

Question 1: A Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) Member of Parliament (MP) asked how many patrol days were provided for DFO vessels in water near Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) 200 mile limit, for the eight years of the current government.

Response: The summarized data pertaining to the delivered NAFO patrol days from fiscal year (FY) 2015 to November 27, 2023 is as follows:

Delivered Days on Program		
Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization	Fiscal Year (FY)	Delivered Days
	2015-16	438.8
	2016-17	473.43
	2017-18	469.27
	2018-19	490.35
	2019-20	500.48
	2020-21	364.88
	2021-22	321
	2022-23	372
	2023-24*	115

Notes:

Data from FY 2015-16 to 2019-20 is extracted from iFleet data system.

Data from FY 2020-21 to 2023-24 is provided from the Atlantic region's internal fleet tracking documents.

* FY 2023-24 is not yet completed. Data in the table covers April 1, 2023 to November 27, 2023.

Question 2: A CPC MP asked the Department to provide in writing the amount of funding and personnel hours dedicated annually to enforcement of illegal fishing domestically in Canadian waters and internationally outside of Canadian waters.

Response: The Department does not track funding received or hours spent by fishery officers in the manner requested. In fiscal year 2023-24, 152.9 million was allocated to Conservation and Protection (C&P). Funds allocated to C&P primarily support front-line operations, including the work of approximately 550 front-line fishery officers and approximately 75 front-line supervisors and managers.

Fishery officers verify compliance with fisheries-related legislation and regulations, including habitat protection provisions and those related to aquatic invasive species and species at risk. Fishery officers are also engaged in fisheries monitoring and control activities in international waters, through work related to Regional Fisheries Management

Organizations, such as NAFO, and the Department's involvement in the Indo-Pacific Strategy, including North Pacific Guard, for example.

Question 3: A Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) MP asked for the Department to provide more detail in writing on provincial actions under their authority to curb illegal fishing.

Response: Combatting illegal activities in the fishing industry is a priority for the Government of Canada. To evaluate the issue and establish a way forward related to unreported cash sales, an approach involving all of the Government of Canada as well as other orders of government was deemed to be required. This led to the creation of an Intergovernmental Steering Committee, which is co-chaired by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia, as well as operational and policy subcommittees. Government sectors and departments with relevant mandates are collaborating on, and will continue to work towards, eliminating illegal and illicit activities related to unreported landings and cash sales in the lobster commercial fisheries. The implicated provinces would be in a better position to respond on specific actions they are taking.

Question 4: A LPC MP asked if conservation and protection officers disregard infractions by some groups.

Response: Fishery officers monitor fishing activity to verify compliance with the *Fisheries Act* objectively, professionally, and with respect. Fishery officers will continue to take action whenever unauthorized harvesting and other violations under the *Fisheries Act* are observed, while supporting the exercise of fishing rights.

Question 5: A LPC MP asked the Department to provide details on the protocols in place when enforcement actions involve First Nations.

Response: The Department's goal is to establish and maintain a fishery that is peaceful, productive and prosperous and that ensures full participation of all authorized harvesters including Indigenous peoples and that Treaty Nations are able to exercise treaty rights to fish.

Conservation underpins how the Department manages and protects Canada's fisheries. Conservation of the resources and safe and orderly fisheries are the priorities, and ones that are shared by both First Nations communities and commercial and recreational harvesters who live and work side-by-side. Fishery officers will continue to take action whenever unauthorized harvesting and other violations under the *Fisheries Act* are observed, while supporting the exercise of fishing rights.

As part of Modern Treaties implementation, Conservation and Protection is actively engaged in the development and implementation of the fisheries enforcement protocols with our First Nations partners.

DFO has fisheries officers stationed in detachments in every province and territory; the fisheries and communities across the country are very different. Fishery officers verify compliance in fisheries, including the compliance of Indigenous harvesters and, when non-compliance is found, such as fishing without a licence or not adhering to the conditions of a licence, they take appropriate enforcement actions given the particular circumstances applicable to each incident.

Question 6: A Bloc Québécois MP asked about the 11, 000 convictions and if the associated penalties were financial and how much money has been paid in penalties since 2015.

