



Second Session, 38th Parliament

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE

Bella Coola

Thursday, October 5, 2006

Issue No. 21

ROBIN AUSTIN, MLA, CHAIR

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**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE**

Bella Coola
Thursday, October 5, 2006

- Chair:* * Robin Austin (Skeena NDP)
- Deputy Chair:* * Ron Cantelon (Nanaimo-Parksville L)
- Members:*
- * Al Horning (Kelowna-Lake Country L)
 - * Daniel Jarvis (North Vancouver-Seymour L)
 - John Yap (Richmond-Steveston L)
 - * Gary Coons (North Coast NDP)
 - * Scott Fraser (Alberni-Qualicum NDP)
 - Gregor Robertson (Vancouver-Fairview NDP)
 - * Shane Simpson (Vancouver-Hastings NDP)
 - * Claire Trevena (North Island NDP)
- *denotes member present*
- Clerk:* Craig James
- Committee Staff:* Brant Felker (Committee Research Analyst)
Dorothy Jones (Committees Assistant)
-

- Witnesses:*
- Billy Blewett (Lower Dean River Lodge Ltd.)
 - Nicola Koroluk
 - Ross Mikkelson
 - Cecil Moody
 - Jason Moody (Nuxalk Nation)
 - Réjeanne Morin
 - Kevin O'Neill (Central Coast Regional District)
 - Susan O'Neill
 - Karl Osmers
 - Rom Richdale
 - Joan Sawicki
 - Chief Peter Siwallace (Nuxalk Nation)
 - Chief Deric Snow (Nuxalk Nation)
 - Ed Willson Jr. (Bella Coola Valley Seafoods)

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MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE



Thursday, October 5, 2006
4:30 p.m.
Lebelco Community Club
Bella Coola, B.C.

Present: Robin Austin, MLA (Chair); Ron Cantelon, MLA (Deputy Chair); Al Horning, MLA; Daniel Jarvis, MLA; Gary Coons, MLA; Scott Fraser, MLA; Shane Simpson, MLA; Claire Trevena, MLA

Unavoidably Absent: John Yap, MLA; Gregor Robertson, MLA

Others Present: Brant Felker, Research Analyst; Dorothy Jones, Committees Assistant

1. The Chair called the committee to order at 4:36 p.m.
2. Opening statement by the Chair, Robin Austin, MLA
3. Statement by Chief Peter Siwallace, Nuxalk First Nation
4. The following witnesses appeared before the Committee and answered questions:
 - 1) Karl Osmers
Ross Mikkelson
 - 2) Joan Sawicki
 - 3) Central Coast Regional District
Kevin O'Neill
 - 4) Cecil Moody
 - 5) Lower Dean River Lodge Ltd.
Billy Blewett
 - 6) Bella Coola Valley Seafoods
Ed Willson Jr.
 - 7) Nicola Koroluk
 - 8) Nuxalk Nation
Jason Moody
 - 9) Rom Richdale
 - 10) Réjeanne Morin
 - 11) Nuxalk Nation
Chief Deric Snow
 - 12) Susan O'Neill
 - 13) Nuxalk First Nation
Chief Peter Siwallace
5. The Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair at 7:22 p.m.

Robin Austin, MLA
Chair

Craig James
Clerk Assistant and
Clerk of Committees

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2006

The committee met at 4:36 p.m.

[R. Austin in the chair.]

R. Austin (Chair): Good afternoon. My name is Robin Austin. I am Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Aquaculture Committee's public hearings here in Bella Coola. It's a real pleasure for us to be in your community and to hear directly from you about this important topic.

I would like to begin by recognizing that we are here visiting on traditional Nuxalk territory. I would like to thank the hereditary chiefs, the elders, the council and the community members for allowing us to come into their community to hear what they have to say on this important matter.

For your information, today's meeting is a public meeting, which will be recorded and transcribed by Hansard Services. A copy of this transcript, along with the minutes of this meeting, will be printed and will be made available on the committees website.

In addition to the meeting transcript, a live audio webcast of this meeting is also produced and available on the committees website to enable interested listeners to hear the proceedings as they occur. Sometimes technical difficulties prevent a live broadcast, but an archived copy of the audio broadcast is retained on the committees website.

Let me, also, for the benefit of the witnesses, read out the mandate that this committee has. The Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture was restructured with the following terms of reference by the Legislative Assembly on February 20, 2006: that the committee be empowered to examine, inquire into and make recommendations with respect to sustainable aquaculture in British Columbia and, in particular, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, to consider the economic and environmental impacts of the aquaculture industry in B.C.; the economic impact of aquaculture on B.C.'s coastal and isolated communities; sustainable options for aquaculture in B.C. that balance economic goals with environmental imperatives, focusing on the interaction between aquaculture, wild fish and the marine environment; as well as to look at B.C.'s regulatory regime as it compares to other jurisdictions. The committee is to report to the House no later than May 31, 2007.

Today we have a number of people working with us. On my left here, we have Doug Baker and Alison Braid-Skolski, who are here from Hansard Services. They record what is being said during the hearing, and then Hansard, as I've mentioned, produces a transcript.

We also have staff here from the Office of the Clerk of Committees. At the front of the hall there we have Brant Felker, a research analyst, and Dorothy Jones, a committee assistant. The Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees, Craig James, is sitting directly to my right.

You are welcome to help yourselves to the material that Brant and Dorothy have laid out at our information table.

Before calling witnesses up to the witness table, I would like to recognize that we have Joan Sawicki here, a former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

Welcome, Joan.

I would also like to ask that Peter Siwallace, who's the hereditary Chief of the Nuxalk Nation, come forward and say a few opening remarks.

Opening Statements

P. Siwallace: My name is [Nuxalk spoken], known as Peter Siwallace. I'm a hereditary chief of the Nuxalk Nation as well as the band manager.

I'd like to welcome you into our Nuxalk traditional territory, and I look forward to hearing what you have to offer in terms of farmed salmon. I'd like to also put it on the record that we're not in favour of any farmed salmon within our Nuxalk traditional territory.

[1640]

We are prepared to do anything to ensure that does not happen here. We're not in favour of it. We'd rather look at other alternatives. One is the Snootkli Creek hatchery up here. If you look at the success of that, it's far better than farmed salmon. If moneys could be pumped into that direction and have those kind of things versus farmed salmon, we'd be far better off with that.

Thank you for listening, and once again, welcome to Nuxalk Nation territory. [Nuxalk spoken.]

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you, Chief.

I would like to introduce all the members of the committee, starting on my right. I'll let them introduce themselves.

D. Jarvis: Hello. My name is Daniel Jarvis. I'm the MLA for North Vancouver-Seymour. I also would like to welcome Joan Sawicki. She was the first Speaker of the Legislature ever to throw me out of the House.

A. Horning: My name is Al Horning. I'm the MLA for Kelowna-Lake Country.

R. Cantelon (Deputy Chair): I'm Ron Cantelon. I'm from Nanaimo-Cowichan or Nanaimo-Alberni or Nanaimo-Parksville. I can't get it right. Have I got it right now, Scott? Sorry.

I'm Deputy Chair, and if I may, Mr. Chair, I'd just like to comment. We're not really here to offer anything. We're here to listen. We're not here to promote or to not promote anything. We're here to hear what your views are, what facts you have to offer us and what your concerns and opinions are. We're anxious to hear them.

C. Trevena: Claire Trevena for North Island.

G. Coons: Gary Coons from Prince Rupert and the MLA for the North Coast.

S. Simpson: Shane Simpson, Vancouver-Hastings.

S. Fraser: Scott Fraser, Alberni-Qualicum. That's on Vancouver Island.

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you.

Just for everyone's information, the reason why this meeting is starting a little bit late today is that we had problems with the plane landing, due to weather, so we were delayed. In order to give Hansard the time to set up, we had to start the proceedings a little bit late. I apologize for that.

I'd like to begin by inviting Karl Osmers to come up to the witness table, please.

Presentations

K. Osmers: Thank you for the opportunity.

Let me introduce myself. I'm a retired educator with a background in archaeology, anthropology and am presently a tourism operator in the valley.

To put, perhaps, the whole mariculture-aquaculture issue into perspective, 10,000 years ago when the hill tribes looked down at the first people planting crops, the arguments are the same today with the commercial fishermen versus the mariculture industry. The mariculture industry is destroying a way of life for the commercial fishermen.

On the other hand, there is no possible way in which the existing catch for wild salmon can possibly supply the world demand. If every last salmon were caught this summer, we would run out of salmon before the next season. And that's on a worldwide basis.

What are the options? I agree with, I believe, everyone in this room that open-net pens are not the answer. I visited the research station in Nanaimo and had a look at their closed-pen containment system, which can be used anywhere. They are non-polluting. They eliminate the problem with sea lice and yet produce a substantial volume of fish for the market.

From a tourism perspective — from the perspective of hotels, restaurants — the ability to order fresh salmon 52 weeks of the year is crucial. The commercial fishing fleet cannot possibly deliver fresh salmon, never having been frozen, 52 weeks of the year. The system is not designed to do that. The only thing that I would ask this committee to sincerely look at is to perhaps take an opportunity to stop off at the research station in Nanaimo and have a look at the process.

It may involve an additional cost to the aquaculture industry. Perhaps closed-pen, closed-bag containment systems are more expensive than open nets. If so, that may be a cost that the industry will have to bear, because I do not believe that the issue of sea lice and escapement can continue without there being major repercussions.

[1645]

I would also like to have this committee think about... When we talk about aquaculture, we are talking about more than Atlantic salmon in pens, though that is the prevalent view in the public. Aquaculture equals Atlantic salmon in pens on the west coast. That would be the equivalent of trying to describe agriculture by

referring only to pork farms and soybeans, ignoring every other crop in the world, which I do believe is rather shortsighted.

I believe there are opportunities up and down the coast where you can have shore-based fish farms raising trout. You can have marine-based operations where you have fish farms that raise prawns as well as crabs. The variety is limitless. On the other hand, according to the United Nations, 90 percent of all commercial stocks have been fished out worldwide, whether we're talking tuna, orange roughy, salmon — worldwide.

I would like to think that as a committee you would be willing to take the opportunity and visit the marine research station in Nanaimo and have a look.

Thank you. I would ask the Chair if I could give the rest of my time over to a colleague.

R. Austin (Chair): Certainly. You're most welcome to.

R. Mikkelsen: Hello. Good evening. My name is Ross Mikkelsen. I'm a long-term resident and a property owner in the valley. I'll make my comments brief. I'm against the traditional open-net-cage fish farming as it stands. I don't believe that the sea lice problem can be properly controlled or managed by DFO. They're in the unenviable position of promoting it and being the policemen at the same time, and there's a tragic conflict of interest.

The Broughton Archipelago stands in everybody's mind that's in this room. So if they can't get their act together there in a remote place like Bella Coola, they certainly aren't going to make any better attempt at it.

This area here is being deindustrialized. In the last 15 years tourism and that type of industry has been promoted more and more. The area is ringed by federal and provincial parks, marine- and land-based. As such, the industrial activities have been winding down to the point of being nonexistent.

In terms of that, it seems like the only thing that is available is the tourism sector. I believe the public has a mistaken belief that the sport-fishing industry can survive in a compatible way with the aquaculture. I don't believe that the sea lice can distinguish between a fish that's destined to be sport-caught or commercial-caught. They're all the same to them.

In that respect, I think that the tourism industry in this area will be put at risk in a substantial fashion by the sea lice problem. I'll rest my comments there.

