

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Published by Order of the Legislature

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

DATE OF HEARING: 31 MARCH 2017

MEETING STATUS: PUBLIC

LOCATION: COMMITTEE ROOM, J. ANGUS MACLEAN BUILDING, CHARLOTTETOWN

SUBJECT: BRIEFINGS ON MINIMUM LOBSTER CARAPACE SIZE AND HALIBUT QUOTA

COMMITTEE:

Hal Perry, MLA Tignish-Palmer Road [Chair]
Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker, Leader of the Third Party
Jordan Brown, MLA Charlottetown-Brighton (replacing Hon. Sonny Gallant, Minister of Workforce

and

Advanced Learning)
Bush Dumville, MLA West Royalty-Springvale
Sidney MacEwen, MLA Morell-Mermaid (replacing Colin LaVie, MLA Souris-Elmira)
Chris Palmer, MLA Summerside-Wilmot (replacing Hon. Tina Mundy, Minister of Family and Human Services)
Bradley Trivers, MLA Rustico-Emerald

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Hon. Sonny Gallant (Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning)
Colin LaVie, MLA Souris-Elmira
Hon. Tina Mundy (Minister of Family and Human Services)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Jordan Brown, MLA Charlottetown-Brighton
Sidney MacEwen, MLA Morell-Mermaid
Chris Palmer, MLA Summerside-Wilmot

GUESTS:

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Lori Cuddy, PEI Office; Kevin Stringer)

STAFF:

Ryan Reddin, Clerk Assistant (Research, Committees and Visitor Services)
Edited by Parliamentary Publications and Services

The Committee met at 9:30 a.m.

Chair (Perry): Okay, I'd like to call this meeting to order, and I want to start by a few housekeeping rules. Please have your cell phones turned off. If you have them on vibrate, please do not put them on the table as they interfere with the recordings. As we move along, please introduce yourselves before you speak for recording purposes.

I'd like to welcome today to present Kevin Stringer, who's the Associate Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, along with Lori Cuddy, who's the Acting Area Director. Thank you for coming here today and providing, I'm sure, some very informative information and answering some questions that will come for sure.

But, prior to this, we'll start just to do some introductions around the table, and we'll start – Peter, do you want to start?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Certainly. Thank you very much for being here.

I'm Peter Bevan-Baker. I am the Green Party member and MLA for District 17, which is in the middle of the Island.

Mr. MacEwen: I'm Sidney MacEwen, the MLA for Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. Palmer: Hi, I'm Chris Palmer, the MLA for Summerside-Wilmot.

Chair: My name is Hal Perry, and I'm the MLA for District 27, Tignish-Palmer Road, and we have four harbours that actually fish out of my district.

Mr. Dumville: Bush Dumville, West Royalty-Springvale.

Mr. Trivers: Brad Trivers, MLA for Rustico-Emerald, and definitely a big fishing fleet out of my area, as well.

Mr. J. Brown: Jordan Brown, Charlottetown-Brighton.

Chair: Okay, and if you want to –

Unidentified Voice: (Indistinct).

Chair: Okay. Do you want to introduce yourselves? I mean, I did an introduction, but just before we start, just so they can get a voice on you, and is there anything you want to add to the introduction that I gave?

Kevin Stringer: No, should I get going?

Chair: Kevin, before you go, do you want to – I'll have to call the adoption of the agenda first, so do I have –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Chair: So called, thank you.

We'll move onto three now, and that's going to be the briefing, but before we start, did you want to take questions as you move along, or wait until the end of your presentation?

Kevin Stringer: My preference, I think, if the committee members are okay with it is to plow through the presentation. I'll try to do it in a fairly short order, and then I'm really happy to take questions on any or all of it.

Chair: Sure.

Kevin Stringer: So, that would be my preference.

Chair: That's what we'll do, then. Thank you.

You can begin.

Kevin Stringer: Great, thanks.

So, first of all, thank you. Thank you very much for the invitation, for Lori and myself to appear before the committee and talk about two decisions that I know that the committee has been studying since last summer, at least, that my department took on lobster carapace size in LFA 25 and on Atlantic halibut shares in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

It really is a privilege for me to be here. My name's Kevin Stringer. I'm the Associate Deputy Minister at Fisheries and Oceans. Lori, as was mentioned before, Lori Cuddy is our Acting Area Director for PEI at DFO.

So, I do have a presentation. I'll walk through it. It speaks to both issues, and I do want to start, though, by saying we understand the importance, and that I actually had the opportunity to review some of the testimony from last summer from some of the people that appeared before you. We get the importance of this issue to PEI, to PEI fishermen, to the PEI government, and to the members of the Assembly and this committee.

You'll see in the presentation we do appreciate, I think, the unique nature and the unique importance of the fishery in PEI. We hear it again and again from the fishermen here and from the government here. I certainly hear it from my colleague, the deputy at – the fisheries deputy. We hear it is the backbone of coastal communities. It is a major economic driver. It's a foundation for the province's history, and its future. We take that seriously, as we take seriously the relationships that we have with the province and with the fishermen in this province.

I think I'm going to just launch into it, and I may touch on the relationship as we go along.

I'll talk about the two items, but I will start with a bit of a context about the fishery in PEI. Many of you know this much better than I do, but I will touch on it just to point out it is a context for all of our work.

On the lobster fishing area, the carapace size decision that was made last year, to increase it over the next three years. I'll talk a little bit about the lobster fishery, some of the trends on how we manage it, and where carapace size fits in that management. I'll talk about carapace size here, but also carapace size, how it compares to what it is elsewhere, in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, but in the Atlantic. I'll talk about the science and why our scientists tell us that the size of carapace is important. I'll talk about the history of an increase in carapace size, what's happened since we started increasing the carapace, and I'll talk about how we made that decision in 2016.

On Gulf Atlantic halibut shares, I'll talk about fleet sector shares. There are eight in-shore fixed air fleets in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, and I'll talk about why we moved to fleet shares on all fisheries, and then I'll

talk about the process that we use for Atlantic halibut, and then I'll talk about the 2016 decision. It sounds long, but it isn't. This slide is just about the importance of fishing, the fishery in this province. It is – depending on what you read, depending if you include aquaculture, it's either second or third in the province in terms of the economic importance. I've seen things that say that it's second and I've seen things that say it's third, and it may depend on the year. It may depend on what you're counting. The bottom line is it's hugely important and is a bigger percentage of the GDP than any other province.

The fishery as an importance is more important here than it is anywhere: 4000 plus harvesters, 1300 in-shore vessels, 3000 jobs in the processing sector and a landed value of \$182,000,000 in 2015. Again, depending on what you count, but it is significant. And a diverse set of fisheries. There are fisheries in 27 different types of stocks.

A unique set of circumstances in the PEI fishery; you don't have an offshore fleet here. Nova Scotia does, Newfoundland does, New Brunswick does. It really is an inshore sector. There really is a commitment to owner/operator and fleet separation, and a commitment to successful independent enterprises, and what's called preserving the independence of the inshore fleet. A lot of unique characteristics; everything from what I just said to having shacks on the wharfs. Nobody else has that; PEI has that. It really is a unique thing here.

There was also, in terms of PEI – and this is why I'm setting this up this way: a tremendous focus and dependence on lobster, okay? – twenty seven different fisheries and stocks, okay? But, \$149 million of the \$182 million of landed value is from lobster. It's hugely important that lobster be successful. It is the main source of fishing revenue for most enterprises and it accounts, on average, for about 82% of the value of landings for most enterprises. So, there really is – lobster is hugely important.

Let's get to carapace size and lobster. I'm not going to go through this – I've provided this presentation to the clerk. But, just to point out a couple of things on this slide: 1,220 lobster licenses in PEI. So, you've got

LFAs, lobster fishing areas. You've got LFA 24 in the north: 635 lobster licences there. Two hundred and twenty six in LFA 25 and LFA 25 is the one where we're talking about the carapace size, and then on the east end of the Island: 359 in 26A. This shows, over the last decade, the percentage – the landed value, as well as the volumes. Volumes are on the left-hand side, values on the right-hand side, and you can see that lobster has been a significant part of the value and also a significant – not as significant – part of the volume, but it has been going up. You can see the dip in 2009 that was during the little financial crisis.

Next slide. Here's how we manage lobster and where carapace size fits in. Unlike most fisheries, lobster doesn't have a total allowable catch. Usually we say the total allowable catch is this much. Here's how much each person gets. There's a share that everybody gets, they have an individual quota, etcetera, for a lot of our fisheries. None of that in lobster – for about 900 reasons.

But, bottom line is we manage it by managing the effort and these are the dials that we have to increase or decrease effort. The number of licences – that's really hard to change, people are in it for the long term, the number of traps that you can have on the licence – in any boat, a restriction on gear, fishing season – so it's open for two months, carapace size; how big the carapace is and it's mostly about minimum size to ensure that there's sufficient recruitment, and recruitment to the fishery really means that there's sufficient resource that you're allowed to catch – and even maximum size to enable egg bearing females to remain.

The larger females, you want as many of those as possible. We actually say: If you catch any that are bigger than this, you have to throw them back. Then we have protection of berried females. If you catch a female that is berried and clearly berried, they carry it under their carapace, and you can see it – you have to put those back too. That's basically how we manage it. If you can see, it's really hard to turn the dial on most of these. Carapace size is the one that, generally, is the one that you adjust when you're addressing conservation and other issues.

