

Minister of
Fisheries and Oceans



Ministre des
Pêches et des Océans

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E6

Mr. Perrin Beatty
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Chamber of Commerce
Suite 420 - 360 Albert Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1R 7X7

Dear Mr. Beatty:

Thank you for your correspondence of January 23, 2009, regarding Canadian fisheries. I regret the delay in responding.

I would first like to address your concern regarding fisheries management of straddling stocks on the Grand Banks and assure you that our Government is committed to protecting and enhancing Atlantic fish stocks in international waters.

Our strategy to eliminate overfishing and rebuild stocks includes an effective surveillance and patrol presence on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks, strong interventions and advocacy to ensure that countries hold their vessels accountable for their actions, and engaging our international partners to strengthen fisheries and oceans management.

Canada has greatly improved the management of fish stocks beyond Canada's 200-mile limit, within the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). In 2006, Canada succeeded in obtaining significant improvements to monitoring, control and surveillance measures to give NAFO the means it needed to counter illegal fishing. As a result, we've seen significant declines in infringements of the NAFO Measures and increases in the level of fines imposed by flag States in cases of non-compliance. Key stocks are also beginning to improve.

With regard to the fisheries component of Aboriginal treaty negotiations and the Pearce/McRae and First Nations Panel Reports in British Columbia, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has instituted a program response that addresses many of the points raised in these two reports.

The Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (PICFI), announced on July 16, 2007, responds to the emerging conservation and fisheries sustainability challenges facing Pacific fisheries and the need for greater cooperation amongst fish harvesters to secure economically viable, environmentally sustainable, and integrated commercial fisheries.

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PICFI supports the development and implementation of much-needed reforms associated with advancing integrated commercial fisheries, including moving to share-based salmon fisheries and achieving greater certainty and stability in access and allocation.

Your letter also makes recommendations regarding the compensation of harvesters and the creation of an independent Crown agency to address the retirement of access provided to First Nations under treaty agreements.

DFO currently utilizes a voluntary licence retirement process to acquire the access that is to be provided to First Nations under the Department's various programs. This process has been quite successful in terms of ensuring that those harvesters wishing to leave the fishery are fairly compensated. Depending on the nature of commitments in a treaty, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada may also provide funding as part of a final treaty to acquire commercial fishing licences.

While I appreciate your views respecting an independent crown agency, I believe that the current program approach provides DFO with the necessary mechanism for addressing the retirement of licences in support of treaty.

Your letter also makes reference to the need for effective consultation and recommends that the Department implement the "Interim Guidelines for Federal Officials to Fulfill the Legal Duty to Consult". DFO has made these guidelines available to all of its staff and is implementing them.

Thank you for writing me on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gail Shea". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Gail Shea, P.C., M.P.

c.c.: The Honourable Chuck Strahl, P.C., M.P.