R. Austin (Chair): Thanks to both of you. Do members have questions?

R. Cantelon (Deputy Chair): Really, to both, just a comment as much as a question. We have indeed been at the biological station and looked at those tanks, and I don't think our exploration or consideration of other methods will end there probably. It's another point of information that it's actually the provincial government that has jurisdiction over monitoring the pens and the fish within the pens themselves, not DFO.

Other than that, I thank you very much for your presentations. I appreciate your global vision of the situation. Certainly, there is a worldwide demand for animal protein.

[1650]

S. Simpson: As my colleague down the way said, we have looked at closed containment and some of the floating closed containment — the bags, the concrete tubs. One of the things that we're told around that, both from an economic and an environmental perspective, is if we're going to explore it in a serious way, we probably need to do some kind of a pilot where we actually try to do this. We put them in and get them operating for a period of time where they can be assessed both as to the economics of them — because the industry tells us they have a concern about the economics — and to ensure they are actually meeting the kinds of environmental objectives around the separation of wild from farmed that people want to accomplish.

My question, I guess, is: would you be supportive of the government, or would you consider it to be a good idea for the government to partner up to make sure, in fact, that that kind of a pilot project was done — maybe involving the universities, the industry and others — to make sure that we actually were going to accomplish what we wanted to with closed containment?

K. Osmer: Yes.

C. Trevena: Thank you very much, both of you, for your presentations.

I have a question, which I'm not sure you'll be able to answer. Talking about tourism as the only economic driver that is in the area now.... I really wanted to know what you've heard, Mr. Mikkelson, about the growth in tourism. You've been a long-term resident here. Is it possible to quantify or through stories just explain the growth in tourism here and how that is changing the community, if it is changing the community?

R. Mikkelson: I'll say a few things, and then I'll let Karl. He's in the business; I'm not. I murder trees, I murder fish, and I'm a paramedic.

Looking at it from the outside, there are some seasonal things that happen. Some of the commercial people have swung over to chartering, because they have to, economically. The price that we're fishing for is what my father and grandfather fished for in the '60s and earlier. The more farmed fish there is on the market, the lower the price for wild salmon — even though we're well aware of the better benefits of eating wild fish rather than farm fish.

I would say that tourism is a factor. It employs a few people. It's seasonal. It seems to be the catchword that's caught the eye of people in Victoria. It's a touchy-feely issue. Does it bring it in a lot of money to the valley? No, it doesn't. Will it keep young people here? No, it won't. It benefits those who are in a position to start a business. It does not benefit those who want to stay here and raise their young families. It's not doable.

They leave. That's why our population is shrinking, both of the band and off the reserve.

I wish there were more options, but in the present political climate it doesn't seem to be possible. We've been waiting for over 15 years for the LRMP to be finished. It's a travesty. Victoria has dropped the ball on that one. We've lost our say in terms of the logging industry here. It was taken away years ago. We've had these types of consultations, but they're all for naught except for, as I mentioned earlier, tourism.

I'd hate to see tourism put at risk because of the sea lice problem. I wish there were more options. We need support, so that's why I said what I said.

K. Osmer: From a tourism operator perspective, Bella Coola, depending on what kind of season we're having — influenced by things like closing Highway 20, when there was a fire north of Anahim Lake, and the cancellation of the Anahim Lake Stampede which cost that community better than a million dollars in lost revenue....

[1655]

We average somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000 visitors in a year through the valley. Tourists spend an average of \$100 a day, according to Tourism B.C. statistics, and 30,000 visitors would equal \$3 million. That's not a heck of a lot of money in a community that has shrunk from 2,500 down to about 1,800 and is going to continue to shrink.

This season, in terms of sports fishing, the spring salmon were late coming into the river. The pink run was decimated two years ago, when we had the monsoons come through in November and blow out the spawning beds. There weren't a lot of chum, and there certainly haven't been very many coho.

That word goes up and down B.C. very quickly, and there are far fewer tourists sports-fishing in the valley this year than there have been in past years. To reiterate what Ross says: to believe that somehow, magically, tourism will save the valley, would require removing approximately 250 kilometres of land between us and Whistler so that we'd have a direct access — not likely.

We're a thousand kilometres away from Vancouver. We're 455 kilometres away from Williams Lake. It takes a fairly firm commitment by local tourists — and I'm talking B.C. folks — because the Europeans will come regardless. To think that tourism is going to save this valley's economy would be a nice thought, but I don't think so.

G. Coons: Thank you, Ross and Karl. Karl, it's always intriguing to listen to your thoughts and see where you're going on issues. I appreciate that.

I just wanted to make a comment about the purpose of the committee. We struggled with that when we looked at our mandate: what do we include in aquaculture? You are right when you look at other types, whether it's shellfish, prawns, crabs, oysters — whatever. When we start looking at the regulations and focusing in.... We determined that the issue at hand is open-net fin-fish aquaculture.

Perhaps some recommendations may come out of that. As we have gone through our public meetings, we've heard lots about shellfish and other forums and other initiatives and strategies that we should be focusing in on, and that may come later on down the road. I just want to make that comment because you brought that up. I think that's quite clear with us also.

R. Austin (Chair): Seeing no further questions, I'd like to thank both of you for coming here today.

K. Osmers: Thank you for the opportunity.

R. Austin (Chair): You're welcome.

I'd now like to call upon Joan Sawicki to come to the witness table, please.

J. Sawicki: When I reviewed this, this morning, it was a little long, so I will try and skip some of the statistics, but I assure you that they will be in the written version that I've left with the Clerk.

Welcome to Bella Coola. For those of you who have never been here before — and given our isolation, that's probably most of you — it's regrettable that you won't have the time to discover some of its majesty. Flying over the coast range on a clear day — unfortunately, not today — and descending into this valley with your wingtips almost scraping the valley walls has surely got to be one of the most spectacular flights in the world.

You will also not have time to really appreciate what makes this community somehow survive the various booms and busts of forestry and fishery industries over recent decades. In my brief five years living here, I don't pretend to understand that yet myself, but I think it has a lot to do with water, with the ocean ecosystem at our doorway and the spectacular rivers and streams that still support all five species of salmon.

[1700]

From this kind of wealth of natural resources, first nations made their living for hundreds of years. Later settlements carved out a livelihood not only from commercial fishing, forestry and agriculture and sports fishing and tourism.... Many people in the valley today still make their livings doing various combinations of all of those things over any particular year.

I had no intention of making a presentation to this committee. In the past I have dealt way too much with this issue. I know the quagmire of the controversy and the seemingly irreconcilable differences. In the late '80s, as a land and water use consultant, I was involved with the CHRS studies, which started to look at the early conflicts of finfish aquaculture.

Then, of course, as a member of government in the '90s, I witnessed the Minister's Aquaculture Industry Advisory Council of 1993, the EAO salmon aquaculture review process and its 49 recommendations in 1997, and the Salmon Aquaculture Implementation Advisory Committee experience. I know you've heard about that one.

As minister I met with industry, with environmentalists. I heard the horror stories of what was happening out there in the ocean, under and around the net pens,

from my own staff, and the frustration of what we didn't know was happening and weren't doing anything about.

Finally, as chair of the Green Economy Secretariat, I ushered in the first tentative steps to try and help this industry move towards more sustainable technology.

Not surprisingly, I was kind of reluctant to wade back into this, but at the last minute I changed my mind, and it was for a very personal reason. Just last week I spent a couple of days out on the ocean with a local commercial fisherman — who happens to be here today, I noticed, and who supplements his income by taking locals and tourists and ex-urbanites like me out to explore the bays and fjords of the inner coast — to do a bit of crabbing, prawning, fishing for halibut or cod or whatever happens to take my hook. And that wasn't very much this time.

This time we also kayaked the Kwatna River. Our friends fly-fished and caught two fresh coho. Then my husband and I drove the 60 kilometres back up-valley where we live on the Atnarko River, where anytime during this time of year we can sit and watch healthy grizzlies with as many as three cubs catching salmon alongside two or three bald eagles.

I'm telling you this story because it reminded me of how interconnected all of this is. And the linkage is the wild salmon — perhaps one of the best teachers on how to act in all of our collective interests and the symbol of what's really at stake along the entire west coast of British Columbia on this question of finfish aquaculture. For here and elsewhere along the coast, without the wild salmon there would be huge holes both in the ecological community and in the human community.

It's a bit of an overstatement, I know, but one that you could do worse than adopt as your touchstone for the work ahead of you: that what's good for the wild salmon is what's good for people in coastal communities, and all the rest is rhetoric.

For a topic that's been so vigorously debated so many times over so many years, it was difficult to know what I could contribute that you have not already heard. I've reviewed your terms of references and some of the presentations.

Predictably, those presentations fall into two camps: those who cite the negative environmental impacts as posing an unacceptable risk to the marine ecosystem and those who suggest that the risks can be managed and are outweighed by the jobs and prosperity that finfish aquaculture can bring to coastal communities. I wanted to briefly talk about those two seemingly irreconcilable positions.

[1705]

First, on the environmental impacts. By now you are, no doubt, very familiar with the range of issues surrounding this industry: the issues about siting, particularly related to the flushing of wastes on the one hand and migrating salmon corridors on the other; the issue of escapes and the concern that we don't know the half of them, whether accidental or intentional; the fact that escaped Atlantic salmon are now colonizing wild salmon spawning streams and the potential impact of

this alien species upon biodiversity and the vigour of native species.

There's the issue of disease and parasites that regularly and quickly spread in these concentrated feedlot conditions of open-net pens and the concern about the chemicals and the antibiotics that industry has to use to treat them and the overwhelming evidence of the impact of sea lice outbreaks on wild salmon. All of you are probably fully aware of the report that just came out a few days ago that estimates a 95-percent mortality rate in juvenile salmon that swim by these pens on their migration to the ocean.

There are the ethical issues of taking food from the oceans of poor developing countries, not to feed the people but to feed to farmed salmon at the very inefficient rate of two to five kilograms of wild fish food to grow one kilogram of farmed salmon. And that's in Canada, where the industry has already replaced some of that food volume with grains.

Finally, there's the issue of waste that accumulates on the ocean floor beneath the pens: fish feces, morts, uneaten food, antibiotics and chemicals — wastes in volumes that if any farms produced equivalents on land, there would be such a hue and cry from the public, that any government would be forced to act, and to act very, very quickly.

From my experience with this issue, I'm convinced that these concerns are not overstatements. With the industry and the history and the studies of the past decade, I do not think that any objective, thoughtful person can deny the severe environmental impacts of open-net-pen finfish aquaculture as it's currently practised in B.C. waters today. After all, there's an essential difference between the so-called fish farms and other kinds of food-producing land-based farms. Unlike on land — where, by the way, we don't do a great job either — with open-net fish farms there is no way to contain these impacts or to eliminate the negative impact on other ocean values and resources.

Oceans are our last frontier of resources, and we are squandering them at a reckless pace, often compared to burning down the library without even ever having opened up the books. If ever the precautionary principle is warranted, surely, it is in the ocean environment about which we know so little and in which, in our ignorance, we are risking so much.

I now want to turn to the "economic impacts on coastal communities" — part of your terms of reference. It always amazes me how gullible and trusting both governments and the public continue to be about industry's promises of jobs and community benefits. Time after time communities like this one have been promised jobs and long-term prosperity only to find that when the natural resources are depleted, when the external market conditions dictate or when governments make some short-sighted policy decisions, both the jobs and the companies disappear.

A few years ago this community engaged in some town hall meetings, and the message came through loud and clear: "We're mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore. We want community benefit from

the use of regional resources, and we want some control over our own future." That is what we heard.