We have, actually, made some real improvements in PEI over the last number of years, and when I say we, I mean the fishermen, DFO working with the fishermen and with the province. The sustainability measures program, the Atlantic Lobster Sustainability Measures Program, which operated from 2009 to 2014. We got sustainability plans approved for all three LFAs in PEI. Ten million dollars of the total of \$50 million went into PEI. So, 20% of the funds with about 6% of the fishery and we achieved reduction of effort and we did management measures. The total – we retired 68 licences. We removed over 28,000 traps and we increased the carapace size, and we reduced impacts on the ecosystem by moving to biodegradable mechanisms for traps. I think there's a third bullet that you can't quite read underneath that says: We moved to requiring log books.

In recent years, we are requiring log books for better information on volume and landings, not everybody loves this, but we insist on it. We're doing more science work. We're working to establish limit reference points so that we're actually able to say when this has a conservation issue, what steps we should take. We're working in partnership with academia and harvesters on science.

With all of these improvements, we were actually able to achieve MSC – Marine Stewardship Council certification in 2014. That's a huge deal. That's what you have to make sure that we continue to have access to Europe and other markets and there are more and more markets that are saying: We require MSC certification to allow any of the fish to get into our market. We succeeded to get it. It had some conditions. There were five major conditions there. One was: We think your exploitation rate is too high and you should be working to reduce the exploitation rate, and that is about carapace size.

Why size is significant with respect to – and this is a complex line and I'll spend a minute on it. It's called – you may have heard the term SOM_{50} . SOM_{50} was the objective that we wanted everybody to get to. It's the size at the onset of maturity. It represents the carapace length at which females reach sexual maturity and are able to produce eggs for the first time. When we're saying here's

what the carapace size limit is, it really is about enabling females to get to that age. It's really about – and we have a sense of – if you set the carapace at this level X per cent of females will get to sexual maturity and be able to produce eggs. The greater the size, the higher the proportion of females being mature and contributing to egg production.

In the Southern Gulf, our science has told us that at 72 millimetres, which is where the carapace size has been over the past few years, 50% of females are sexually mature and can produce offspring. At 75, 69% of females are sexually mature and at 77, which is at the end of the three-year process, 79% are able to produce eggs. At 81 millimeters, which is market-size, almost 100% of females are sexually mature and able to produce offspring. That's a complex size but you can see it's why size matters, frankly.

Exploitation rates in lobster are high. The latest estimates – and we don't know, because we don't set a TAC, etcetera, but we have estimates – is that the exploitation rate on LFA 25 is probably north of 70%. That means: of the eligible – of the lobsters that are available in the fishery, we catch about 70% of them and leave 30% for next year and to produce further eggs. Fecundity, or the number of eggs produced, increases with size. A 72 millimetre female lobster produces about 5,000 eggs, on average. Seventy five millimeters at 6,077 – it's 7,000.

We've known for a long time that carapace size was important, okay? We didn't have rules on carapace sizes until 1987, and in LFA 26B, which is a PEI – it's actually Nova Scotia, increased first. Other LFAs moved in 1990. LFA 25 was at 63.7 millimetres in 1987, moved to 65 in 1990.

In 1995, the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council – you may have heard of the FRCC – used to come out with huge reports. They had fishermen, they had provinces, they had academics, and they'd look at a fishery. They did a shrimp report, they did a crab report, they did a lobster report and one of the main recommendations in the 1995 report was: You really need to get to SOM₅₀. You need to get to a state where 50% of the females are able to

produce eggs, especially where you've got high exploitation rates.

In 1998-2001 there was an effort to increase the carapace size at an increase to 67.5. There was another – it's a bit like a Coke machine, a few goes at it and you budget every time. In 2003 to 2005 it increased to 70 millimeters. Everybody got there in 2013. It was partly that lobster sustainability management program, which enabled people to take fishermen out of the industry, and it made it easier to move the carapace size up. Everybody got to LFA – to SOM₅₀ in 2013. Some went further.

LFA 23, which is in northern New Brunswick, went from 72 to 76. Their SOM₅₀ objective is 72, just like it is here. They went to 76. In LFA 26B North, they went to 82.5. 26B South went to 81. Their SOM is higher than, SOM₅₀ is higher than 72. It's a science-based thing. It's different in different areas. Theirs is higher, but it's not way higher than 72, but they're well above the SOM₅₀ objective.

That increase above that basic conservation objective of SOM₅₀ is largely driven by markets, but there are conservation benefits beyond what we initially identified as a SOM₅₀ target. Markets are an important component, but there is a conservation benefit, as well.

Other areas, especially 23A and B, and I mentioned those before, have seen significant increase catches, significant increase catches, since their carapace sizes have increased. The issue is the fishery is in great shape, here. It is. The lobster fishery is in great shape, but we are seeing signs in the southern ends of the range, and the southern end of the range, I don't mean here. I mean in Maine. I mean in New England, off of Massachusetts.

We're seeing significant reductions there. There is no question that lobster is related to water temperature and oceanographic conditions. As oceanographic conditions, PEI, and not just PEI, but the Gulf generally is usually so dependent on lobster, we need to make sure that we've got the dials and we've got the tools to be able to address it quickly. That's why we've got the log book requirements, etcetera.

What is the situation? This is the LFAs, the Lobster Fishing Areas. There is no biological reason to have these lines on the water. They are management areas, pure and simple. One of the things we should be thinking about is what the stocks are, but they'd been in place for 150 years, I'm exaggerating, and people are used to them, and they – but this is – LFA 25 you can see, and I'm pointing at it, which is useless, is, as you can see what the SOM – the carapace size limits are.

In the north of New Brunswick, I talked about 23, it's 76. In all of 23 and you can see off of Cape Breton, it's, as I said, 82.5 and 81, and you know what the decision was in LFA 25. So that's the situation in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It remains at 72 in LFA 24. It remains at 72 in LFA 26A-1.

I just wanted you to take a look at the rest of Atlantic Canada. This is a little hard to read, but I'll tell you in the Maritimes region, again, it's based on science. It's based on science that SOM₅₀ is generally higher in the Maritimes region. I guess having to do with being in the open ocean. In any case, the carapace, the minimum carapace size in most of the Atlantic areas, sort of 29 to 34, is 82.5, 84, 82.5, and so, generally in that area. Again, that is largely based on science being – showing us a little bit different.

We have generally moved off of SOM₅₀, that 72 in this case, usually at the request of harvesters. We have tried to make sure it's when harvesters request us to do it. We say: We need you to be at SOM₅₀. We think there is value in going higher, but we want to work with harvesters on it.

That was the case in all the other areas that I talked about that went above. It has been really hard in LFA 25. In LFA 25, two-thirds of the fishers are from New Brunswick, one-third is from PEI. That's not quite right. There are a few, a good, a reasonable number from Nova Scotia, as well. The challenge is you have got three different provinces with different perspectives.

The 2016 decision by the minister followed a set of intense and focused discussions and consultations over the last four or five years, including governments, harvesters, indigenous groups, processors. We

established the working group that ultimately ended up with this decision in 2013. We had representatives from all three provinces, indigenous groups, processors, the harvesters, and the provincial governments. They looked at all kinds of different options and they continued their discussions, sometimes as a working group, sometimes in a different form, through 2014 and 2015.

They looked at option like – some things that you'd say intuitively, and I remember me saying this intuitively: Why don't we just say it depends on what your home port is? So, if you're from the PEI side, and the PEI wants this carapace size, why don't we just say that that's what you do? Or draw a line in the strait and say on one side it's this and on the other side it's that, the minimum carapace size. Every time we really did – dove into that, the complexity of the fishery and the traditional fishing patterns, it just wasn't feasible to do that.

In the northern part of LFA 25, around Tignish, the PEI lobster fishermen fish on their side of the area. Closer to the Northumberland Strait there is intermixing. Really tough to have a different carapace size requirement in the exact same location for different fishermen; difficult to manage; difficult to enforce, and maybe not fair. Those options, looked at, decided not to do it.

After three, four years of intense discussions a final decision was taken for LFA 25, clear that New Brunswick wanted to do it. They were concerned about the LFA 23 fish, the smaller lobsters, drifting into 25, and being caught by 25, and they wanted the market price which is a better price. PEI fishermen, generally, wanted to maintain at 72; the canner market and the niche market in particular. Those were the two main issues. Nova Scotia was involved, as well.

The decision was we would increase the carapace size to 73. Well, you know what the decision is. It's outlined here. By the way, you don't need to change the gear fundamentally until 2018. We tried to make it as easy as possible for fishermen.

We did have a good result last year; 6.2 million lbs. up from 5.6 million lbs. and the canner market is up to 80 millimetres, so at

81 you're getting into market size. Harvesters can continue to fulfill this market with further increases. That market is not gone, at all.

Gulf Atlantic halibut shares: Regional sharing arrangements, mostly for groundfish dates back to 1994. Minister of fisheries ratified the principle of safeguarding historic shares. This largely came at the request of provinces, PEI and Quebec, in particular, said: We want to make sure our share of the fishery is maintained. They set-up a federal-provincial committee, a working group, and they basically said, back in 1994: Let's use what there was, what the catch history was between 1979 and 1991. The principle being; if this has been what the provinces' shares have been, if this is what we've caught, we should continue to catch that going forward. We need to be able to safeguard that. No one should get a windfall. It should be continue – those people, who have benefitted from the – livelihood from it, over the past number of years should continue to do that. They wanted to safeguard that. They went with 1979 to 1991. 1979 was after we extended the 200-mile jurisdiction. 1991 was before the moratorium. That was the thinking about those dates.

