, coast guard, public security agency, scientific representation and legal fishermen, to act not only in observation and surveillance but also to act in protection and intervention in the event of force majeure to promote a resumption of fishing that is adequate, egalitarian and ensuring increased safety;

[English]

The Chair: Has everybody heard the subamendment?

Shall we call the vote, Madam Clerk?

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: I want to get clarification. Is she saying this is a group that gathers together? The interpreter is saying it's a crisis cell; I don't know what a crisis cell is. If we're talking about a group of people to come together, sure, I can agree with that.

I'm asking for clarification as to whether this is a group that's going to be formed, with professionals or people who are impacted by the elver fishery, to be able to provide an informed and local perspective.

Is that the intent of (e)?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: That's how I described it.

We learned from observing elvers that if we reopen the elver fishery, we know from past experience that we will be dealing with the same issue.

If we reopen the elver fishery, we need to make sure that we have a crisis unit including all those impacted by the situation—

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: It's a crisis team.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: —who will keep an eye on things properly, keep things safe and make it possible to respond.

So we would be taking into account the circumstances that specifically affect elvers.

• (1715)

There will be border officers, people from the RCMP, but also legal fishers, people from the community—

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Okay.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: —a crisis unit that can step in to guide the reopening. Otherwise, there's no point in reopening. That security unit has to be there to support the reopening.

That's my position. That's why I'm moving a subamendment.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You folks operate a bit differently here at fisheries from the other committees I sit on.

Just based on the discussion so far, I am going to ask, Mr. Chair, that you excuse the witnesses. It seems like this is going to take the remainder of the time.

The Chair: I think that's a good suggestion, Mr. Bachrach.

Is everybody in agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I thank the witnesses for their participation here today and for sharing your knowledge with the committee as we look to do this study. Unfortunately, we're not going to get back to any more questions because we're right in the throes of a subamendment, amendment and motion, so that's going to take a little while to get done.

If there is anything you want to get to the committee, please put it in writing and send it to the clerk, and she'll make sure that we're all copied on any information you send.

Again, thank you.

Now we'll go to the subamendment.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We will now vote on the motion as amended.

Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I'm going to make a motion to amend, if I can. "That pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government provide a comprehensive response to the committee's report."

This is not a report. Then, fine, I'll withdraw it.

The Chair: Now, we'll go back to the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*] [*Proceedings continue in camera*])

The Chair: We'll go in camera to do drafting instructions for the Yukon study.

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