Yes, the finfish aquaculture industry creates jobs along coastal British Columbia. I have heard figures of 1,700, but I have no way of knowing whether that's up to date or whether it's accurate. It really doesn't matter because those numbers are nothing compared to the 16,000 jobs in the commercial sport and first nations fisheries. Add to that the jobs in the commercial fishery and local tourism and other spinoff industries — all of which are at risk from an environmentally unsustainable aquaculture industry.

[1710]

There is a difference between jobs and livelihoods, between short-term employment and the kind of sustainable livelihoods with commitment and continuity that one can pass down to their kids. Let's face it. We're not talking about a ma-and-pa industry here. We are talking about one of the most corporately concentrated industries in the world. As the industry grows in so-called efficiencies and economies of scale, we know there will be fewer jobs per 100,000 fish produced — not more.

Despite the rhetoric, this debate has precious little to do with community-scale sustainable economic development. Any promises of new jobs from an expanded industry must also be tempered by looking at net jobs — pun unintended and unavoidable, actually. What are five new jobs in a fish farm off our coastal waters if it costs ten jobs lost in commercial fishing, water-based tourism, grizzly bear viewing and the loss of quality of life in polluted waters and reduced recreational opportunities that are so much part of lifestyles in these kinds of communities?

Yes, communities like ours are struggling with economic diversification. I served on the CCRD economic development commission that formulated our economic development plan. Finfish aquaculture is not part of that plan.

Unfortunately, regional districts don't have zoning jurisdiction over the oceans. That's why it's imperative, in your recommendations, that communities like ours are not forced to accept an industry we do not want and that the common resource we all share and rely upon — the ocean — is protected from the decisions of the communities that do want it.

I have not done justice to either of these two parts of your assignment, but I know that others have. Part of the reason I have not even tried to do so, however, is because I do not believe that is where you will find the answers to the dilemmas for you.

The two views of the industry don't and can't, in themselves, lead you anywhere. If you try to fix the hundreds of issues that have been raised by both sides of the debate in order to balance economic goals with environmental imperatives, you will fail — as all other previous efforts have failed — to move us beyond the paralysis of conflict and controversy. You will fail because one cannot talk about sustainability and balancing the economy and the environment in the same breath.

Economic benefits are notoriously short term. Environmental impacts are invariably long term. Decision-makers often like to use the "balancing" phrase to signal the so-called win-win solutions, but quite bluntly, that is a copout. What it really means is that a few people win today and the rest of us, including the ecosystem and future generations, lose tomorrow.

At this stage of your work, nearing the end of your hearings and having to now turn your attention to the kind of report you will write, if you have been listening carefully to what you have heard, you should be approaching full panic by now. So in my remaining few moments I'm going to be very presumptuous and say to you that based on my experience with this issue and my work on community sustainability, if I were still sitting in your chairs, here is the direction I would look for solutions.

First, if we are serious about sustainable options for aquaculture in B.C., as your terms of reference dictate, you need to spend some time thinking about what such an industry would look like. If we don't know where we are going, we are likely not going to get there.

Next, we need a set of sustainability principles that will guide us and keep us on track. I'm not talking about the current government version that includes words like certainty, efficiency, competitiveness and coexistence.

[1715]

These may be governance goals, but without the context of ecological health and community well-being, they bear no relationship to any mainstream sustainability principles that I'm aware of.

While I'm at it, I also want to expose the fallacy of the overreliance on science-based decision-making — another government-stated sustainability goal. Obviously, we should always pursue and use the best science we can muster in all our decisions. It's a deceptive trap. The problem is that science can only take us so far. It cannot make the social choices for us. That's what this issue is about — social choices and what kind of environment, economy and community we want today and what we leave for future generations.

That is why, when I'm urging this committee to think about principles that could guide us towards a more sustainable aquaculture industry in B.C., I am talking about things like the principle of healthy ecosystems as the life-support system for all species — ecosystem integrity, environmental health and precautionary approach; the principle of community well-being, including meeting basic human needs for clean air and water, a healthy and secure food source, adequate housing, other services, and the opportunity to learn and grow and do useful work; and the principle of democracy and due process, including not only access to information, participation and decision-making, collaborative action and adaptive management, but also just transitions — ensuring that as we redirect economic activity towards sustainability, no one group bears an unfair share of the burden of change.

Of necessity, your recommendations will need to span across broad time frames with both immediate

and short-term actions and long-term strategies, fitting within the context of some clear goals and objectives.

While this will be a tremendous challenge, governments have no shortage of tools to work with, both in terms of carrots and sticks — or as one of my former colleagues, Darlene Marzari, used to say, carrots and heavy carrots. We will need the creative use of all those tools if we are really going to set this industry on a sustainable path, safeguard the ocean ecosystem and contribute lasting socioeconomic benefits to coastal communities.

While not mutually exclusive, I see two basic priorities. First, harm reduction. Address the urgent environmental impacts of the industry right now, using the well-known tools of regulation, monitoring, compliance and enforcement. Second, harm avoidance. Simultaneously push, pull, nudge, lure this industry to make that essential transition to more sustainable technologies.

Some brief comments on the essential rule of an adequate and appropriate regulatory regime. It's not a matter of more regulation or less, but the right and effective regulation that actually reflects our environmental values and reinforces our socioeconomic goals. Governments of all stripes and levels are notoriously bad at designing effective regulatory regimes. Invariably out of context with any overall vision, they become a package of disconnected, knee-jerk reactions to the crises of the day.

Then there is the compliance and enforcement aspect. Quite frankly, with the massive cutbacks and the gutting of an already ineffective enforcement regime within British Columbia, I don't even want to go there.

On the harm reduction front, I think the direction is very clear to you, and you have heard many suggestions about the alternate technology to open pens. There are several other intermediate steps that need to be considered, such as requiring the removal of open-net pens from salmon migration corridors, fallowing pens during key periods of the year or establishing no-fish-farm zones in sensitive habitat areas.

[1720]

On the technology itself, I'm sure you have also heard that there are many alternatives at various stages of development. Some of them are here in British Columbia and several in other parts of the world where their backs are perhaps closer against the wall than ours are at the present time.

Again, government is not lacking the tools to do this, only the vision, the courage and the political will to use the tools — tax-shifting tools that reward and provide incentives to those in the industry who are prepared to lead that transition. Those who insist on keeping their heads in the sand, or in the net pens as the case may be, may be required to pay the true costs of their actions. A really good place to start is the good, old-fashioned polluter-pay and innovator-benefit principle. But they must be done in tandem.

Here in B.C. we had just started along that track in 1999-2000. Then government chose to lift the moratorium and let the industry off the hook, and we lost that momentum. Six years later we need to get that momentum

back, and we need to do it very quickly. Far from compromising competitiveness, I believe we would actually be doing this industry a favour. Sustainability is where leading economies and corporations in the world are heading not only in response to the growing ecological imperative but also to take economic advantage of the greener global marketplace — FSC certification in forest products, the organic food movement, major multinationals like Interface carpet and Home Depot adopting The Natural Step.

We have an opportunity, with government leadership, to help this industry leapfrog to the forefront, where the rest of the industry will have to be if they are going to survive. We have the opportunity to make that transition now while we have the prosperity and the resources to do so, not later when our backs are against the wall, ocean ecosystems are in further decline, industry profit margins have plummeted, and coastal communities are again losing jobs and viability.

In closing, I want to say: don't expect industry to willingly embrace any of this. I don't blame them. Business is in the business of business. Their job is to look after their investment and watch their profit line. That is well and good, because if they don't do that, they won't be in business for very long.

It's not the job of business to look after the public interest of people and the environment and the communities. That's government's job — your job as legislators — because as much as we all love to hate governments, regulations, taxes, so-called inefficiencies and all that rhetoric, government is the only institution whose sole reason for being is to look after the public interest.

That is this committee's task related to the aquaculture industry: to look after the public interest, not the collective private interests — the public interest, and not just today's public, but tomorrow's public as well. As one of the last remaining places on the planet with healthy and productive — albeit stressed — salmon runs, we are almost unique in the world in trying to also accommodate a finfish aquaculture industry.

Based on the experience elsewhere — and the lessons, if we choose to learn from them — we have precious little time to take action if we want to retain both of those economic sectors. Nor can we cherry-pick our way through this by tweaking a regulation here, greasing a squeaky wheel there, throwing a sop to the public in terms of access to information, carrying out another study or requiring the industry to jump through just a couple more hoops.

[1725]

The past 15 years should make it clear that the random application of band-aids doesn't work. Those of you familiar with the approach will recognize that what I'm urging you to recommend is nothing less than a strategic plan for sustainable aquaculture in British Columbia, with fully developed vision, goals, objectives, strategies, actions, time lines and monitoring.

This is not some esoteric suggestion, but perhaps the only viable approach we have — integrated, holistic, a package deal. Such a path would be extremely

difficult, and fraught with mistakes and false turns, but social choices are pretty simple. I think the experience elsewhere is pretty clear. Either we help this industry transform itself, compatible with environmental and community values, or we risk losing everything — the industry, the wild salmon, the jobs, the viability of coastal communities and the productivity of the ocean ecosystem for future generations.

I wish you wisdom and above all courage as you contemplate the recommendations that will go forward from this committee. The economic future and quality of life in this community that I will be driving through when I leave here, and the community of wild salmon, grizzly bear and bald eagle that will greet me when I get home, will be greatly influenced by the outcome of your work. Thank you very much for the opportunity to make this presentation.

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you very much, Joan. I'll invite members to ask questions.

D. Jarvis: Thank you, Joan. Let me put it this way: I do agree with you that if we were to lose our British Columbia salmon... The industry sector would be ashamed of it. It would ruin our whole ecosystem down the line, as you say, with the bears, trees, forests and all the rest of it. In part of your discussion, there was an equation that doesn't fit with the information that I've received over the past. A lot of people are making not necessarily misstatements, but they're listening to the press. The full evidence isn't in yet. We are seeing everything laid on the fish farms.

Not many people have brought up the fact that there is a predation of the salmon prior to them ever leaving our coastal waters. Out at sea every Asian country is overfishing — driftnets, all the rest of it. We have heavy predation from the sea life that's out there eating our fry that go out, and eating the juveniles and the grown salmon while they're out there.

They're all saying that everything is predicated on the basis that our industry is falling apart, ostensibly because of the fish farms. Where we see like the Skeena River... The year before last they said they put the largest number of fry down that river out to sea than ever in the history of looking after that. They had very little return that year, and yet their own books that they showed us showed that the Skeena River returns to the people in Prince Rupert were approximately \$27 million. But the Alaskans brought in something like \$67 million from Skeena River fish that came through. That's got to be in that predation category, because they're taking more fish than we are, or they're doing a lot better.

There are no fish farms near the Skeena that would infect the.... The closest fish farm, I think, is just down here. What's its name?

R. Austin (Chair): Klemtu.

D. Jarvis: Klemtu. And those salmon, from all accounts, go straight out. They don't go north. They go

straight out. So it's concerning that all of a sudden everything's being laid at the feet of the fish farms.

[1730]

Now, if it comes down to it and they find without question that the fish farms and the sea lice are destroying our salmon.... If that evidence comes forward, I'm certainly going to be the first one to stand up and say that it should end.

The question of open-pen fishing. I guess it's quite viable as far as economics to a lot of communities. Some communities are thriving on it and will continue to farm and thrive, especially in the northern Vancouver Island area.

However, we see problems of.... For example, I think you mentioned it — people saying that Atlantic salmon are starting to colonize. We have never seen any information to that effect. No specific evidence has ever been put forward that they are doing that. If you have some, you should be bringing it forward to the committee. No one has ever proven that's a fact — a lot of suggestions.