Here is why they did. In the inshore fixed gear fishery, and that's what this was. The shares of the Atlantic halibut, it was open and competitive. We had about, and I should have the number with me, we had about 3,000 fishermen that had – they were licensed in the Gulf of St. Lawrence to go fish. Eight reasonably-based fleets, again, I should have a map. There is PEI. There is the Magdalen Islands. There's Gaspé. There is western Newfoundland. There is Nova Scotia. There is New Brunswick. I may be missing one, North Shore.

Every single year when we said we're going to have an Atlantic halibut fishery there is a debate over the – when do we have the opening date? PEI says: We need to be after this date because we have our lobster fishery that we have to finish. Newfoundland says: No, we need it before this date because we have another fishery that we have to go. There is a huge debate over that.

Occasionally, we let one fleet go first, they caught all the fish and everybody else got

none. So, we have to have them all go at the same time.

Gear restrictions – people wanted different gear restrictions. Some of them made sense, some of them didn't. But everybody had to have the same gear restrictions with the way it was, and there was a race for fish. So, we would shoot the gun off, 3,000 fishermen – I'm exaggerating, because they didn't all go, but there were 3,000 licenses – would go out, catch all the fish in about five minutes, and we'd shoot the gun to say: Stop. We'd had a quota overrun. There was no way to control that.

It was a very short season, so you'd have this gigantic glut coming back to the processing sector, and they said: We've got to handle all this stuff in sort of three days, and there were safety at sea concerns because you had everybody going out and racing for the fish and maybe taking a risk that they maybe shouldn't have.

The thought was: Let's do a sharing formula and let's have eight shares in the gulf and figure out what the share was for each one. Everybody agrees; a terrific idea. What's a reasonable basis for a share? That's not so easy.

I think I've said that (Indistinct) – sorry, Atlantic halibut wasn't the only one. We did it for cod, we did it for Greenland halibut which is turbot, we did it for redfish, we did it for – we did it for a lot of fleets and stocks, and it was done mostly between 2003 and 2007.

Atlantic halibut is one stock in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Before 2007, there was no sharing. There was only – there was an inshore fleet, fixed-gear fleet sector amount that was split from the mobile gear, but that was it.

Everybody agreed it was a good idea, and we established a process in 2004 and it took three years. Just like the carapace size, these things take time. Governments, harvester groups got engaged. Various options in various years of histories were considered. They actually looked at that original – okay, 1979 to 1991; well, that's too long ago, and really we don't trust our information up to 1986.

Newfoundland, frankly, wanted us to look at the most recent years because they'd done well in the most recent years, and that's what you should be looking at if that's what you're protecting, who's had access lately. Others said: You know, there were periods of time when we didn't have access, so you should be discounting that.

Where we ended up was: Let's look at a broad period of time from 1986 to 1994. And if you take 1986 to 2004, take the average of that, that's how we're going to divide the shares among the eight fleets in the gulf.

Everybody explained how they had been ripped off by that process. Adjustments were made over the next few years. I should note; that of all the shares that we did, this is the only one that we've adjusted over the years. The other ones have stayed where they were, partly because there's not much fishing in it. But, they have actually stayed stable.

This one has changed. In 2008, partly because people said: It just wasn't fair the way it was done. We took some of the mobile gear's quota which wasn't being fished, and we redistributed it to the inshore groups.

In 2009, we took that same quota and we said; instead of applying the sharing formula, we'll give each of the eight fleets one-eighth, so they all got whatever that is, 17% or 12% or whatever that is. Still, people weren't that happy about it.

In 2011, Ernst and Young conducted a review for our minister of the day. It resulted in a new sharing arrangement, and I'm going to come to in a bit what the sharing arrangements were and how it adjusted over the years.

One of the reasons why this has been as exciting as it has been; is because gulf halibut is a true success story. It's really grown. We've seen challenges in some fisheries. Gulf halibut has gone – since 2007 when the shares were established – it's gone up by 475 ton to 1,000 ton, 1,038, so it's almost doubled. It's been a real success story.

The allocation of the TAC increases, of the total allowable catches, as well as a quota

redistribution, has varied from year to year. It's been a bit of a challenge in terms of saying: Every time that we would make an adjustment in the quota shares we'd say: That's it; it's now stable and we're locking it in and this is our last decision on it. People have continued to be unsatisfied with it.

March, 2016, after all of these discussions and after all of these adjustments, the minister comes in, new government, says: You know what? I keep hearing that this is a bit of a challenge and there's been little changes, and I'd really like to have a look at it and I'd like it to be a real public one. So, I understand there's been processes going on, but I want to establish a public process. They outlined the principles: Conservation, adjacency, historic dependence, economic viability, industry considerations; stable and predictable access allocation process with priority given to those who are closest to the resource; decisions made in full consultation with industry, indigenous peoples and other stakeholders; and decisions made in a fair and consistent manner.

I had a very public process, launched the process in March. Fleets and other stakeholders were requested to submit proposals and positions and views, et cetera, by mid-April. We posted all of the inputs on our website. Everybody could see what everybody else had said.

We had a face-to-face meeting with the fleets and the provincial government representatives in April and in May, the minister made the decision and it was posted on the website along with the minister's rationale for his decision on our website.

It said, in part: Going forward, the 2007 fleet shares will be used to allocate the TAC and 85% of the mobile gear quotas will be allocated equally among the eight fixed gear fleets. It was a bit of a hybrid that the minister decided.

That goes – when you say equally, it's not according to the fleet shares; it's one-eighth each. It's those who have less of a share get a bump up, and that's PEI.

Where does that take us from and to in terms of PEI's allocation? It was five tons in 2007, based on the 2007 shares.

As a result of the increase TAC and what the minister decided in 2016, the initial allocation – I don't know why it says initial allocation, I think it's the quota – for 2016 is 40. Okay, now a lot of that was the increase in the TAC, but some of it was also an increase in PEI's percentage compared to 2007. They were also permitted to carry forward some of the unused quota from 2015, and they have actually had a very good season.

Here's where it gets – if you thought that was complex – so this is the eight fleets and the percentages. You'll see the eight fleets left on the left-hand side. PEI is the third one down. The 2007 share – remember we had a process from 2004 to 2007 to establish shares for the first time – that was the share that PEI had, 1.46, based on the average that they had caught between 1986 and 2004.

After the adjustments, by 2013, PEI was at 3%, 3.1; 2015, 4.77; and in the minister's final decision in 2016, 4.18 – so through the little adjustments.

To be fair, what PEI stakeholders say to us and what the province has said to us, when we had that exercise back in 2004 to 2007, they said: We don't think it should just be based on protecting those people that have had access to the fishery. We have lots of fishermen here. We have more licenses than anybody else. We have less landed value per person in terms of fishermen, and we think it should be divided, not equally, but maybe 60% based on equal share and 40% based on catch history, or the other way around, 40% based on equal share and 60% based on –

That did not win the day, but that has been PEI's view, very compellingly put by the province and the fishermen. But, at the end of the day successive ministers, I think, have said we got to take that into account a little bit, and that's why we use the mobile gear (Indistinct), but that's not the major part of it. The major part of it is those people that have depended on the fishery for their livelihood should continue to depend on it in this fishery and others going forward. That's kind of where it's ended up.

I think I'll stop there, and I don't know if I've got anything else. It was a bit longer than I thought.

That's it.

Chair: That's it? Well, thank you Kevin. I will start off with a question.

Kevin, with the establishment – going back to carapace size – with the establishment of that working group, I'm sure during the public consultation they spoke, like you said, to processors and to fishermen and such. Was there a vote among the fishermen at that time, during that process, to see what on both sides of the strait?

Kevin Stringer: There were votes at various times, as I understand it, going back many years but there was not a vote on this one. It was absolutely clear that – and no one, I think, doubted it – no one questioned it, that generally if there is uncertainty, we will request a vote and we've often seen votes, but when it's absolutely clear what the view is the vote would not be required. There was a vote, I think, back in 2012ish on the New Brunswick side. I'm not sure about the PEI side, but there was not a vote leading up to 2016. That said, there were intense negotiations down to the local level – not negotiations. I guess it was negotiations, but consultations and engagement.

Chair: I know that the Maritime Fishermen's Union in New Brunswick were advocating for this, but there was resistance from the PEI Fishermen's Association at that time so I was just wondering if there was a vote overall even though, as mentioned earlier, I think 60% of the members or fishermen, are from the New Brunswick area.

Kevin Stringer: Yeah.

Chair: Correct? I know our fishermen in our – they do a great job and they will move forward with any kind of science-based evidence and they are high on conservation and protection of that industry. It is one of our main economic drivers, as you've mentioned earlier, for PEI so they take the conservation part and protection of it very serious.

With that, with the carapace size moving up five millimetres and it's five over three; we had one millimetre the first year, and now the next two will be two millimetres. There has been an ask, especially from the PEIFA,

to slow that process down and to have it five over five as opposed to five over three. Is there any movement on that from your end?

Kevin Stringer: I think – not that I'm aware of.

Chair: Yes.

Kevin Stringer: My sense is that that decision was taken. It was taken considering all of the elements that I outlined in my presentation. My sense is that decisions stands and as far as I know, that decision will stand going forward.