Response: Complete data on convictions and associated penalties since 2015 is not available in a Departmental database. Once a ticket is issued or charges are laid by a fishery officer as the result of an alleged offence, the court file becomes either the responsibility of a provincial court in the case of tickets, or the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, in the case of prosecutions resulting from charges. Information on fines imposed and collected through ticketing is held by provincial courts and information on court-imposed fines following conviction is held by the Courts and the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

Question 7: A New Democratic Party (NDP) MP asked if there are accountability mechanisms in the enforcement tools being used. They also inquired about enforcement capacity.

Response: Conservation and Protection (C&P) has approximately 550 front-line fishery officers who verify compliance with fisheries-related legislation and regulations, including habitat protection provisions, those related to aquatic invasive species and species at risk and investigate alleged offences where warranted. Fishery officers verify the compliance of commercial, Indigenous and recreational harvesters, as well as individuals and companies engaged in any activity occurring within Canadian fisheries waters that has the potential to impact or affect fish, fish habitat and/or aquatic ecosystems. C&P is responsible for patrolling 423,023 kilometers of Canada's coastline (includes the mainland coast and the coasts of offshore islands) and Canada's Economic Exclusion Zone, covering 5,599,077 km².

The priorities set by C&P at a national and regional level support both the Government of Canada's and the Department's priorities, including the Minister's mandate letter priorities. C&P conducts extensive consultation with other Departmental sectors, such as Science, as well as with First Nations, commercial harvesters and commercial harvesting associations, industry and recreational fishers when setting annual priorities.

C&P also works with other DFO programs, law enforcement partners, and Indigenous and industry stakeholders to ensure peaceful and orderly fisheries. C&P has partnerships with the Canadian Coast Guard and PAL Aerospace, who provide in-shore, mid-shore, off-shore and aerial assets to enable effective delivery of C&P's missions.

C&P works in a dynamic environment and investigates on average over 11,000 occurrences per year across the country. Fishery officers use their discretion to determine the appropriate course of action when non-compliance is found, including by assessing the severity of the offence, the compliance history of the alleged offender, any aggravating or mitigating factors that may be present in the circumstances, and the anticipated effectiveness of the action in achieving compliance or preventing the continuation or recurrence of the offence, among other factors.

Decisions to initiate an enforcement action are the discretion of a fishery officer; however, these decisions are guided by management structures and procedures that support officers within the operational environment in which they work. Generally, this involves consultation requirements for enforcement decision-making including requirements to engage with their supervisor, Legal Services and/or the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

Based on priorities, C&P may temporarily deploy fishery officers from one area to another to bolster capacity to manage certain fisheries or to support priority projects, such as the North Pacific Guard mission. Effective delivery of operational enforcement activities not only requires ongoing assessment and re-prioritization exercises, but also relies on leveraging technology, partnerships, and a remarkable group of hard-working fishery officers. The Department is confident that C&P has the capacity to appropriately and effectively respond to and take action on unauthorized fisheries activity both domestically and to respond to our international commitments and priorities.

Question 8: A LPC MP asked the Department to provide a written response about the impact of illegal fishing on stocks and habitat.

Response: Illegal fishing undermines the health and sustainability of fish stocks. The impact by illegal fishing will vary based on the status of the fish stock and the level of illegal harvest. High levels of illegal catch may have negative impacts on stock abundance and productivity, even in healthy stocks, while for stocks that are in recovery, even small levels of illegal catch may slow or impede recovery.

Illegal fishing could also pose a threat to sensitive habitats.

Question 9: A CPC MP asked if Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing is factored into catch data before determining Total Allowable Catch (TAC).

Response: Unaccounted-for catch can be taken into account directly or indirectly depending on the methodology used to assess the stock.

Direct accounting takes place in some models which specify “catch bounds” that allow the model to estimate the true levels of catch based on what we know from the survey information, natural mortality, growth and recruitment in the stock.

Indirect accounting occurs in stock assessments where underestimated catch is attributed to natural mortality or to lower productivity (i.e. lower growth and reproductive rates), which adds uncertainty to the stock assessment, and is communicated in the Science advice supporting the TAC decision.

For stocks that are assessed and managed under what is called a “Management Strategy Evaluation”, overages can be estimated and taken into account. In such cases, Harvest Control Rules can be tested under assumptions of fixed overages (e.g. 10% higher catch overage) to ensure the harvest strategy would be sustainable even if catch is underestimated.

Underestimated catch can also be accounted for directly at the decision making stage by “setting aside” amounts of fish from the official TAC.