I could go on and on, but I just wanted to ask you: do you have such information available that we could see, to prove that Atlantic salmon are colonizing our rivers?

J. Sawicki: I'll address a couple of those things. I'll start from that one, though I'll tell you, Dan, the Ministry of Environment staff in the late 1990s brought me that evidence as minister. We are well aware of which streams already have Atlantic salmon in them. Of course, we were promised that this was not going to happen, but I can assure you that is a matter of record in government. You can ask Barry Penner to ask his staff, and he will provide you with those records.

D. Jarvis: But being in the rivers is not colonized.

J. Sawicki: On some of your other points. When you say the full evidence is not in, all we have to do is look elsewhere in the world at what has happened. As I mentioned in my comments, that is the basis of the precautionary principle. When there is reasonable evidence of risk, a lack of scientific certainty is not an excuse to do nothing.

If you stacked the number of reports on the impact of open-pen finfish aquaculture operations on the benthic layer of the ocean and on wild salmon and certainly the sea lice issue with the juveniles that pass through on their migration corridors.... If you stacked those studies, it would probably be a substantial number of feet high. I don't think there's any question about evidence of impact. The issue now is: what are we going to do about it?

R. Cantelon (Deputy Chair): Thank you very much for your presentation. You painted a very lovely picture of the valley. Unfortunately, we didn't quite see it. I have been here before, so I have been in this beautiful place. It is truly a marvellous and spectacular place.

Our introduction was not quite that. We were flying through at very high speed, and we could really reach

out and touch the glaciers. To me it was a bit of a metaphor. When you talk about trying to get the best science you can get, it might have been a metaphor for.... On one side we have this view, and on the other we have this, and if we make an error, we're going to crash-land rather abruptly.

I do agree with your comment that science will guide us, but it does come down to social choices, where you balance social benefits against environmental and other impacts. Just a comment.

I hope you would be heartened. You mentioned earlier some numbers of the industry and the harvesting of wild salmon. We're a little more indefinite — quite rightly so — on the purported benefits on the farmed salmon. But we are embarking on a study now, a third-party study, to clarify and quantify more explicitly what those benefits are to the communities that are receiving benefits from the farmed salmon. That will be a major part of our study. It'll be independently done because we're not economists. I appreciate our other colleagues taking initiative on that.

You kind of lost me a bit, and I wonder.... I'm still not clear. This is the point I'm questioning.

[1735]

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for my preamble.

Earlier I think you referred to the industry as being an environmentally unsustainable industry. I inferred comments that in its interaction with wild salmon, it was heading on a collision course. Were you saying to us that the industry must be halted or stopped or removed?

J. Sawicki: I think my points were very clearly that it is an unsustainable industry right now. We have the opportunity to help that industry make the transition through its ways of doing businesses and through alternate technologies and in addressing some of the impact it already has so that it can coexist.

If you're saying, can open-pen finfish aquaculture coexist with long-term, healthy ocean ecosystems and salmon runs, I believe the evidence is pretty clear that in the long term, it cannot.

R. Cantelon (Deputy Chair): Just to be specific, you think all open-net pens should be stopped and removed. Is that correct? You just said open pens now.

J. Sawicki: That's right. If you listened to what I said, I said we've got to begin now to make that transition to new technologies.

I do believe in the principle of just transitions not only in this industry but in every industry. But when we know that we have to transform industries to better reflect our environmental values and meet our socio-economic goals for communities, then we have to build in the pathway to make that transition.

I think that's part of your job as the committee. Is this going to happen overnight? Of course not. That is why I think we look for the tools that will help those in the industry who are prepared to lead that transition to

move forward, because that's what will pull the rest of the industry with them.

R. Cantelon (Deputy Chair): Transition to what? Transition from open net to what?

J. Sawicki: To other technologies. I mean, closed containment is one technology, but I happened, just in preparing for the presentation today, to run across several other technologies that are being tested all over the world. In some parts of the world they're even being used — some for other than salmon — and some of those technologies may be able to be adapted.

Necessity is the mother of invention. What I'm saying, and I think what you're hearing in many other parts of the province, is that necessity is now — before we lose all of those other values that we treasure.

R. Cantelon (Deputy Chair): Thank you. I would only finally say that we certainly agree with you on regulation compliance and enforcement, and that's why we did introduce very strict rules — regarded as some of the strictest in the world — in 1992.

I would love to engage in a further discussion, Mr. Chair, but I think I've indulged your good patience already.

G. Coons: Thank you, Joan. I guess you're feeling like we're coming full circle again. We had fish farming. We had a moratorium. We had the salmon aquaculture review with the 49 recommendations.

What are your thoughts on the 49 recommendations that came out in '99? Do you think they've been followed through adequately?

J. Sawicki: I think it was around 1997. My memory is getting a little hazy, Gary.

At the time — remembering that was pretty early on in terms of the industry's introduction to British Columbia — that review looked fairly comprehensive. I think very quickly we realized that it was not that comprehensive an environmental impact assessment, because we really, quite frankly, didn't know very much. As a result, those 49 recommendations tended to be sort of a shotgun approach.

My understanding — and I could stand corrected here — is that some of them were implemented partway, and others of them have never been touched. Given the experience since that time, given what we now know in all of the studies that have been done, I would also really question whether those 49 recommendations are the right ones in 2006.

[1740]

G. Coons: Like yourself, I've been doing some research and came across a report from the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, which is an advisory council to both the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of Agriculture and Lands. I guess it's MAL now.

In 2003 they issued a report to both federal and provincial governments that said the government of

British Columbia lifted its moratorium in 2002 and expressed a commitment to ensure the environmental effects would be taken fully into account before any new licences would be issued.

In this consultant's report by them it said: "There was insufficient progress made towards reaching this expanded environmental knowledge objective before the decision to lift the moratorium." Again, it seems like we're coming full circle. That's why I asked about your thoughts on the salmon aquaculture review recommendations — whether or not we had fully got towards the environmental knowledge we needed. Do you think we have the environmental knowledge we need?

J. Sawicki: I think we have enough to know that we have to change the direction of this industry.

S. Simpson: I would agree that we've seen an awful lot of evidence. I believe we've seen an awful lot of evidence that suggests there are real challenges with this industry.

One of the big challenges we find at this point in time, of course, is that we are in a debate — as you outlined early on in your presentation — where we have the industry telling us: "We have made all the changes we need to make. We are a more sustainable industry, and largely, things are pretty good the way they are. Those who tell you different aren't telling you the truth."

Then we have another whole body of evidence that tells us the impacts are severe. We saw the most recent study on lice that was released, and other studies we've seen that paint a very different picture about the real jeopardy of the wild fishery and wild salmon in particular, which we face today.

I'm assuming that the government side and the Premier recognize that we have a problem. If he didn't do that, I don't imagine he would have put a committee in place that he called the Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture if he was of the view that everything was just fine. Otherwise it wouldn't make much sense to put the committee in place if everything was fine. So I have to assume that the Premier — or whoever, the Minister of Agriculture and Lands — recognizes there is a problem.

The question I have particularly goes back to a point you made, which is around those who want to make change. I know there are a couple of companies that have been engaged in a process with some of the environmental interests. Looking at some of these questions — I know working with Alexandra Morton on siting issues, on questions of when you fallow — mostly those kinds of changes, not more fundamental, that we've been told would be helpful...

I'd actually like you to talk a little bit more about how we distinguish those companies that want to make those changes versus those companies that are resistant. You talked about tax-shifting, and you talked about other things we can do. The carrot and the stick, or the carrot and the bigger carrot — I don't quite remember what that was.

J. Sawicki: The heavy carrot.

S. Simpson: The carrot and the heavy carrot. Talk a little bit more about what you think those tools are. As government, from your experience as a minister, what tools do we have to encourage the changes we might want to see, other than the option of just coming down and hammering with regulation?

J. Sawicki: I'll try and do that briefly, Shane.

The whole idea of tax-shifting, which is something that British Columbia took a leadership role in, in the late '90s, has a pretty simple premise. It basically says that those people, industries, communities or whoever who choose to do the right thing should be rewarded, and those who damage the environment, etc., should have to pay closer to the full costs.

[1745]

The problem is our tax system or pollution permit system — whatever. All of the things, which all of us as individuals or as businesses have to pay one way or another, don't reflect any of these societal values. That's why companies say: "I can't afford to do the right thing for the environment because my cost of production will go up, and I won't be able to compete." Well, the only reason they can't compete is that the marketplace is not reflecting all of the costs. It does not mean the costs are not being paid. It just means that those businesses are not paying those costs. People in communities are paying those costs, the environment is paying the costs, and future generations definitely will pay the costs.

When I'm saying using a tax-shifting type of tool, which is what we were doing under the green economy secretariat... Aquaculture was one of our first forays into that, after we had done a few studies and research. The moratorium was on, and we said there would be no more permits issued for new aquaculture farms. However, we would put out a call for proposals, and those who wanted to come forward with demonstration technologies other than open-net pen would go to the front of the line and be permitted to have extra production figures.

That was a way of motivating and making it worthwhile for, quite frankly, those within industry who wanted to take a leadership role. It's no different for forestry, mining, oil and gas or any other industry. I think the principle is the same. There are those who are prepared to lead, but they can't lead if they have to pay a penalty by doing the right thing.

The difference between tax-shifting and simple incentives is, as I mentioned, that they have to be in tandem. I mean, with tax-shifting one of the principles is that it's sort of revenue-neutral so that if you choose not to do the right thing, you actually start paying closer to the full costs of your actions. If you don't do them in tandem, then it's just kind of a government giveaway and incentive, etc. That gets pretty costly and probably doesn't have the heavy-carrot kind of impact that you need. Does that help?

S. Simpson: It helped.

S. Fraser: Thanks, Joan, for making the decision to come here, finally, tonight. The knowledge you have from the past is helpful. I find we tend to lose things in the political system, and collective wisdom goes away. I mean, parties come and go and all that stuff, but people know things. We're learning that with communities as we do this trip — and first nations traditional knowledge. I'm hoping we as a committee can make the bold step that you're referring to and actually come up with recommendations with effect. I find it challenging.

There are a lot of issues, but I know we've only got limited time. There's one issue you touched on, about the two to five kilograms of biomass required to create one kilogram of salmon. Shane touched on this. We have had some statements that said, "No, that's not true. It's 1 to 1." The ratio's there, but it's difficult to get a grip on that.

Let's assume you're somewhere in the ballpark there. How do you reconcile that? How would we reconcile it in a global sense, if it's going to require...? Just in sustainability, true sustainability, how do you reconcile that? If you don't know the answer, that's okay. I don't know the answer. I'm looking for help with that.

[1750]

J. Sawicki: I don't know the answer, but it is an ethical question. There are ethical questions all the time as part of public policy decision-making, but it is just one of those factors. When we are in a world where probably the majority of the people on this planet do not live half as well as all of us do here in North America, we do have a responsibility to think of whether it is an ethical use of fish to instead feed other fish rather than feed people who need that food.

Now the solution to that. I repeat: certainly the Canadian industry, I understand, has taken the steps to replace some of the volume of food with grains. How that will affect the productivity of their fish, I don't know. But business is innovative, and it can find ways to change the way it feeds its farmed fish, again, with some motivation to do so, to try and address that ethical question.

That's not a very good answer, but I don't know of anyone who could really give you a definitive answer to that one.

R. Austin (Chair): At this time I would like to ask that Kevin O'Neill from the Central Coast regional district come forward to the witness table, and if there's anybody else who would like to come forward and share their views with us, please just register with Brant here at the front of the room. We'd be happy to hear what you have to say.