Chair: They can advocate, again, as much as they want? You don't think there will be any movement on slowing that process down?

Kevin Stringer: Not that I'm aware of, and my sense is that's the decision, as far as I am concerned. That's the decision that stands. Ministers make decisions regularly, but this one – we appreciate how big of a deal this was. We always listen to harvesters and we listen to the provinces as well, and it would be lovely to see some new consensus come together. But, my sense is that is the decision that will stand.

Chair: Thank you.

Question from Sidney MacEwen.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for your presentation.

You talked about when the carapace size increased years ago. Is it fair to say that this time the increases are a lot faster, a lot quicker, and a lot more aggressive?

Kevin Stringer: Generally, I think yes. This is a significant increase. There is evidence that going up two millimetres per year actually gets a greater benefit than going up one millimeter per year. There's a paper done by Michelle Comeau that speaks to that, but some of them have gone up more quickly than others but (Indistinct) this one is quicker.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair?

Chair: Sidney MacEwen.

Mr. MacEwen: I've fished lobster for the last 14 years now and I guess what I'm trying to figure out – if the stocks are good, you mentioned that we're happy, and as Hal said: The fishermen are great at conservation here. They readily, for the most part, agree to do all of the stipulations that have come whether it's the escape hatches or – you know all that stuff. But, if the stocks are really good and we're doing this for the future because we're worried about the warming waters to the south and if they're going to keep coming north, is the lobster going to – we seen a big increase in Maine and those areas and all of a sudden now they're worried about it evaporating so now we're starting to see some big increase and we don't want that to happen here.

I get the conservation, but why is it going up so quick, so fast when we do have good stocks? Yes, everybody is agreeable – well, not everybody. But, people do understand the need or some of the reasoning behind moving them up. But still, why go so fast, so quick?

Kevin Stringer: It is a question of how fast. I think the view is that looking at all of the considerations, and there are market considerations as well.

Mr. MacEwen: Yes.

Kevin Stringer: If you are going to move it up let's try to avoid having a discussion every single year about whether we should go up this year etcetera. Let's try and get it done quickly. I think that was part of the thinking and it gets to a – it does basically a catch up to where other fisheries are, at least on the New Brunswick side, although not on the PEI side.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair?

Chair: Sidney.

Mr. MacEwen: Could you say that again? That doesn't seem like science to me, what you just said there. It seemed like it was more of a: We want to catch up quick.

Kevin Stringer: I think two things. One, as I said in the presentation, carapace size decisions above SOM₅₀ is largely about market.

Mr. MacEwen: Yes.

Kevin Stringer: But, there are conservation benefits as well. For the department, we're always pleased when it happens and in terms of how fast it goes up, I think it's less significant in terms of how fast it goes up and more important about where you land. It's over a period of time, and we have seen some indication that moving up by two millimetres, rather than one millimetre, actually has a greater egg production result if you do it by two millimetres. There is some science reason for it, but I think there was also a view – there was a challenge every single year in terms of the discussions – if we can get the move done quickly and you end up where you're going to end up, why wouldn't you do that?

But, there's no magic sort of: Okay, this is the best way to do it, increment to get there. There is a decision that was taken and it does get there.

Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. MacEwen: So far I'm still hearing the reasoning that is: We wanted to get to 77 as quick as possible.

Kevin Stringer: We want to get to 77 and there's no reason not to proceed as quick as possible.

Mr. MacEwen: I would argue there is reason, and I think a lot of the fishermen in LFA 25 from PEI would argue there is reason. I think a lot of them are succumbed to the fact that it's going to go to 77. Well it is, they are agreeing to it, but the significant loss of catch – in the long-term, yeah. The science shows it might be better, but I still don't see a good reason what the rush to get to 77 is, I guess. If that's the plan for the department to get there, we have to get there, but one, two, two every second year.

We've got to the SOM₅₀. We have done it before and now it's extreme rush to go way beyond that even with stocks good, so I'm – okay (Indistinct) agree to disagree I guess.

Chair: Thank you, Sidney.

Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for your presentation.

Most of my constituents would fish in LFA 24, which is at 72 mills, and at SOM₅₀, as you said. I just wanted to know if you – if there are any discussions or any plans to change carapace size there in the future, that you know of? Again, you say it's mostly related to market, right?

Kevin Stringer: It's usually market that – to get to SOM₅₀ that was the department, but also working with fishermen and saying: Guys, that's the objective. It came out that with the fishermen, but it was a department (Indistinct). With respect to going above it, the department likes that because of the conservation benefits and you never know, we may at some point write another objective but we don't right now. It usually is – we seek the fishermen to set that objective and then we work with the fishermen.

I'll ask Lori to jump in. I know of no departmental plan to increase above SOM₅₀ in LFA 24. I do know that the fishermen there have discussed it. I know they've got a perspective right now which is not. We will see how that plays out, but there is no plan for the department that I know of to be able to go above it.

Chair: Brad?

Mr. Trivers: I was wondering – I guess the question is: How confident are you that you have the complete picture with the science? Because I know – we have seen drafts before from LFA 24 where when the carapace size has increased.

Typically there should be a – I believe it's a decrease in catches the following year, while both smaller lobster grow to that carapace size so they can be caught and then you see an increase; but really, when you look at the graphs for LFA 24, you don't really see the trend that you would expect based on that science.

I guess I was wondering what – how complete you feel the science is, and what steps are you taking to better understand really, the migration of the lobster around? One of the things we're talking about with LFA 25, is maybe the lobster grow on the

PEI side and then when they're big enough they kind of go to the New Brunswick side – but that's speculation. I just wanted to find out a little bit more how you're improving (Indistinct).

Kevin Stringer: Two things – really, really good question, thank you, and difficult one, but two things, I'd say.

First of all, how important is carapace size compared to water temperature, acidity, changing oceanographic conditions?

When science says: If you increase the carapace size by two millimeters here's what will happen. That completely depends on the oceanographic conditions staying the exact same as last year and not having storms, et cetera. Carapace size is just one dial, and it does not – there's not an automatic relationship between, if we change this, here's what will happen next year. We are confident that given everything the same, what science advises us in terms of carapace size is accurate.

We are also well aware that there are lots of things we don't know about lobster, and there's a lot of work that's being done right now to try and better understand migration, lobster biology, the impact of climate change; trying to understand what's happening in Massachusetts, the US is doing that and we're working with them on that. How can we make adjustments?

There are many things that we don't know. Lots that we do and lots that we don't. We have good science. We're confident of the science that we've got, but we're also mindful that Mother Nature is far more – it just doesn't follow the same patterns every year. It makes science difficult to predict what's going to happen in the future.

Chair: Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

For the LFA 25 region, have there been studies and do you know if there are cases where the young lobster are sort of on the PEI side and then as they get larger they sort of go to the New Brunswick side? Have there been studies done?

That's a worry, because if you raise the carapace size and it's sort of the breeding grounds on the PEI side and once they get past a certain carapace size they go to New Brunswick side and you can see the catches drop on the PEI side. That's something I've heard and I don't know if there's any science behind that, but is that something you've even looked at?

Kevin Stringer: I think there is. I don't know if it is exactly the way that you said, but there are studies in terms of the migration patterns, where they are in winter, where they are in summer, and where they move, how they move around.

As I said, part of the issue with the New Brunswick side in terms of wanting to see an LFA 25 increase, there is concern that in LFA 23 that the smaller lobster are being caught in 25, are drifting south and being caught in 25 and lost at 23. We do have some migration information that tells us this. Again, Mother Nature throws us a curve every once in a while, but we are looking at that. We're looking more and more at that.

Chair: Thank you, Brad.

Just out of curiosity, Kevin, what is the size of a female lobster when they become at a reproductive stage?

Kevin Stringer: Well, it's the carapace which is – and we need a scientist here to tell you – it's from the eye to the end of the – is 72 millimeters. We have a science-based process that tells us at what point 50% of females will be sexually mature and be able to produce eggs. That's the SOM₅₀, and it is the carapace size and it is 72 millimeters in the southern gulf.

Now in the Maritimes, it's different. Even off of Nova Scotia, it's different, like it's 74 or 76 off of Cape Breton, but it is a science-based process. When you say 72, they actually look at – I remember seeing a study – four or five years in a row, and seeing what the number was, and one year it was 69 and another year it was 73, so science comes in and says: 72.

Chair: Is the average.

Kevin Stringer: Right.

Chair: Yeah. Is it also true that lobsters will grow by 10 millimeters each molt and increase their weight by 40%?

Kevin Stringer: I don't know if it's 10, but it's significant. Molting is frequent and growth is significant after molting. That's how they grow.

Chair: Great, thank you.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks so much for your presentation, Kevin. I want to come at this from a slightly different angle. We know that the previous federal administration made some fairly severe cutbacks in science capability across all departments; and I'm wondering, particularly in DFO, what, if any, impact that has had on your capacity to collect the information that you require to use science in a reliable way when you make decisions?

Kevin Stringer: I'll say two or three things on that. One: you could ask any public servant if they could use more money to do the work that they do and they will say: Yes. Do you have sufficient dollars to be able to do what you need to do, and they will generally say yes. So I'll say that.

