



May 18, 2021

Mr. B. Unger
Chair
Strathcona Regional District
301-990 Cedar Street
Campbell River BC V9W 7Z8
c/o Ms. Edith Watson

Dear Mr. Unger:

Thank you for your correspondence of January 19, 2021, regarding the transition of marine net-pen aquaculture in British Columbia (BC). I also acknowledge receipt of a referral from the office of the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister. I regret the delay in responding.

The Government of Canada recognizes the important role that aquaculture plays in our coastal communities and for our economy and food security, and is committed to ensuring that Canada is a global leader in sustainable aquaculture.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and I recognize that this is causing uncertainty and stress for families and communities in the region, for whom aquaculture is a critical source of income and economic development. I assure you that the decision was not made lightly. The Government offers a strong suite of support for workers and communities, and we have a strong partnership with BC in place, including the Canada-BC Workforce Development Agreement.

As Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, I have been mandated by the Prime Minister to work with the Province of British Columbia and Indigenous communities to create a responsible plan to transition from open net-pen salmon farming in coastal BC waters by 2025, and to begin work to introduce Canada's first-ever federal Aquaculture Act.

With respect to the development of this plan, Mr. Terry Beech, my Parliamentary Secretary, recently held virtual roundtable engagement sessions with First Nations in BC, the aquaculture industry, environmental stakeholders, and other interested parties to hear their perspectives on this important initiative. These sessions were complemented by an opportunity to engage through online submissions, to allow those who could not participate in the virtual sessions to have their opinions heard.

The results of Mr. Beech's engagements will be presented to me in an interim report this spring.

Over the coming years, we will move forward by using the best available science, evidence, and input to develop a plan for salmon aquaculture in BC. Close collaboration with the Province and Indigenous communities will be critical to the development of a plan that is environmentally sustainable, economically feasible, and considers social aspects. To assist in the development of the transition plan, Budget 2021 provided resources to support engagement and to pilot the concept of area-based management.

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DFO and our partners have a solid foundation of information to help inform the development of this plan, including: the State of the Salmon Aquaculture Technologies Report; the recommendations of the Indigenous and Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Body and its three technical working groups; and the Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans' report, An Ocean of Opportunities: Aquaculture in Canada.

In parallel, DFO continues to advance work to develop a federal Aquaculture Act that will strengthen the federal regulatory framework and help provide more clarity to the aquaculture sector. The Department has engaged widely in support of this initiative.

DFO will continue to engage on aquaculture with Indigenous partners, industry, environmental organizations, and members of the public in 2021. I encourage you to visit the DFO website to keep up to date on future engagement opportunities. These consultations will be critical in ensuring that aquaculture is done in the most environmentally sustainable and economically viable way.

The Department recognizes that a bold and targeted response with concrete actions is required to address the challenges facing Pacific salmon over the long term. As outlined in my January 15, 2021 supplementary mandate letter, I will continue to work in close collaboration with relevant ministers, First Nations, provincial and territorial authorities, fishing and stewardship organizations, and implicated communities across the Pacific Region to bring forward a Pacific Salmon Strategy, and deliver on our commitment to conserve and protect wild Pacific salmon and their habitats and ecosystems. Budget 2021 announced a federal response to Pacific salmon declines by investing \$647 million in research, new hatchery facilities, habitat restoration, and creation of a Pacific Salmon Secretariat and Restoration Centre of Expertise, and further engagement with First Nations and fish harvesters.

Thank you again for taking the time to provide me with your thoughts on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bernadette Jordan', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The Honourable Bernadette Jordan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

c.c.: Mr. Terry Beech, M.P.
Burnaby North–Seymour
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and
the Canadian Coast Guard
Ms. Rachel Blaney, M.P.
North Island–Powell River
Ms. Michele Babchuk, M.L.A.
North Island