K. O'Neill: I'd like to welcome all the members of the committee to Bella Coola on behalf of the Central Coast regional district.

I'm the vice-chairman, and I'm representing the views of the regional district tonight. I can't promise to be anywhere near as comprehensive as Joan was, and I won't try to be, but I did chop out one thing that you

talked about, and that was the healthy bears eating wild salmon. If I appear a bit sleepy, it's because she left one thing out. The healthy bears are much like healthy people: when they finish their salmon, they want dessert. For dessert they come to my orchard, or so it's been the last few nights. So between barking dogs and chasing off grizzly bears, I haven't had a whole lot of sleep.

The regional district several months ago began a review of our existing aquaculture policy with a view towards change and probably looking towards the arrival of this committee here. We consulted with the first nations communities within our boundaries, and we came up with.... I guess I should say our existing policy left the door open a bit to development. The motion that we passed at our last meeting closes that door. The motion opposes the development of any open-pen finfish aquaculture within the boundaries of the Central Coast regional district — period.

I think that I can speak for all the directors in saying that we arrived at this decision based on the weight of the science that had accumulated indicating that the development of open-pen fish farms posed an unacceptable risk to our wild salmon stocks. We weren't prepared to take that risk in any way, shape or form. So that was the reason for the position that we took.

Since that time.... Of course, the study that came out earlier this week you've probably heard more about than I have. Two things I learned from that. I haven't seen the whole thing yet. One I didn't know, and that was that the effects of fish farming, as it's currently practised, on wild stocks can occur kilometres away from where the farms are located.

I saw all the pictures of Alexandra Morton with the small fry and the sea lice on them, but she was right next to the fish pens. And you could kind of see the fry swimming by underneath, and you could see the lice jumping off the fish in the pens onto them, and it all fit perfectly. I didn't realize that those effects could be spread many, many kilometres away, which is a cause of concern for us here.

[1755]

The second thing I was struck by was one of the comments of one of the authors of the report, which basically said that the history of fish farms and wild stocks is conclusive. That history is that the wild fish disappear. That's unequivocal. And that's the history that I am aware of, and I'm not a scientist. I'm only trying to keep informed on this topic because it's a topic that is of great concern to people in this valley. The wild fish are pivotal in so many ways to those of us that live here, and we're not prepared to see those fish jeopardized in any way. That's a message I'd like you to take back to the government on our behalf.

The other thing that struck me tonight at the very beginning.... One of your members mentioned that you had really nothing to offer to us. You were going to listen. That's fair enough. I wasn't expecting that, but I would like you, again, to take that message to the government: that is, that the government needs to offer

us something. We need to hear answers to our concerns. We haven't heard them yet. We need to hear them.

C. Trevena: A couple of very quick questions. One is: how far up and down the coast does the Central Coast regional district go?

K. O'Neill: It's a very, very big regional district. The boundary goes as far south as Oweekeno village at Rivers Inlet. It goes out and includes the Heiltsuk at Bella Bella, where you were today. In fact, they have a member on our regional district. And it includes Ocean Falls and, of course, Bella Coola as far as the bottom of the hill here. It's a very large area, hard to describe. It's just a big thing.

C. Trevena: I wondered.... The reason for passing your motion is obviously based on the science. But have there been any approaches by any companies for zoning for fish farms within the regional district?

K. O'Neill: I'm not aware of any, no.

S. Fraser: Just quickly. As a regional district, are you aware...? Have you ever been in the consultation process for an aquaculture tenure? I know you cover a big area, but is the regional district itself part of a referral agency?

K. O'Neill: I would assume that we are, yes. But we haven't had any applications, any proposals, tendered, so we haven't, to my knowledge, had any referrals to make.

S. Fraser: Okay

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you very much, Kevin. I appreciate you coming.

I'd now like to call Cecil Moody forward to the witness table, please.

C. Moody: I don't believe in sitting down when I'm talking to you so-called government officials here. My name is Cecil Moody — my English name — and my Nuxalk name is Kw'yutsmalayc.

What you're talking about here is a big threat to my and our community. I talk for Nuxalk people who respect me and who respect the food that's put in the river by Manakays'. That is going to be taken away from my people and our valley by what you're imposing on here. I would like to welcome you, but I can't, because you are a threat to our valley.

This is one thing I do not like around me or around this valley. It's already been destroyed enough, and enough is enough, and no more should be done in this valley. The reason why I'm saying this is the Kitasoo have one fish farm already in place. That's a threat to us. There's a hatchery at Ocean Falls, and that's a threat to us.

This is why I'm saying this to you. The fish farm does not belong in my territory or in this town. We are

just getting economics put in place for the people of this valley, and that's the wild salmon. The wild salmon support the valley people and support the commercial people — men and women. Now this comes in place, and that's a big threat to us.

[1800]

We have nothing here, but we are happy. You come here and impose on us, and we are unhappy. It's not right. We should not have to worry about anything like this in this valley. You said it yourself. It's a beautiful valley. You flew in. The mountains there, the rivers there.... Now you're going to come here and put that in place. What would it be? You picture it. You come later on to me and tell me it's beautiful; it's done. You come right to me and tell me that you've done a great thing for this valley.

It's not right when a foreign government comes in here and imposes all this stuff on us. We are a healthy community where we are, but we need more economics put in place that are friendly to our environment. That's what we need here, not something that is an enemy to our environment. We do not need that.

I'm not that young anymore, and I'm looking up at you. You're the same way as I am. Why are we making these decisions for our future generation? It's not right. We're destroying the future generations'.... What we've got in place for that.... Nothing is ever considered for the new generation that's coming up.

It's always anything that's put in place is to destroy in this valley. You look anywhere else, up and down this coast — proud. Only reason why they're passed is they're certified. By who? The government. Certification is always a big thing to the government. They never listen to a person talk that is not certified. Even the meeting here tonight.... I can't remember her name, but when she was talking here, you asked her a question that she could not answer. But there were some people in the back here that could answer that question. That's the way a meeting should be done. The whole place would be able to talk and support that person that sits down here.

We are talking about our valley. We're not talking about other places; we're talking about here. I don't want to see that fish farm coming here whatsoever. I want it out of here. We've already got two that are close by us now. You talk about these Atlantic salmon. We had it here. We had it in Port Hardy. They say they don't escape. They escape and mix in with our wild salmon. There you are. It's all here.

In this valley we know about it. You ask people here. Let them speak and say their piece. We are a small community, and we are closely knitted. We are trying to protect what we've got left here. It's not right to have foreign companies and corporations come here and destroy our — what you said yourself — beautiful valley.

If you could come back here later on after this is done and say how good it is, then I'll bow my head to you. But if it destroys our environment, why did you impose it on us? Why?

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you very much, Cecil, for coming and speaking to us. I appreciate it.

I'd like to call Bill Blewett up to the witness table.

[1805]

B. Blewett: Hello, I'm Billy Blewett. Actually, I think I'm the only one here representing a sports fishing lodge in the area.

If I look around the room, I can see that there are only four, maybe five people in this room who are not directly supported by wild fish. I see any fish farm activity in the area as a major threat to our existence.

At this point in time there are not a lot of numbers and figures out there, but I'd like to ask you guys to go out there and get the numbers. What is one wild fish worth to this community? What will this community get out of one farm-raised fish? I think you'll find that even thinking about threatening the wild fish would kill this community.

I'm just one fishing lodge. For instance, how much revenue would you say that my lodge would produce for the province in direct licence sales? Take a wild guess. Nobody knows. Why is that not...? You know, my one lodge produces about \$150,000 in direct licence sales and rod-day fees that goes directly to the province. How come no one ever brings this up? Is the taxation on one pound or two pounds of that horrible, rotten fish worth jeopardizing that?

The way our industry is set up is very.... We spend a lot of money. We generate a lot of revenue, but we spend most of that money right in the communities that we come from. I'd like to ask you: is somebody going to subsidize the communities with the money that industries like ours put into the communities? Where's that money going to come from?

A small fishing lodge like mine may produce over a million dollars' worth of revenue, but \$900,000 of it comes right back into the community before taxes even come round. Where's that money coming from? Who's going to bring that money forward?

I was born and raised here, and this community means a lot to me. This subject just makes me irate, because it's a no-brainer. I'd like to see who's going to provide all these jobs for all these people. Everybody here — their families are all supported by wild fish.

Those wild fish support the forests. That nutrient base just doesn't.... Once it's gone, it's gone. The trees don't grow anymore.

You watch that bear. "He's beautiful. Oh, he just carried another salmon back into the woods." How many salmon does one bear take back into the woods? How many trees does that feed?

Most of the people here have more than one job. They have a summertime job. They may be commercial fishermen. In the winter they might be loggers. They might be carpenters. You can't survive on one thing here.

The one thing we all have in common is that everybody in this room relies on wild fish. I think it's up to the government and this committee to take that forward and support communities like ours and say no to fish farms.

We know that finfish farms destroy wild salmon runs. Where does the feed for those salmon farms come from? It's out there in the ocean. Yeah, they go out

there with their big seine nets, and they scoop up all the krill and all the shrimp. They grind them up into these little pellets, and they drop them in these pens. How much of that falls right through onto the ocean floor?

How many fish do you grind up to make that pellet? If you let those swim free and those wild fish miss that, that thing goes on, and it feeds something else. It's not dead, and it's not on the ocean floor providing feed for sea lice. It's not providing contaminants. It's not providing chemicals in the water.

Let's think about that when we put this forward. I'm not a scientist. I'm not highly educated. But I do know one thing. I love this place, and I'll do anything to keep it the way it is.

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you very much, Billy. Claire has a question for you.

[1810]

C. Trevena: I've got a couple of questions, Billy. Thank you very much for your presentation.

How many sport fishing lodges are there operating here in Bella Coola or in the vicinity?

B. Blewett: There are four lodges on the Dean River. In Bella Coola there used to be one that ran full-season. It runs part of the year now. There is a multitude of other guides in the area who guide daily — either drop-ins, or they have people come and stay in the local hotels, campgrounds and stuff.

I'd really like to see if the province is really serious about this. Is it not that you just want to double-dip and get more revenue out of the same fish? Do you want to give up everything we have here so that you can make just a little bit more money off the top? Is it worth it? I don't think so.

C. Trevena: May I ask another couple of questions? As Ron said, we are doing.... You have hired a company to do an economic picture, and it will be looking at the sport fishing revenues and so on, to give a good idea. But from your own lodge.... You mentioned licences were about \$100,000.

B. Blewett: Over \$100,000 is directly related to licences and rod-day fees.

C. Trevena: What about numbers of people working for you?

B. Blewett: I have ten people that work for me.

C. Trevena: Is that just through the season?

B. Blewett: That's about five months. I'd say that's a pretty good portion of most of their incomes.

G. Coons: What's the name of your lodge, Billy?

B. Blewett: Lower Dean River Lodge.

G. Coons: Just a comment. You mentioned that you weren't educated. When we come to communities, "education" to us really refers to local knowledge and traditional knowledge. I think we all really appreciate you coming forward. Your words are well listened to.

R. Austin (Chair): Thanks very much, Billy.

I'd like to ask Ed Willson, if Ed Willson is here, to come forward to the witness table.

E. Willson: My name is Ed Willson. My wife and I have Bella Coola Valley Seafoods. I'm not much of a speaker here either, but my wife did teach me how to go and cut up fish a little bit, so I manage.

Anyway, we are totally opposed to any finfish aquaculture in our area. I'm really thankful for all of the people who have stood up here tonight and have spoken so well against what's been proposed for our area.