What I will also say is that the current government in their first budget last spring provided \$40 million a year in oceans and fisheries science, an injection of \$40 million a year going forward. That's an increase of 22% of our science budget and it's made a huge difference. We're hiring 135 scientists. A majority of that money is going into stock assessment and fish biology, partly because whenever the department gets new science dollars, fisheries and oceans, it's usually for the new issue – climate change, acidification, aquatic invasive species, et cetera. Any reductions that we've had have generally come out of fisheries biology and stock assessment. This investment is a significant one, and in terms of answering the questions that you've asked, that as a manager, I ask our scientists all the time, they're far better equipped now than they were a couple of years ago with a \$40 million injection per year into our core science.

A fair amount of that money, I should say, has been set aside for partnerships. I would also say a generation ago, DFO did most of the science in fisheries and oceans and we would partner opportunistically with academics and universities and infrastructure. It is now far more diffuse, and our ability to leverage research, science research with UPEI, with Memorial, with Dalhousie, with UBC, is hugely important, so we've set some of these monies into a partnership fund. Science is the core to all of our work, and to be able to answer any of your questions, we need those people to be doing well and this new injection is significant.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Despite that, we all know science is infallible. It's not infallible, excuse me, it's very fallible. As you said yourself there are lots of things we don't know about lobster. A 70% exploitation rate seems precariously high to me, and I know we've had what you might call a stubborn abundance of lobster here in Prince Edward Island almost forever. We had a crash back in the 1880s –

Kevin Stringer: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – but since then, since regulations have been in place and it's been managed more closely, things have improved. But given that we've seen so many fisheries collapse around the world – 85% of fisheries are either fully or over-exploited at the moment, globally – can we be confident that the management processes that we have in place – I'll get to halibut in a minute, but we'll talk specifically about lobster for just now – with an exploitation rate of 70%, despite the stubborn abundance that we've had for so long, are you confident that that will continue?

Kevin Stringer: I think we're confident that in the short term, it will; you never know. The signs that we're seeing in the southern part of the range, in southern New England, and in the northern part of the range, we're seeing, I think, I heard 400% increase in Newfoundland; from this much to this much. It's not a huge amount, but it's a huge increase. It's showing signs that things are moving.

We need to make sure – but I don't think there's any imminent concern. There really isn't, we don't think. The science advice that we get, is it continues to be a health and abundant resource. Our challenge is to ensure that if there is a downturn, we have the levers and we have the regime in place. That's the log books, the carapace size, all those things, and addressing the exploitation rate and making sure that the fishery is in as good shape as possible.

Things are changing in terms of the oceanographic conditions. Not as much in the Gulf as some other places. Off of Newfoundland shelf, huge changes. Shrimp and crab decreasing significantly, cod some will say, coming back big time. Others say: it's only one-third of what it was in 1980s. But in any case, it is a, some say, regime shift and we've got to watch for the same – we're seeing some signals, but we're not seeing the same thing in the Gulf and others would say it changes all the time.

These measures are largely about ensuring that if there is a downturn already, but we do not anticipate a downturn in the short-term. People are managing this well. Fishermen are doing a good job in terms of being our partners. The province is doing a good job in terms of being our partners so we don't see that challenge. But, we want to be as ready as we can if it does come.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the issue that Sid brought up regarding the rapidity with which this carapace size increase is being brought in. I want to ask two questions on that.

Firstly, you mentioned the other LFAs, 23A, 23B, where there was a significant increase in carapace size historically. Was that done a millimeter per year, or was it done in the way this is done?

The second question is: Your rationale for it not being done five over five was that we'd have to have an annual discussion over that, but I don't buy that.

We've made a decision; the ministers made a decision, five over three. We're not going

to go back and discuss this during that three-year term. If it were a five-year decision that we will do this over five years that decision is made. I'd like to know what other rationale are there, why it is being done?

Kevin Stringer: Thank you for the question.

First of all, I don't know. I don't know the answer to the question on 23, but I think it was one millimetre a year, but I do not know that. I shouldn't have said, if I did, that it is just because we don't want to have the discussion every year. I think it would be better to characterize it, or more clear to characterize it as: Look, the decision is taken. This is how far we're going. Let's do it quickly. Let's get it done. There's some evidence that we will get even better conservation benefits from it, from that one peer-reviewed paper that I discussed. You don't want – it's difficult, I think, not impossible to say it's changed by one millimetre this year and everybody has to figure out exactly where they're at and make the adjustment each year.

Within three years, you're actually making one gear change. It is, we think, an efficient way to do it. The decision is made to get to that level. Let's get to that level. I think that's what the thinking is, but I do acknowledge, I don't think that 23 went up by two and two, but I stand to be corrected on that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I have questions on halibut also (Indistinct)

Chair: Sure, Peter. Actually, if you want to – we'll move on and we'll come back to you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Certainly.

Chair: Thank you.

On my list at the moment I have Jordan, Sidney, Chris, Brad and we'll go back to Peter.

Jordan.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you.

Actually, it's probably timely. My questions are following up on Brad's questions and then Peter's.

Do you have a sense of – I know when you started out you had the numbers of licenses in the different fishing areas. Do you have a sense either, on a year-by-year basis or if you just took the five millimeters what – and I know you don't do lobster by TAC, but what percentage of the catch, typically, that would result in – that increase would result in?

Kevin Stringer: I think what it means is we're spending more time, and generally we'll do the same effort. What we saw last year when the TAC went up – not the TAC, when the minimum carapace size went up, there was actually an increase in the volume. Again, we went up by one millimeter. Does the volume increase have anything to do with that one millimeter or was it just water temperature and good fishing etcetera? It's hard to say. But, I don't think there's a sense – I think there's a sense that ultimately there will be an increase in volume because there are more eggs. There's more lobster to catch, there's more etcetera.

Some say that there will be a decrease in the first year, but this year there wasn't. There was actually an increase, 10% more volume in 2016 over 2015.

Mr. J. Brown: I'd like to go back though. I'm not sure that you appreciate, kind of, the specificity I'm looking for in my question. I realize that overall catches may be going up, but I'm wondering if you know what percentage of the catch would fall in that five millimeter range, the five millimeter difference.

Kevin Stringer: That's a good question. I don't know the answer to that. I don't know if you do, do you?

Lori Cuddy: No, I don't know.

Kevin Stringer: She moved away from the table.

It's a good question: What percentage of the catches overall are somewhere between 72 and 77 millimetres?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Kevin Stringer: I don't know the answer to that.

Mr. J. Brown: Then related, and I presume you don't know the answer to this and this is probably of the utmost importance to Prince Edward Island where our fishers have actually spent money marketing the canner size lobsters over the last five years or whatever it's been. What percentage of that canner market would that same number represent?

Kevin Stringer: You can continue to catch until you catch sufficient cannery. By going to 77 our analysis suggests that that canner market can be addressed.

The other thing is, in LFA 24 and in LFA 26A, carapace size is still at 72. The only change is in LFA 25 and I don't seem to be able to work this anymore, but if we look at the number of licenses – and the number of licenses in the –

Clerk Assistant (Reddin): (Indistinct)

Kevin Stringer: Yes.

Clerk Assistant: Just go up to view, play slideshow.

Kevin Stringer: Press play? Okay.

Clerk Assistant: Then you can just go back and forth (Indistinct)

Kevin Stringer: Okay.

No, it's before that. Who does this affect in terms of the – I can't find it – the number of licenses.

Lori Cuddy: The next slide.

Kevin Stringer: There you go.

There are 635 in LFA 24, 226 in 25 and 359. In terms of who this affects, it affects this in 226. The others are still at 72 at SOM₅₀. In terms of the canner market for PEI, not a huge change overall. That was, I think, certainly a consideration and – but your point is a good one because we're at 77. There's still room to catch cannery up to 80. Once you get 81 or 82 you're into market size, but your question: Is that 1%?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Kevin Stringer: Or is that 58% (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: I guess one final question on the opposite end. I would presume you leave those, over the course of three years there's going to be lobsters and if they grow that five millimetres in one year we should – we kind of know the number based on the question that I just asked – so you're going to have an additional allotment of lobsters that will effectively be coming market size at the end of that three-year period. Do we have any idea in recognizing that stocks seem to be going up generally, do we have any idea what additional portion that's going to add to the market-market?

Kevin Stringer: Yes. I don't have it with me, but I think the sense is generally: Market sized lobsters get a better price. There is analysis that says: overall, there is an economic advantage to doing this and at the same time whether there's enough canners left to support the canner market, particularly, with the other LFAs not moving.

Mr. J. Brown: I guess what I'm kind of driving at is: you had indicated a lot of this has to do with the markets where these are ultimately sold.

Kevin Stringer: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: The canner market, obviously, is going to have less fish overall, everything else equal, recognizing that the market-market is going to have more fish.

Kevin Stringer: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: I'm wondering if you've quantified the (Indistinct) recognizing, as Peter has addressed, science is not going to be exact on this, but if you quantify the likely impact on each of those markets. We've seen – what I'm going to call pretty wild shifts in the market here in the last five years relative to price – that people would look around and say: it has to do with the amount of fish that's been put on the market at any given point in time. We've had huge investments, particularly in the western end of Prince Edward Island, in holding tanks to try and avoid those spikes.

I guess what I'm wondering is: Is there going to be a glut of markets and a shortage of canners in three years' time or four years' time when we start to see these stocks (Indistinct) –

Kevin Stringer: The answer, I think, is no, partly because of what I – I think is no, okay? Partly because of what I was saying: This is only LFA 25, it's a small number relative to the overall PEI fishery.