R. Austin (Chair): Thanks for coming and sharing your opinion, Ed.

I'd like to ask Nicola Koroluk to come forward.

N. Koroluk: Thanks for the opportunity to respond. I'm not well prepared. I should have just called Joan last night and said: "Send me what you're working on." I could have taken bits out of it.

A lot of what I want to say has been said already today. Probably the biggest concern I have is that I think it would be very unethical for the government to go ahead with fish farming-aquaculture at this point in time without gathering all the information. I know this is what you guys are here to do. You're here in place.

There are studies from all the different European countries where aquaculture has taken place. It's my understanding that a lot of the companies that were involved in the initial aquaculture in B.C. came from foreign countries. It was cheaper. The legislation and laws were not as strict, so they were coming here. Whether or not this is a fallacy, I do not know. These are the rumours you hear.

I do know that in the U.K. there has been significant damage as a result of fish farming, and they are working on building the streams and habitats back to what they were.

[1815]

I don't think we can take that risk. We know what's happened in other countries. Let's work on a way to sustain that by not allowing it to happen here.

As has been said a few times, the fish are important; the bears are important; the nitrogen from the fish into the trees, as Billy said — that's all important. It's all a cycle. I just believe that it's dangerous to proceed in the way that we are currently going with aquaculture.

To comment actually on the question that Daniel Jarvis put forward to Joan Sawicki, that it's not necessarily the aquaculture industry that is causing these problems.... It could be many factors out in the ocean — fish are going elsewhere, overfishing, etc. It's the cumulative effects.

Let's throw another issue into this. If aquaculture is going to affect our fish one little bit, that's adding to the cumulative effect. Everything else that you said is happening out there.

Again, why take the risks? We have a lot happening. I said the same thing to the oil and gas industry when they were in. We forget about our cumulative effects. It's essential. We need to remember it.

In conclusion, basically, I do think in this day and age, before technology is in place, where we can move forward and do things and create things that can be better for the environment, better for the industry, to reduce harmful effects, we should be using that. It might cost more money, but in the long run, what is more important: the environment or making the money?

Last night I quickly looked through some of the comments that were made. I picked one of the hot spots to look at some of the comments that had been made. One of the questions that somebody raised was — and I didn't read it; I just flicked through it: what is more valuable, the economics to communities or the environment? I believe it was Joan who said that we can't compare the two.

Economies rise and fall all the time. Once our environment is damaged, we can't change it. We'll never bring it back to the way it is. Once the fish are gone, they're not going to come back.

I hope it's something that you're finding in your studies, that you're out there talking to the different countries where aquaculture has already happened and finding out why they've changed their policies, why it's more difficult for aquaculture to occur there, why industry is coming to B.C. I don't think it's just Bella Coola. My concern is for B.C. and Canada.

It's interesting, actually. The federal Fisheries are going to be in here in the middle of the month, I just saw in the newspaper, talking about their wild salmon policy. They are putting on an open house. There's an overlap here. The two don't seem to go together.

That's about all I can say. As I say, I'm sorry I wasn't more prepared; I didn't seem to have the time. But thanks again for the opportunity to speak.

R. Austin (Chair): Thanks very much, Nicola, for your presentation.

I'd like to call Jason Moody forward — if you'd like to come to the witness table.

J. Moody: My name is Jason Moody. I work for the Nuxalk Nation, Nuxalk fisheries manager.

We were on a lot of different projects here to work with the wild salmon. We always say that we're here for the salmon and all the other species that rely on them. We work to protect them because they cannot talk for themselves. The projects we run try to protect, conserve and ensure the salmon for Nuxalk people yet to be born.

[1820]

We have river guardians that work closely with food fishermen and all the community. We try to maintain

the knowledge of the systems and the salmon they rely on. We're sort of a modern version of previous Nuxalk river guardians that used to exist here. So we know the opinions of local Nuxalk people, and they oppose farmed salmon operations and other aquaculture projects that could be toxic. I share the views of everybody else here.

One of the projects we run is called the Atnarko tower count that assesses pink and coho returns every year. We've also noticed changing water temperatures, lower water levels. This tower count has been run for over 30 years. There are a lot of misconceptions that we notice when talking with people up in Atnarko — lower returns of salmon and other things — and they seem to always blame our Nuxalk food fishermen. But I think a lot of the problem is before the fish get here, be it fish farms, sea lice, low sea survival rates. I think there's a real need for more studies such as krill surveys and catches that get here before then. Some topics just.... This is the stuff that we always work....

We also have started a new sockeye enhancement project, and that's for wild salmon. It's been kind of difficult — a lack of support. But I know Nuxalk people would rather have wild salmon than a farmed product. Looking at the work that offices like the Snootli hatchery.... When they work with wild salmon, we see the returns coming back every year. I know it'll work. We don't need farmed salmon. It would work, and it would sustain a local fishery here for our people, for sport lodges, for a commercial fishery.

We also have an oolichan study that assesses biomass. Our oolichans disappeared after 1998. We finished the sixth year of our study. I think it's a huge tragedy that's been overlooked by public officials and politicians such as yourselves. Sockeye and oolichans are two species that would be very susceptible to farmed salmon. We've already intercepted farmed salmon here in our river.

Another problem is also our steelhead. Since 1995 there's been no fishery here on them.

These are all stocks that have been suffering. If there are fish farms, they'll suffer more or disappear altogether.

For the steelhead, this closure has not worked. Our office believes firmly in wild enhancement, and it's time for a proactive approach for steelhead enhancement. These are the projects that we're interested in running — not fish farms. Our office will never train in fish farming.

[1825]

I feel that fish farming would jeopardize all these efforts to preserve our wild salmon, as well as Nuxalk people's rights to food-fish for these wild salmon.

There was talk earlier that we had to bring forward proof that these fish farms damage the environment, fish, wild habitat. But prove to me how areas like the Broughton Archipelago have not been impacted since the area has been used for fish farms, and prove to me how these farms will not impact the wild salmon and habitat they rely on here, right now.

It appears to me from a first nations perspective that this is almost.... Well, it's a clear attempt, I would

say, to impact these wild salmon and also the natural way of life of the Nuxalk people who rely on them.

Previous staff from my office had travelled to fish farms in other areas that had been producing them. They went to look at their operations, and after the first day they said: "That's disgusting. That's horrible. I watched them dump the stuff into the water. I watched all the defects in those fish and how they're rubbing their faces off in the pens."

We've heard about it. We know about it. We're not interested in it. We currently have, throughout each annual year, 23 employees, and we train and work with wild salmon. But we'll never train for fish farms. We're here for the wild fish.

S. Fraser: You said that your group has observed Atlantics in the river. I know it's obvious the Nuxalk have a very strong relationship to salmon and the river. As the tribal council chief council, were you ever part of a consultation process regarding the siting of fish farms? Because there are a few fish farms, as you're aware.

J. Moody: How many applications are there for the central coast? That came up earlier with the CCRD.

S. Fraser: Well, we probed this in Skeena, and I believe the first nations upriver were not being consulted. It wasn't part of the consultation process. So I was just wondering about that because they weren't on the coast, even though obviously the river is inextricably bound to the coast. But they were not part of the consultation. I was just wondering if you were aware if Nuxalk were ever consulted regarding the sites.

J. Moody: No. I think that's in the province's hands, where you apply and you wait for your licence to be approved, or in other cases, where the moratorium is lifted. Fish farms, such as the other two that Cecil was talking about, were also approved and passed by other organizations, and there was no consultation with us.

The way I see it is that because our salmon migrate through there, it directly impacts us. It lowers returns, impacts people. It makes a difference here for people who need that salmon. But no, they haven't consulted with us on any of those.

D. Jarvis: Thank you for your presentation. I just wanted to know, although it's somewhat uncertain.... You say the steelhead in the Atnarko is dead.

[1830]

J. Moody: It's not dead, but there's been a closure since 1995. This closure was supposed to have brought back the run to where it could be a catch-and-release fishery and then eventually a retention. No. There have been flybys. There have been dives every year. It has not come back up over about 700 to 1,000 in a good year. It has actually been down to about 50 in one year. Even our food fishers, who catch them, revive and release them, knowing there isn't enough up there.

D. Jarvis: Is the river being enhanced particularly by the hatchery?

J. Moody: No. There have been efforts through other offices that have prevented any of that to happen here. Previously the technology and the knowledge weren't there. Now it is.

To effectively enhance steelhead, you have to get them between 50 and 60 grams so that they migrate straight out. If you raise them to fry, they'll stay in the river, and there'll be high mortality. They'll rear in the river before they go out to the ocean. What you do is enhance them wild, keep them for their full two years and release them as large smolts. Then they'll return.

You look at salmon. We're allowed to do our sockeye, which we've watched deplete and deplete. That's because salmon is a federal fish. The steelhead is a provincial fish that has the Ministry of Environment as a doorway to go through. There are still enough adults here to effectively enhance them and bring them back. We could.

D. Jarvis: Would you like to see it enhanced more?

J. Moody: I'd like to see them enhanced — period. There's been nothing done for them here. It's probably the best way to do it. I've worked with salmon enhancement programs since 1991, and I've watched the results. It's been great.

D. Jarvis: Thanks very much. I appreciate that.

S. Simpson: Thank you for your presentations. A quick question. You mentioned that you're working right now on a sockeye enhancement program.

J. Moody: Yes. We're in our second year of it.

S. Simpson: Just talk a little bit about how that works and what you're hoping you'll be able to accomplish.

J. Moody: Well, it's a pilot project. The initial goals there were to learn more about the run before it disappeared and also to maintain and conserve an amount that would be sustainable, that would keep itself alive. There's no commercial fishery on the sockeye here. There's virtually none caught in the sport fishery. There are very low numbers for our food fishery catch. We're learning about their return, their timing — when they return. We're learning about fecundity — the amount of eggs per female — DNA, size, survival traits.

Here in Bella Coola we have a very distinct run of sockeye. We actually think we have river-type, stream-type sockeye which spawn right in the creeks. That's in the Atnarko and the Talchako. If you go from there up to the lakes, there's also sockeye that spawn up.... Actually, some of them spawn along the edge of the lakes, but some of them spawn in the drainages. They like the fast water.

[1835]

We want to enhance each stock and keep them separate and test them for their differences and their

distinctness and maintain those, because we're finding that the ones in the stream are actually disappearing faster because of flooding, scouring. The ones in the lakes are the ones that are lasting longer, because in a lake you're kind of sheltered. You're away from some of the other problems and things that can happen in the river.

Not only do we want to learn everything about them, but we want to make sure that they don't disappear. We want to do that with every species — steelhead, sockeye. We do it with chum. We do it with chinook. We do it with coho. That's the way to do it — that hatchery up there.

G. Coons: Just a last comment on that. You mentioned a lack of support for the project for the sockeye. I'm just wondering what support you are getting. And what would you like to see?

J. Moody: We're doing it with virtually no funds. We're currently training our people through a training funding agency. You apply, your proposal is approved, and you go through it that way.

Usually you can get money from the northern transboundary fund or Pacific Salmon Treaty foundation. There are strict criteria, though. It's hard to get in for that kind of thing. There are more important watersheds where they want to put that money.

No, we haven't got anything except we do have a work-share relationship with the hatchery. You need a B.C. transplant permit in order to enhance wild stock and do it correctly. You have to check for IHN. You have to do BKD testing. You have to make sure it doesn't infect any other fish. You have to segregate all those kelps. You have to follow everything by the book if you want to use a facility like that.

I know other places don't, and I question it. The fear is they could go out, catch a bunch of sockeye, enhance them, and they don't test for diseases. The next thing you've got to do is cleanse the whole headbox and everything — disinfect. You tried to enhance, but you killed it all off.

I question other groups on the central coast that are doing it without those permits and all the correct measures. People here know. They're the first nation I'm talking about.

R. Austin (Chair): Jason, thank you very much for your presentation.

At this time I'd like to call Rom Richdale to come forward.

R. Richdale: My name is Rom Richdale. I eat wild salmon. Personally, I think it's the best salmon around. I've tried salmon down south and up north, and there's nothing that tastes quite like Bella Coola salmon. I'll do anything to keep those salmon where they're at.

I'm just a little puzzled about something. With all the money that the wild salmon is making.... I keep hearing that they're making these record millions of dollars every year, and it's getting bigger and bigger.

Originally, I thought it was too expensive for them to do it out of the water. Maybe there was already discussion on it and I missed it, but if it's so profitable, why can't they do it out of the water in their own back yard or something?

It just seems like they're here to make quick bucks, and then when it's all said and done, they're out of here. That's the way it's been around here. Everybody comes in, exploits, makes their money and leaves. We're left here without jobs.

[1840]

I don't know. If it wasn't for the salmon and the hunting around here, a lot of us wouldn't survive very well at all. We'd be eating Kraft Dinner or something. We can't afford the store-bought \$20 piece of steak or whatever. We rely on our fish, and I'd never eat farmed salmon.

Another thing that bothers me is the labelling of the salmon. I went to a Superstore, and I was looking at these filleted salmon. They looked really nice in the package — fresh Atlantic salmon, \$15 or \$20 a package — and it doesn't say farmed salmon on there anywhere.

People don't seem to relate that to farmed salmon. One lady comes up, and she goes to buy it. She's admiring it, and I say: "Did you know that was farmed salmon?" She's like: "Oh, it is? I didn't know that. I just thought it was fresh Atlantic salmon." So she put it back and walked out. It's like: huh, that's weird.

I think a lot of people don't know what they're eating because of the labelling as well. Maybe that's why you guys are generating so many profits, because people don't realize the difference.

That's a couple of things there, and that's about it.

R. Austin (Chair): Thanks, Rom, for making your points. Dan has a question for you.

D. Jarvis: Just for your own information, by far the market for farmed salmon — whether it be right, wrong, ethical or not — is offshore, where they're sold. Ostensibly, when I say offshore, it's particularly to the United States. If we were to say, "No more farmed salmon and open-net system," and go to a closed-net system.... I'm not sure, but I'm guesstimating. I'm trying to relate it to what I heard from other people.

It's a supply-and-demand business, so the demand is across the border. There would not be contained nets up in this area here. More than likely there wouldn't be, because they'd have them right across the border where it's cheaper and easier to market, with shipping cost and all the rest of it.

I just wanted to put that point of view in mind. Whether it's good or bad, that's just the way the market is. If the government decides there'd be no more farmed salmon in open-net containers, it doesn't necessarily mean that closed containment would be in the north or the Island or anywhere else. It'd be elsewhere.

Are you in a related business to the salmon industry?

R. Richdale: I do fishing. I fish the river, and I fish out in the inlet. I make a living off it too.

R. Austin (Chair): Thanks, Rom, for your presentation. I'd like to call Réjeanne Morin up to the table, please.

R. Morin: I'm not so much concerned about the fish farms, because to be concerned about something is that you don't know the answer to it. You guys know and I know that fish farms pollute. If you put a pollutant in the water or if you put a pollutant anywhere, you're going to cause pollution. You're going to affect the environment. I know that. You know that. That given, I don't know why we're discussing it.

My main concern in coming here.... Let me back up. I didn't want to come here. I'm going to show my bias and my cynicism. I don't particularly believe that my government ever does anything that's any good for any of the population unless you really fight for it. I'm not from the ocean. I'm a landlubber. I come from New Brunswick, and I was raised on a farm.

To answer your question, you don't need proof. You have to have a little bit of faith and common sense. I lived in an area where I was raised in a family of 12 on a little farm where you had chickens, pigs, turkeys, milk. You had everything, plus you had one commercial staple that you sold. This was very sustainable, and all the little farms were like that. Life was good. Everybody was educated. There was no problem.

[1845]

If you go to New Brunswick now, there is no such thing. Is this good? Is this bad? For the people who live there, I'd say it's bad. For McCain, it's a great thing. Life is good. So you have to look at the point of view of where you're coming from.

Billy said that most of us here have three jobs. I'm a retired school teacher — from 31 years. I retired this year. I'm a paramedic, for eight years, and I'm a commercial fisherman. No, I don't fish my husband's boat. I fish my boat. That was going to come up anyway at one point or another, because everybody says that women are not out there fishing. But they are.

Standing behind listening to you guys asking questions — that's what got me up here. I'm really concerned about this committee. I mean no disrespect and no offence, but I really get the idea that you have come up here — maybe you did it on purpose — with total ignorance about the area. You don't know how many lodges there are. You don't know how much money is being made from the sport fishing industry. You don't know how much money is being made from the commercial fishing industry. You don't know how much pollution is put in the water by a fish farm.

I don't know the terms of reference of your committee, so I will admit my ignorance to that. But if you don't know any of these things, I don't see how you can make any recommendations, and I don't see how you can make any decisions. Again, I don't know your terms of reference, but some things are evident.

Since coming here, I've developed a love for this valley. Somebody said that it's a beautiful valley — right? It's not true. It was a beautiful valley. I've been here 30 years. The valley now and the valley 30 years ago are two different things. Is this bad? Is this good?

Change does happen. You can't stop it. It will happen. The idea is: can you nudge it one way or the other?

Companies, as Joan said, are in the market of making money. They're not in the market of whether I enjoy my view or not. They couldn't care less. They couldn't care less whether you flew in and saw the glaciers and it was beautiful. The glaciers are much smaller than they were 30 years ago. Why? We know that pollution affects our environment. That's a given.

If you have the opportunity, if it's in your mandate to hire somebody to find out how many feet of garbage there are underneath a fish farm, then you should hire somebody to dive down there to measure it. Do whatever it takes to do this. If you don't have that mandate, then I would suggest that you go get it — that you expand your mandate.

I have a little 40-gallon fish tank. It has 20 fish in it. That's one fish per two gallons. If I don't totally clean that thing every two weeks, I might as well go out and buy a new filter, which has happened a few times. That's the way it works. You feed them. They eat so much; it goes to the bottom. They don't clean themselves. They're like kids. They don't make up their own rooms. It's the same thing here.

If you don't know how much money wild salmon brings into the valley, then by all means hire somebody. Go find out. Does a fish farm totally destroy the wild fish? Of course not. There are probably 15 other things that affect it. But do the fish farms not affect the wild salmon? No. That's the bottom line. If one tiny, infinitesimal portion of the fish farms affects the environment of this part of the coast, it will affect the environment of this province eventually.

I don't make money as a commercial fisher. Well, I do make a bit of money, but I can't live on it, which is why I have other jobs. Somebody said: "Can we sustain both?" My point of view is no. It's like having your cake and eating it too. You can't. You have either one or the other.

[1850]

Companies will tell you they can. Of course, that's their business. I will tell you they can't because that's my business. I want to leave an environment for my kids that is not just sustainable, but it grows. It gets better. This is not getting better. This valley is not getting better, as in most of B.C., most of Canada.

It scares me when members of this committee ask questions that I think you should know the answers to. Maybe I'm looking at it wrong. Maybe it should be you guys coming up here and saying to me, "Look, this is what fish farms cause" — not me telling you. That's not my job, even though I live here, and it's my point of interest.

The other thing that concerns me is that I think this committee.... Whether you've done it or not — and you probably have, so excuse me if I'm insulting your intelligence here — you should have made within yourselves a decision as to which side of the fence you stand on. We all stand on one side or the other. Don't say you don't, because we all do. We're all humans, and we all have little biases one way or the other.

If you stand on the side of fish farms, then you should do your utmost to prove the opposite. If you stand on the side of the commercial fishermen or the environment or the moratorium on fish farms — not have any more, get rid of the ones that are there — then you need to do your utmost to prove the opposite of that.

Only then can you sit and say: "We're going to make a decision for this." Even once you have all of that, it would behoove you to come back here before you make your recommendation — we're talking about where we live, not where you guys live, and I'm sure you all live in beautiful places — and say, "Look, this is what we've all found out. This is what we've done. We've researched how much money it makes. We've looked at how much pollution it is. We've found out how many fish — all down the road.... With all of this, this is where we're leaning," and give us a chance to respond.

I don't know what your mandate is. Six months, a year, two years?

S. Fraser: May 2007.

R. Morin: Okay, so you have another year — right? If in 2007 somebody tells me that the book is out — because I really don't pay attention; I'm very cynical about politics — and I get this 2,000-page book that says, "You can have your fish farm," then I will sit here and say: "You know what? Gordon Campbell did strike a committee because it looked good." The decision has already been made. He's going to have fish farms up on the coast, and to have this committee makes it palatable to the people who live in that community.

He'll say: "I struck a committee, and they did all this research. This is their recommendation, and there's your fish farm." That's called playing politics, and it's smart.

My concern is you guys, not whether fish farms pollute the environment.

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you, Réjeanne.
I'd like to call Deric Snow.

D. Snow: I guess I'm just like everybody else here. I came unprepared. Most of the time that's the best way to be.

First of all, I want to tell you who I am and why I'm here. My name is Snuxyaltwa. Snuxyaltwa means brightness of the daylight. I'm one of the hereditary chiefs from south Bentinck. Our people have been here thousands of years. That name tells me so. My blood has been since that time, the beginning of time, here in this territory.

[1855]

Our people have not treated with any government. We've never given anybody the rights to this territory. We've made this statement over and over for hundreds of years now, since you people came from wherever you come from.

Our people made a stand in Ista in 1995 against the logging corporation. Our people made a stand against the hatchery in Ocean Falls. This is not a territorial issue.

It's our human rights issue, because we are the salmon people. I made this statement before. We know that nobody from any government has come to tell me that fish farms are good for our people. Nobody has come to us and proved that it's right for the people.

I'm very happy to see you here tonight because it's a start, where you understand and honour and respect each other as a people. I have to respect you. You have to respect our way as a people. I'm happy. Our people are happy here today.

We totally survive on the salmon. It's our way of life. The way that has been given to our people to continuously ask for it, and we don't ask for it from the government. We ask from our creator. He's the one that put us here.

Our people still do a traditional ceremony down by the riverbank and continuously thank the Creator for this. I ask that you honour and respect that. Our people still potlatch. Yes, we do work in today's world, but we've made the statement that if it's going to hurt the environment, then it's no good for our people.

I heard this lady who talked before me. I don't know who you are. I don't even know why you're here. Like she said, I don't know whether you support fish farms or you don't support fish farms. I don't know if you're part of the corporation or the logging company. I don't know if you're a lawyer or from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Who are you? I explained who I am, where I come from, why I'm here.

R. Austin (Chair): Maybe I can answer that question for you, Deric. We are a group of MLAs elected from various parts of the province, who have been asked to join a committee to look into the question of aquaculture here in British Columbia. We come from all different parts of the province.

We were not asked to come here to give our opinions or our biases, but to come and listen and to travel around coastal communities that are affected by aquaculture and to listen to what people in those communities have to say on the subject.

[1900]

Do that over a period of many months, go to different communities and then come back, sit down amongst ourselves once we've heard what people say and come up with a set of recommendations to present back to the House — to the Legislature. That's essentially what we've been asked to do, so that's what we're attempting to do.