Secondly, all of the elements that you're talking about in terms of the investments are probably going to make a bigger difference than this; and third, the market lobster industry is a growing industry, particularly in the US. We're watching the US market very, very carefully right now. It's kind of interesting, but that has been a growing market.

That said, the PEI government and industry has done some really interesting work in terms of the canner niche and the potential growth for that, and we appreciate that they want to ensure that there is sufficient canners for that market to continue to develop that market – the cruise ships, Popsicle and other pieces as well.

Chair: Thank you, Jordan.

Sidney MacEwen.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I know that you say the numbers are smaller in LFA 25, so that means that 24 and 26A are still going to be catching enough 72 mil lobster to feed that canner niche type market; but if that's just the tip of the iceberg and you already hear a number of fishermen from LFA 25 saying: That's not fair, the rest of PEI should ship there too; I would argue if that's the push, then we would significantly lose that number of lobster that's going into that canner thing.

I want to pick up on what Jordan said, too, because there have been investments on the importance of the canner lobster being strategically important to PEI with a lower price per piece to get into the markets like the cruise ships and that type of thing. You mentioned that your department is the goal to get to SOM₅₀ and then after that, the market drives it. What do you mean by

when you say the market drives it? Because could we not say that the other way around, too, that the market could drive keeping it at 72 if we've got a niche product?

Kevin Fournier: Yeah, I hear what you're saying. What I would say is we've set an objective of SOM₅₀. We want everybody to get there. Everybody's now there. Are we going to set another objective? At some point, we might. We're not right now; but a number of LFAs have gone above SOM₅₀, and it's usually been them who've said: We want to do it. And it's usually for market reasons but also for conservation reasons.

I didn't say that that's the only reason we would go up. The reason we would go up is for conservation reasons, but usually when a group comes to us it's because they see a market and they actually want to address it. We work with them in terms of both what's optimal for the market and the conservation.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

Chair: Chris Palmer.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you.

Thank you for your presentation. I think you've been all around the answer, or maybe you've already answered this, but what does evidence tell us about the carapace size increase and how long it takes for the catches to come back to – like, to be increased catches?

Kevin Stringer: Again, just a couple of things I'd say. One is you never know. One millimetre really doesn't make that big a difference in terms of against water temperature and conditions, etcetera; but generally, there have been some cases where there's been a lull for one year and then an increase, and we have seen that sometimes. In the case of LFA 25 last year, we actually saw an increase right away, but whether that has anything to do with the carapace size or other conditions, we're not sure.

Mr. Palmer: Across all those LFAs, is there kind of any average information that we have of –

Kevin Stringer: Yeah –

Mr. Palmer: – as the carapace size has increased?

Kevin Stringer: – and I would say generally it's – you've seen some evidence that there's a dip of one year and then an increase, and there's been an increase virtually everywhere, but there's been an increase everywhere anyways.

Mr. Palmer: Okay.

Kevin Stringer: Right? So, difficult to link the two.

Mr. Palmer: Okay, all right. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Chris.

Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Quick question: You mentioned that the way you manage lobster is sort of unique compared to other fish: The number of licenses, the number of traps, length of the season, the carapace size. Is there any movement – just curious – within DFO to say: We need to manage lobster in a different way, it'd be much easier for us to do, and it'd be easier to control and ensure its sustainability. Or is that something that's just never discussed? This is the way we do it and –

Kevin Stringer: It's a career-limiting question.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Kevin Stringer: It's something that I hear about from time to time. It's an anathema in the industry, to move to (Indistinct), to do total allowable catch. Some people think it would be an appropriate thing and some people occasionally say: Why don't we?

But at bottom line, we work with the fish harvesters in terms of managing these fisheries. We've made good progress in terms of the management of these fisheries. We're satisfied that we've got the right dials in place. If an industry came to us and said: We'd like to do an experiment on this – I don't know what we would say; but it would have to be, I think, and industry coming to us and saying we'd like to test this out.

When I say an industry, I mean an LFA, and you wouldn't have a 51% vote that got us there. It would be if an LFA actually came with it: You know what; we actually want to do this.

The other thing is this: We don't have quotas, but we have pretty similar things to quotas with the number of traps; and frankly, there are some LFAs where everybody knows exactly where this guy's traps go, and no way on Earth are we going to adjust them. So it's not written down anywhere, but it actually kind of exists.

The short answer is no, but it's not that we haven't heard about the idea; and if an LFA ever brought the idea forward, it's something that we would talk to them about, but it's not something that I think the department would drive at this time.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

That's a great answer, very fair.

Chair: Okay. Thank you, Brad.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to go back to the slide you just had, the bar graphs of the various catches, and I noticed that in the 26 species other than lobster that we catch here on Prince Edward Island, there's been a dramatic decrease in a very short time span both in the tonnage and the percentage of value.

Now I know that the volatility of lobster prices will affect the relative value of those catches, but can you explain why – if we were to take the lobster, the blue bit –

Kevin Stringer: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – off the graph on the left there, that's not heading in a very nice direction.

Kevin Stringer: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Why is that?

Kevin Stringer: It would be things like we've seen a reduction in mackerel; we've seen a reduction in herring. We are seeing

some changes. In terms of the gulf fishery right now, there are some bright spots. Lobster is obviously a bright spot. There's been a bit of a reduction in shrimp. There's been a bit of reduction of crab, but not like we've seen off of Newfoundland.

What we are seeing is the beginnings, similar to Newfoundland, of a cutting back of some of the groundfish, halibut being the prime example. We're seeing red fish now, and these are areas where we do not currently have a fishery and we don't anticipate it in the short, short term, but we are seeing some growth in some stocks which don't show up here because we don't have a fishery.

The things where we've had fisheries, there's been some reductions. The things where we don't have fisheries, red fish, cod, we are seeing some signs of growth. So it's not quite as that would show, but there have been reductions. Herring's had reductions; tuna over the decade, even though there's been a turn-up recently, had reductions; and a couple of other stocks, mackerel has gone down.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

We know that, because we've had fishermen who've had trouble catching the bait for their lobster traps recently –

Kevin Stringer: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – in Prince Edward Island.

My alarm bells go off when I hear about success stories in particular stocks because the tradition or the history has been that we overshoot the carrying capacity and then there's a sudden collapse. It happened regionally, of course, with cod, but it happens all around the world.

Although the halibut catch has almost doubled, if I remember right from the presentation, that doesn't necessarily augur well for the future. You have brought up repeatedly the fact that with climate change, water temperature, salinity, acidity changes which are happening everywhere, that that's a real wild card in terms of stocks.

So I'm going to ask the same question I did with the lobster: With all those variables in there, and particularly with the incredible value of halibut – and it sells here for close to \$20 a pound in stores, that has the potential to be a very lucrative fishery here on Prince Edward Island. I'll get to the percentages in a minute. But, how confident are you that that large increase is sustainable?

Kevin Stringer: Confident in this case, a couple of things that gets us there. First of all, caveat is one that you just put; you never know, changing oceanographic conditions. But at this point, the changing oceanographic conditions seem to support groundfish, and halibut being at the leading edge of that, not only in the Gulf, but also off the coast.

We actually do have a precautionary approach, unlike back in the 1980s. We actually have established a precautionary approach that basically says a couple of things; one, if it goes below a certain level, we'll call it in the critical zone. We must have a rebuilding strategy and a rebuilding plan for that. If it's in the healthy zone, we'll establish the total allowable catch based on harvest control rules.

The harvest control rule for halibut – I know it's the case in Maritime Regions, but I think it's the case here – basically says: No matter how big the spurt is, we're not going up by more than 15% in any decision. If there is a temptation to go up 75%, we're not doing that. Similarly, as long as they are in the healthy zone, if there is a reduction, as long as it's in the healthy zone, no more than 50% decrease. It's an attempt to get stability, and it's an attempt to make sure that we're treating the fishery differently when it's healthy and when it's in trouble.

We have a different regime than we had back in the 1980s and we're more confident of it. I'd say we're maybe a little bit less confident about the impact of climate change. But those science funds that I talked about, more and more of that is invested into ensuring that climate change is taken into account with respect to fisheries management decisions; hard to do because we make fisheries management decisions for this year. Climate change happens over –

We do know some things though; more storms, more severe weather events, changing water temperatures, and we are more and more making sure we're taking those things into account. We've done an exercise, not just fisheries, small craft harbours, building our small craft harbours regimes differently to ensure that they can withstand severe weather events. Those types of things; climate change adaptation and taking into account, in terms of, fisheries management, in two ways; understanding the direction that things seem to be going and also building in more uncertainty and rigour around on uncertainty because of climate change.

Chair: Peter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm delighted that the precautionary principle is being used here increasingly. I'd like to talk about the percentage that Prince Edward Island is granted in the halibut quota. You gave us an excellent rationale for why we are where we are today.

I have a couple of questions on that. One is: Does the quota for each province bear any – is there any correlation to the amount of the stock, geographically, in the water?

Kevin Stringer: When we talked about the principles for how we would divide the stock, one of the principles we always say is adjacency, adjacency to the resource. The challenge is, it's not that far from PEI to the Magdalen Islands and it's not that far to Cape Breton and it's not that far to eastern New Brunswick. Halibut are everywhere in the Gulf. Everybody is adjacent to the resource. There isn't one territory that different fleets are allowed to fish in. On that, basically, we've said – and I think, we don't have a dispute on this one – everybody is adjacent to the resource.