S. Fraser: I don't think any of us are lawyers either.

R. Cantelon (Deputy Chair): Can I just add one thing? To try and make it as even and open as we can, it's chaired, of course, by a member of the opposition. There are ten panel members; eight are here tonight. There are six members of the opposition on the panel and four members from the government, so we're not trying to push forward any agenda. We're here to listen. We certainly don't have all the facts yet.

To answer some of the other speakers' questions: we are using experts, certainly in the economic area, to gather some numbers and facts for us as well, because we're not economists either. I don't think there are any lawyers in the panel. No. That's maybe a good thing.

R. Austin (Chair): We're lawyer-free.

D. Snow: Okay. We've already made the statement, of course, before. I'm sure you've heard it over and over again that up and down the coast here even our neighbouring communities totally oppose the fish farms. We have to support the Ahousaht people, the Wuikinuxv people and the Ulkatcho people. The Ulkatcho people are our neighbours. They don't have any fish up there. They come down here to fish all the time. Our people have been affected already by the depletion, by the oolichans not showing, and very few of the sockeye salmon are running back now.

Of course, you heard the young fellow earlier talking about the steelhead. You know, we don't like it, we don't trust it, and we don't believe it's the way for our people here — not only the native people but the people in the whole valley, from what I'm hearing today.

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you, Deric, for coming and sharing your opinions with us.

We have two final witnesses to come up and speak. I'd like to invite Susan O'Neill to the witness table, please.

S. O'Neill: My name is Susan O'Neill. I'm proud to be a teacher. I'm not involved at the present time in commercial fishing or sport fishing or local government, except by marriage. I'm not a first nations, but I also have a passion for the wild salmon. When I moved to B.C. with my husband 34 years ago, we gill-netted for five years. We were privileged to see some of the most spectacular scenery in the world — salmon so thick in Rivers Inlet in Bella Coola that there was no place you could set your net that you didn't catch lots. There's been a steady decline in the salmon since that time.

In fact, we moved to Bella Coola because we thought we could gill-net, make a living and do our back-to-the-land thing, but we realized very quickly that my husband would have to leave for weeks at a time in order to make a living. We didn't want to do that. We didn't want to have our family separated, so we sold our boat. After that, we earned a living through every other aspect of the wild salmon industry except enforcement. He counted fish at the tower, and he worked cutting heads off when we had a fresh-fish processing plant here, before the wharf burned down. He worked at the hatchery on the egg takes and that sort of thing — enhancement.

[1905]

That's the perspective I'm coming from. It was our livelihood, but it was more than that. It became part of our adopted culture. In this community the white tradition was farming. When there were 5,000 people in Ocean Falls, this community fed them with fruit and vegetables that were grown here. Then men realized that they

could make more money logging and fishing, and there were those two commercial enterprises that had taken over by the time we moved here in the late '70s.

The original people here, as they have so eloquently said to you, were salmon people. It is not just their culture; it's not just their religion. It's their life. It's their food, as it is for many of us here as well.

Our community is now trying to adjust from the severe downturn in logging and the commercial fishery. I won't get into the reasons for those things that I have my own opinion about.

We're trying to adjust to a tourism economy. Part of our beauty, as Cecil so eloquently said, is the salmon — not only the sport salmon that are caught along the river and in the salt chuck but also all the people who just stand and watch as they spawn. They stand on the bridges and watch the creeks as they spawn. You can see the parents with their little kids pointing down at them. They're just standing mesmerized, watching them come upstream. It's a beautiful thing.

One of your members asked one of our presenters a question. I could be wrong, but it seemed that he was trying to get her to say that she blamed fish farms for the demise of the salmon. That's what I would like to say about that. I think it's only the most recent assault on them. They have been assaulted by many others — by big fishing companies and by logging companies.

I'm here to say that I will not physically allow this kind of assault, an open-net aquaculture. If those things are tried to be put here, I will most assuredly be on any protest line that must occur to keep them from happening, either on land or on a boat. That is the strength and the depth of how I feel about this, and you need to understand that. You need to take the passion of this community back to the House and let everybody, all of your colleagues, know how we feel about it here.

I haven't heard one person stand up and say to you: "Well, this might be a good idea if we have jobs." No, that's not what we're saying. It's not what the regional district has said. It's not what the first nations community has said. It's not what the sport fishermen have said.

It's not what the commercial guys have said. And if you didn't get Eddie Willson, it's a commercial enterprise. It employs people. He employs students in the summer; he's making a living here. If all of those people who are doing those things didn't make a living here, I wouldn't have a job. It's not just about the economic benefits, the direct ones. It's all those indirect jobs. That's all I'm going to say.

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you, Susan.

Anyone have any questions?

Thanks very much for your presentation.

Finally, I'd like to invite Chief Peter Siwallace back up to make some remarks.

P. Siwallace: One of our speakers from a first nation indicated we are a non-treaty band. I'd like to emphasize that again.

We have a lot of treaty nations in B.C. They are the ones that seem to get a good cash flow into their respective

reserves and traditional territories. Non-treaty bands, on the other side, are severely handicapped with a lack of funds. We don't have the same cash flow. The government chooses to listen only to treaty Indians, not to the non-treaty Indians. I'm going to make that very clear.

[1910]

We're talking about first nations issues here as well as non-first nations issues, but I look up here, and I don't see any first nations representation on this committee. Why? History has proven this is always the case with first nations. We are impacted by everything outside of our traditional territory, but we don't have a voice there. We don't have a voice in this committee.

I know what recommendations are all about. You guys can make recommendations until the cows come in. But would somebody listen to the recommendations? I've got a feeling this is a no go. It is my opinion that the decision is already reached. You're here only to inform us that, in the way that you're talking. You guys hear what we say — I heard one of you say that you hear what we're saying — but you have to listen to what we're saying also. They are two different things.

We are tired of being the fall people for everything that has happened in our traditional territory. When you look at the farmed salmon issue, you have to look at the big picture, and the big picture is the world. We're living in a global society today.

We have these filament nets that have been pillaging the oceans for years. We have deep draggers. We have all the technology geared up to destroy what keeps us going. We as human beings, as first nations people, depend on that salmon. We are not the only ones that depend on it. All the animals in the forest — the trees, the birds, the bears, everything — depend on that salmon. Once that salmon is gone, where are we going to be?

I cannot help but think of what happened to the buffalo with the Plains Indians. In order for them to get under the control that they did get, they had to kill off the buffalo. To me, what's happening is similar. Our fish are being depleted rapidly. My children and my grandchildren are not going to have the luxury of seeing a wild salmon, at the rate we're going. They'll probably only see farmed salmon. That is exactly what we don't want here. We don't need that.

If I could make a suggestion to you guys. You guys are going to make the recommendations. I would like to see those recommendations first, before you take it to the next level. I'm sure all the communities that you guys have visited or plan to visit would feel the same way. We would like to have our input attached with your recommendations. Too much in the past has been heavily favoured the other way. We aren't being listened to. It's time to change.

There's a reason why we're called first nations people. We were the first people here on this continent. We were put here by our creator. You guys were put over in Europe. We accept that fact. You have to accept that also.

When you take a look at what we have here, we've got something called reserves. We don't own them. We've got certificates of possessions. To me, this farmed

salmon is just another way of controlling us. We don't need that.

I was born here, and I intend to die here. I've always said that. I'm going nowhere. You guys are coming here, and we'll probably never see you guys again, outside of Gary Coons, who has come here on a regular basis. The rest of you I've never seen before. You come here and listen to us once, leave, and make recommendations that are going to affect me directly for the rest of my life and my children's lives. I can't accept that.

[1915]

If you guys are sincere about what you're doing here, come to the communities and see what we have to live with and how we have to survive. A fisheries technician working for us often has to get funds from this existent budget to try and save the salmon out there. We get no help that way.

It seems like first nations are always getting set up for projects to fail, so that somebody can point and say: "See, they don't know how to do business." I say that because when the nation took over and kicked the Department of Indian Affairs out of here, we took over our own oolichan program. The amount of money that the Department of Indian Affairs had for the oolichan program up here was about three times the amount of money, if not more, that they gave us and asked us to have the same service delivery. Impossible. We couldn't do that. DFO has been imposing policies on us for years, and this is another one.

I went to a meeting on September 21 in Nanaimo about the crab fisheries. They said the same thing as this gentleman over here. When the natives stood up and said, "We are concerned about the crab fishery, because we are at the end of the first year of a three-year study, and already we're seeing signs of the crab fishery declining," DFO stood up and said: "I can't accept that, because that's not a scientific approach to it."

We are not scientists, but we know what is going on here. We're not stupid people. We know when the salmon aren't going to return. Our oolichans are part of that cycle. Nobody up here is concerned about it. Why? Because it's of non-commercial value, but it means lots to us. It's our medicine; it's our food. I always say this when I travel around and make some speeches out there.

You guys don't know the impact that a lack of oolichans has on first nations, but I put it in this perspective. If we went out and killed all the cows in North America, how would that impact you with your milk, with your butter? That's the only similarity that I could bring to your minds of how it impacts on us.

As time is progressing, people on the reserve here are slowly getting different kinds of sicknesses and ailments that were never prevalent before. The main contributing factor to that is that oolichans have played a vital role to us for thousands of years, and then they stopped coming about eight years ago. And what is the government doing about that?

I would like to see a committee struck and go around to all the villages and all the sites where oolichans historically return. They are part of that cycle, and they are no longer coming here. A lot of first nations see it

up and down the coast. We have too much against what is there.

I was a logger for about two years, and I knew the policies. We weren't supposed to log those streams, rivers or creeks. We were. That's one of the primary reasons why I got out of the logging industry — because they did not respect their own policies. We didn't make them up. Somebody else imposed that on us, yet here we were dragging logs through the rivers and streams. Oweekeno was a good example of that. They were logging, taking the logs and running them down through the river, and the sockeye were trying to come up. Who is going to win?

Now you look at the sockeye depletion in Oweekeno. There are no returns like there were before. We'll never get back. We only fool ourselves when we say that we could bring back what was there during the '50s, the '60s and further back. But let's try and salvage what we have today and move forward and learn from our past.

Didn't we learn anything from what happened over on the east coast? Obviously not, because we're sitting here talking about the depletion of salmon and farmed salmon to replace wild stock. We don't need that. As the speaker here said, I'll oppose it, and I'll do everything I can to oppose those farmed salmon. That is the recommendation, suggestion, I want to make to you to take back to the government.

R. Austin (Chair): Thank you, Chief Siwallace. Scott has a question for you.

[1920]

S. Fraser: Just a comment, Chief. I appreciate your words. I understand that none of us here are first nations, and that's probably a flaw. We're all MLAs. We were elected in, and this is the setup that we were asked to take. But just so you know, your words here today are part of the permanent record here forever, as are Heiltsuk, Nuu-chah-nulth, Ahousaht, Tla-o-qui-aht. We're making sure that we try to visit and learn as much as we can about not just science but traditional knowledge.

I know I'm not speaking just for myself. We're taking this to heart. We're trying to learn here, and it's why we're not just visiting with scientists. We're coming to the communities. We're coming to the first nation. This is part of the permanent record. It can't be erased. Your words just said here and your concerns about the makeup of this committee are part of the permanent record. We can't forget that, and neither can anyone else. I just hope that gives some comfort.

Again, I acknowledge the traditional territory, and thank you for having us here.

R. Cantelon (Deputy Chair): I was just going to say thank you again for your generous welcome to your traditional territory. Believe me, your words are being heard and, as indicated, will be part of the permanent record.

Again, thank you for coming twice to talk to us.

R. Austin (Chair): I'd like to thank everybody who came and made presentations here today.

The committee adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

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