The distribution of the resource, has that changed? It has changed a bit over the last generation. It was more of a northern Gulf. It started in the northern Gulf, but it has spread, virtually, throughout, so virtually everybody is adjacent. That's when you kind of go: well let's go with just historic catches.

Chair: Peter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

The way that the quota is distributed between the Atlantic Provinces and Quebec, at the moment, two of those provinces; Quebec and Newfoundland, control almost 90% of the quota. Is there any other stock, which – as you have just said – is fairly equitably distributed in the water, which is so inequitably distributed in terms of quota for each province?

Kevin Stringer: I think so; I'd have to take a look. But I think what I can say is, is that the same principles are applied. The principle is – we look at all of the principles; adjacency, historic dependence, economic dependence, etcetera, all those things. At the end of the day, the objective and the principle is those people, who have earned a resource, a livelihood from this, should continue to benefit from it.

When we say: This has been a competitive fishery; we are now going to build shares. Nobody should get a windfall from that. If you weren't fishing it before, as long as everybody is equally adjacent to it, those who have been fishing it should continue to get access.

The PEI case is this: A couple of things. One, you're counting a period when there was a moratorium on groundfish in PEI and New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, etcetera, and not in the north.

You look at the 1979 to 1991 period, how much halibut did PEI catch? Point eight per cent, less than one. If we only counted the period before the moratorium, PEI does worse. There are a couple of other places, as well.

The other thing they say is: Look, we've got more licence holders. That is an issue and we have got less landings per licence holder. Yes, but they weren't fishing the resource. Unless they were fishing and not reporting, so the challenge we've got is, we're going with our shares based on what the reports were; how much fishing there was between 1986 and 2004. If there was not reporting, then we can't base it on that.

For the period that where there was a moratorium, PEI was 2%, and for the period where there wasn't, 1979 to 1991, PEI was

0.8%. The argument that they were – that we were counting a period where there was a moratorium doesn't actually help because if you go with a period where there was, no moratorium, PEI did a little worse.

Chair: Peter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

As the abundance of various stocks comes and goes dependence of fishers out on the ocean changes as well. Obviously, in Newfoundland, they have had to replace the value of their landed catch, which was predominantly cod with something else. They've done that very successfully. The value of landings there, as you know, is higher than it was before the cod collapsed.

My question is this. We have such, PEI has such a dependence on lobster, in terms of the value of our landed catch, 82%. Heaven forbid if there was a problem with the lobster fishery and the fishers on Prince Edward Island had to replace that value with some other stock. Halibut, as an example, is out there.

Would there be a situation where you would imagine that DFO would reassess the quota per province?

Kevin Stringer: I think that is something we'd have to look at it. Say, what would we do when the chips are down?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Kevin Stringer: Say that my job is to make sure the chips stay up.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Hear, hear!

Kevin Stringer: So that is our main objective, is to make sure that that doesn't happen, and hence some of the exercises that we have been going through. You know, when the cod collapsed, shrimp and crab replaced it. Generally, that happens; something replaces it. But there was a huge gap of about five or six years before – after cod went at a significant decrease to when there was enough shrimp that you could actually have a shrimp fishery, about five or six years.

That's the biggest risk from an economic perspective, never mind an ecological perspective, which we are very concerned about. How do you work with industry to get through that? We took some pretty drastic measures in Newfoundland with the cod and in other areas, but particularly in Newfoundland. Obviously, that's something that government would have to take a look at if anything were to happen here. Our objective is to make sure that that doesn't happen, but we've always got to be thinking about that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Peter, thank you.

Next we have Bush Dumville.

Mr. Dumville: My question is kind of along with what Peter's talking there. The collapse of the cod fishery in Newfoundland, it's just devastating to all of the outports. All species seem to be strong and stable now with the shrimp and the crab replacing cod in Newfoundland. You say that the cod is possibly at one-third of its historical numbers.

Where is the cod in relationship to, say, shrimp or crab? Is it going to be a valuable resource for Newfoundland, in particular?

Kevin Stringer: Again, predications are difficult, but I can tell you what has happened on cod since 1992. There was a long period of time when it was 2% of what we call the limit reference point, 1% or 2% of the limit reference point. The limit reference point is a point at which we say: Okay, you can have a good commercial fishery now.

The limit reference point for northern cod off of Newfoundland is the average of the 1980s, so it was at 1% or 2% of the average of the eighties for a number of years after 1991, 1992. Then about a few years ago, we really started to see some increases. I've forgotten how many years ago. It was reported by science that it's now 18% of the limit reference point, and the next year – I think it was an extra maybe two years – it was 26%, and then it was 34%, and we're seeing growth again.

You could see it two ways. One is it's exponentially increased in the last 10-15 years; gone up from one or two to 34 and now higher. The other way to look at it, which some do, is okay, 34, you're up one-third of the 1980s. So, that's one point.

At what point do you say: Are we going to wait till it gets to the 1980s level to really have a commercial fishery? Or, are we going to say: It's a different regime and they have a fishery. That's some of the considerations.

The second thing is shrimp and crab are pretty valuable, and cod – there's a lot of whitefish involved. For some reason, halibut seems to beat that, and there's a really good value for halibut, but cod – it would be a challenge for cod to replace – if you had the same value – sorry, volume of cod replacing shrimp and crab it's not the same livelihood.

The world's changed in terms of the markets, but yes, we are seeing some very positive signs off Newfoundland for cod, but at the same time shrimp and crab are decreasing, and again speaks to whether that's climate change or as some would say: Oh, every 30 or 40 years the oceanographic conditions change.

Mr. Dumville: Are foreign fleets picking on these new species, like they picked on cod? That was part of it too, wasn't it? That foreign fleets that –

Kevin Stringer: So, you know NAFO – NAFO was the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, which Canada's a member of and so is the EU and so you've got the Portuguese and the Spanish involved – got pretty – much stricter rules now than we had then, and better monitoring. We've got RCMP vessels, our enforcement vessels, out beyond 200 miles. We're watching pretty carefully, and you know, we do hear questions from them about: I hear your cod's coming back, how's that? So we, you know, we'll let you know, and –

Mr. Dumville: Because there would be a value to that for them.

Kevin Stringer: Yeah.

Mr. Dumville: Okay.

Kevin Stringer: But, it is something to watch.

Chair: Okay, thank you, Bush.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Sidney MacEwen.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Can you – the Quebec fishers that fish the halibut, can you give me like a profile, like you know we have what, 800-900 licenses here, but probably 300 fishing halibut, right? Or, I'm not sure the numbers. Can you give me that kind of a profile of the Quebec ones?

Kevin Stringer: I can, but not right now. I don't have it with me. I know it's less license orders, right?

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Kevin Stringer: So, it's people who, as I understand it, basically make their livelihood out of this fishery and have for a long period of time. Longliners, fixed gear, and – but I can't tell you exactly how many license owners, but I could get it to you real fast after.

Chair: Sidney?

Mr. MacEwen: No, and that's kind of what I'm getting at. It's a much different type of fishery than it has here, and picking up on what Peter talked about, when you were talking about the equally adjacent, the halibut people here are wild about the losing quota and they always said not everybody has to be happy, but at least they were staying the same or going up. That's the way it should go forward, rather than this reduction from last year.

They're looking for a way to – you know, all of us here represent harbours. They're lobbying us. They're lobbying your bosses.

Is the way to go maybe is to start looking at breaking up that equally adjacent like the way that Quebec fishers are doing it, the way we're doing it here, it's almost equivalent to us fishing tuna with a rod and then people fishing tuna with nets. Is there a way that we can start saying: Do you know

what? The amount of halibut down there is, anecdotally, everybody says it's awesome. I see it myself. But, is there a way to start saying: Maybe that's the way they should start lobbying is that we need to start getting more specific information about waters around PEI to say that wow you guys, your stock is doing better than – even though you say Quebec is equally adjacent, maybe we could start breaking that up to try and get more quota.

Kevin Stringer: A couple of things. Thank you for the question.

This is a stock that is virtually everywhere in the gulf. It's virtually everywhere in the gulf. It's plentiful everywhere. It really is hard to say, and in fact, I believe the science tells us it's one stock. So, it's not like it's three stocks across the gulf. It's one stock, and the way we manage it – there is a gulf Atlantic halibut – a gulf halibut fishery, and there is an Atlantic – coastal Atlantic halibut fishery, because those are considered to be two stocks.

We manage it biologically, unlike our LFAs where we've had these divisions we may or may not link to, but that – so that's difficult to do in terms of that.

But, I do want to go back to the slide which talks about the shares, and PEI having gone from 1.46 back in 2007 to 4.18. Take a look at Gaspé: 44% to 36%. Take a look at western Newfoundland because you guys are talking about they control most of it: Western Newfoundland, 32% to 27%, so they don't control 90. They may have been close to 80. They are now significantly less than that, and I can tell you when I go to meet with their fishermen, they're extraordinarily unhappy about where we're at.

I would say that each of the eight fleets has a compelling case. I would also tell you that the PEIFA is very good at it. I'm meeting with them this afternoon and I have no doubt that I'm going to hear about it from them, and they're consistent, and they're compelling, and respectful.

But, Quebec, Gaspé in particular, and western Newfoundland are the two where they really did, back in 2007, say: This is the share that people have been fishing at; this is

who should continue to get it. It's been kind of nibbled away at it each little adjustment to the benefit of those who didn't fish it as much before, including PEI.

I appreciate that PEI would say: Wait a second here, we were doing okay. We know we are getting a little bit more, a little bit more, and then when you made that final adjustment we went down; not much, but a little bit.

So, difficult to divide it up –

Mr. MacEwen: It's not much, but it's a lot when you're out there and you catch one fish and you've got 75% of your quota gone. Do you understand? Like, that's the point, right –

Kevin Stringer: I do, I do.

Mr. MacEwen: It's not much, but it is a lot when – see the bigger picture here on PEI is that we are trying to get as much year-round fishery as we can and you're right, you fish for lobster for two months. What do you do? We're starting to see the tuna starting to come back.

That's what they want to do, is keep that year-round fishing going. It helps our economy. It helps the livelihood. It's – I know you've heard this –

Kevin Stringer: No, but I absolutely get that, and that's the compelling case that PEI and the province make to us, and we're doing what we can to address it within the bounds of conservation, et cetera, but without question they need to make sure that a good livelihood can be got from the fishery, and this is a key component.

Mr. MacEwen: One more?

Chair: Okay, Sidney.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

You mentioned that the redfish fishery and it's starting to come back. Is there a concern out there that that's going to take back some of this halibut quota from the fixed gear fleets to the mobile fleets?

Kevin Stringer: I don't think so – oh, that is an issue. That is a potential issue down the road –

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Kevin Stringer: The other issue –

Mr. MacEwen: But how far down the road, because that would take a lot of quota away from the halibut, right?

Kevin Stringer: Don't know. Then do you take a look at the quota again. So, that is a question –

Mr. MacEwen: And, maybe if you don't mind explaining what I'm talking about, how red fishing and halibut are intertwined.

Kevin Stringer: So, the mobile gear – I was hoping not to be asked about this, because it's complex – but the way –

Mr. MacEwen: But, it is a big issue, because then PEI's would be reduced down to nothing again. We'd be back to the 1%.

Kevin Stringer: The reason that we've actually been able to provide greater access and gone off of that 2007 share is because we took 85% of the mobile gear share and divided it one eighth among the eight partners, the eight fleets. The reason the 85% is there and the mobile gear isn't fishing it is because it was only ever there – they needed halibut access because they were running into halibut as by-catch, mostly in the redfish fishery.

There hasn't been a redfish fishery, and therefore they haven't needed that quota so we were able to use it and give it to the fixed gear fleets and divide it eight ways.

If the redfish fishery starts coming back some, not much, some of that mobile gear quota will need to go back to the mobile gear fleet – which is otter trawlers and those types of things. I don't think it's imminent. I think the other issue, just so you know, is the relationship between redfish and shrimp. Are the redfish eating the shrimp? With the (Indistinct) fishers, there's a fair amount of mixing in those two – so it's very interesting. Thinking about what you were saying, in terms of ensuring there's a year-round fishery, is redfish part of that?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Kevin Stringer: Okay? But if redfish does come back, there are implications on other fisheries, including halibut. It's a really good point.

Mr. MacEwen: Right now you don't feel that's imminent at all?

Kevin Stringer: I don't think it's imminent and it's certainly not – I don't think it's imminent and I don't think it's imminent in a big way, if you know what I mean.

Mr. MacEwen: Yes. If it happened would there be any talk of increasing that mobile fleet, so that it doesn't affect the current –

Kevin Stringer: I'm sure there would be talk of that at this table. So, therefore –

Mr. MacEwen: Oh, at your table.

Kevin Stringer: We would hear about it from you. I don't know, but I hear what you're saying.

Chair: Sidney?

Mr. MacEwen: I'm good. Thank you.

Chair: Okay. Thank you, Sidney. That's exhausted our list.

Peter?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Can I just have one follow-up question?

Chair: Sure, Peter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: CETA is imminent and we know in supply-managed sectors of agriculture that's presented potential problems. Does CETA have any impact whatsoever on what we've been talking about this morning?

Kevin Stringer: No, except to make it better. I think we're going to have access to the European market in a way that we haven't in the past. Shrimp in particular, there's – there are quotas so we're able to overcome quotas. It's going to be – I mean, in terms of Canada's exports, the majority of

our exports go to the US. But after that, it's Europe.

What will be interesting is, how does the UK then deal with that? Because a fair amount of it is the UK. But that's all upside in terms of CETA – will help alleviate, I would say, some of the challenges so we can do some things that we would like to be able to do. So will the Atlantic Fish Fund, that was announced recently, in terms of working with the province right now in how to roll that out going forward.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you, Peter. Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I hope this question is relevant, but –

So there are about 46 tonnes of halibut caught in PEI last year. But on halibut farms – like inland farms – there's, I'm just reading here, about 70 tonnes or more of halibut produced. Are the decisions made by DFO on halibut quota at all impacted by the amount of halibut that is farmed, or is it a completely separate process? Is there any impact? They say: Oh, well they're producing 70 tonnes of halibut on the farms on PEI; maybe they don't need as much halibut quota. Is there any relationship at all?

Kevin Stringer: No. There's a separate process. We establish the total allowable catch based on what conservation will bear. Now it doesn't mean people – if there was a glut of halibut and the fishing industry decided – it's not worth our while, they won't do it. We don't set it based on what there is in aquaculture, we set it based on what the conservation requirements are.

Chair: Brad, finished?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Chair: Okay. I want to thank our members for the questions, and I want to thank Kevin and Lori for taking time out of your schedule and joining us here today for a very informative presentation – for answering questions on the lobster carapace and also

on halibut and a few questions beyond the request.

Again, thank you. Enjoy your stay here on PEI and have a safe trip back.

Kevin Stringer: Thank you. Thanks very much.

Chair: You're really welcome.

Kevin Stringer: We really appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

Chair: We'll take a two minute recess just to let our presenters gather themselves.

[Recess]

Chair: We'll call the meeting back to order and we'll start with number four on our agendas, which is new business.

Brad Trivers?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Yes. I was wondering if the committee would be open to having Atlantic Beef Products to come back in to talk about their various marketing plans, get an update on how they're doing –

An Hon. Member: Burger Love

Mr. Trivers: Just to – I mean they're – hopefully they're in their profitable time now. Just to find out a little about their expenses and just get an update because there's a lot of tax payer dollars going to Atlantic beef plant. Just really want to know where things are at.

Chair: I'm not sure if the committee wishes. We were there a couple of months ago, I think. We had met with them at their facility. Does the committee feel that we need to have more information?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Chair?

I would. You know, with Burger Love about to begin, that's a really important time of year for beef producers here and the other small producers on the Island. I'd like to know how things are going at Atlantic Beef Products. Yes.

Chair: Sidney?

Mr. MacEwen: Yes. I'm sitting in for Colin, but I'd like to echo to end. More for the point that – because I know a number of MLAs are hearing from some of the local small meat producers that are buying meat and putting it back out with contracts and stuff and wondering if they're not in the market competing against the Atlantic beef plant – which is obviously paid for by the tax payers. I think it's a great idea to start with them and then if maybe the committee would consider bringing in some other local people too to hear their perspectives on this.

Chair: Yeah I know that, of course, the session starts Tuesday coming. So, in time would probably be well after – not well after, but after the session is over – that we request this. Is it the request of all members that we bring them in?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Okay. So we'll put that on the agenda, Ryan.

Clerk Assistant (Reddin): Sure.

Chair: For a later date.

Clerk Assistant: Yes.

Chair: Is there anything else pressing at the moment?

Clerk Assistant: This committee has a request for a presentation on fish kills in rivers that went to the minister's office of communities, land and environment and we're waiting for a response on that.

Chair: I guess with that, is there any new business?

Mr. Trivers: Just on that note –

Chair: Brad?

Mr. Trivers: When was that request sent?

Clerk Assistant: Originally, it went to a freshwater fish biologist in that department, in January. I guess they talked about it internally, but didn't get back to my proposed dates for our presentation. And then, I think it was the last meeting of this

committee, the committee wanted a follow-up letter –

Chair: Yes.

Clerk Assistant: – sent to – and they had, at that point, requested that it be directed to the minister as well.

Mr. Trivers: Just to be clear, did they reply to that follow-up letter at all?

Clerk Assistant: I did have some replies – emails, but not an indication that they would, yes, come in. It was more that they were discussing it internally.

Mr. Trivers: All right. The initial request was in January and here we are almost in April so it seems to me – I just wanted to express a little bit of dissatisfaction that we're not getting a quicker uptake on our ask there.

Chair: I think it was expressed last week and that's why we had resent the request again.

Mr. Trivers: Now, I don't know if it's appropriate for the clerk or the Chair, maybe, to just call the department directly and just find out what's going on.

Chair: Well, I guess was it the last – when did the inquiry –

Mr. MacEwen: Most recent letter?

Chair: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: When is your next caucus meeting? Just asking.

Clerk Assistant: The last letter just went out in the last couple of weeks. I think it was after the meeting we had here with the certified organic producers.

Chair: Okay. Two weeks ago?

Clerk Assistant: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: It wasn't long ago.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: We're approaching the season now, again, where we're going to have rains

and runoff and really, I think our questions were around the processes and how much it's so hard to find root causes –

Chair: I guess we'll follow up with that.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Chair: Okay?

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to keep on top of that.

Chair: Definitely.

Mr. Trivers: I didn't want to let it slide any longer.

Chair: Thanks, Brad.

Any other new business?

With that, we will move on and I will call for adjournment.

Mr. J. Brown: Moved.

Chair: Jordan, thank you very much.

The committee adjourned