



INTRODUCTION TO THE STANDING SENATE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES AND OCEANS

MANDATE

The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans' mandate is to study issues relating to the fisheries and oceans generally. Among others, it is particularly interested in the management of oceans, aquatic resources and fisheries, aquatic life and ecosystems, the fishing industry and the safety of waterways. The committee is also interested in the federal government's current and evolving framework for managing Canada's fisheries and oceans.

HISTORY

The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries was created in May 1986 to deal exclusively with matters relating to fisheries, which were, until that date, the purview of the former Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The name was changed to Fisheries and Oceans in December 2002 to better reflect the scope of its activities.

SELECTED STUDIES

Over the last 12 years, the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has published more than 16 substantive reports. Its special studies have dealt with numerous aspects and issues pertaining to Canada's fisheries and oceans.

In December 2013, the committee received an order of reference to examine and report on the regulation of aquaculture, current challenges and future prospects for the industry in Canada. The committee began its study in January 2014 and examined a broad scope of themes such as finfish and shellfish farming activities, various types of farming sites and systems, environmental considerations, the supply chain from hatcheries to processing plants, certification and marketing, scientific research and First Nations perspectives.

The committee held public hearings in Ottawa through 2014 and the first few months of 2015. It also held public hearings in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador, Halifax, Nova Scotia and Moncton, New Brunswick. Fact-finding missions took place in each of these provinces, in the Gaspé region of Québec, and Scotland and Norway. The latter two are known as world leaders in aquaculture with respect to production capacity and value, regulating the sector, addressing environmental matters, conducting scientific research, developing new technologies and earning social license.

The committee heard from federal and provincial officials, the aquaculture sector, scientists and researchers from diverse organisations, First Nations and interested individuals. The central message of the committee's report, published on July 30, 2015, is that an ocean of opportunities exists for aquaculture in Canada. The country has the world's longest marine coastline, a rigorous regulatory regime and world-class aquaculture research. Canada is well positioned to help supply the growing global demand for fish and seafood in a sustainable



manner. The committee supported the goal of doubling Canadian aquaculture production within the next decade. In light of this, it proposed 10 recommendations grouped into five themes: legislative and regulatory framework, healthy aquacultured fish, healthy and productive ecosystems, research and development, and social licence and public reporting.

In addition, the committee studies many issues related to fish habitat and stocks. In 2012, it examined Atlantic ground-fish and how grey seals were a key factor limiting their recovery since the collapse in the early 1990s. From March 2012 to May 2013, it also studied the lobster fishery in Atlantic Canada and Quebec to better understand the structure of the industry, follow-up on the 2009 committee report entitled *Crisis in the Lobster Fishery*, and make recommendations to the federal government on the issues brought to the committee's attention. In 2010, the committee examined Canada's lighthouses and services provided by light-keepers. The study was broadened to include the *Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act*, which came into force in May 2010. In 2007, the committee studied the management of Atlantic fish stocks beyond the 200-mile limit.

The Arctic is becoming increasingly important in many ways, both in strategic and economic terms. The Fisheries and Oceans Committee studied Canada's Arctic, the role of the Canadian Coast Guard and the management of the region's fisheries and oceans. Seven reports published on these topics called on Fisheries and Oceans Canada to improve management of the fisheries and the region's emerging development opportunities. The recommendations also stressed the importance of defending Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic and providing support to the Coast Guard in view of protecting the economy, environment, values and interests of Canadians in the North.

The committee recognizes that fisheries are a vital part of the economic, social and environmental sustainability on the Canadian coasts. It regularly examines the impact of policy changes on coastal communities and residents, as well as the state of fisheries. Studies have also touched on issues related to freshwater fisheries.

SELECTED LEGISLATIVE WORK

The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans generally conducts special studies and is less frequently called upon to consider legislation. However, during the previous session of Parliament, three bills were referred to the committee: Bill S-3, *An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act*, Bill S-224, *An Act respecting National Seal and Seafood Products Day*; and Bill C-555, *An Act respecting the Marine Mammal Regulations (seal fishery observation licence)*.

CURRENT WORK

For information on the current work of the committee, you may wish to review the orders of reference the committee has received from the Senate, or review the committee proceedings. Detailed information on current work of the committee can be found on the parliamentary website at <http://senate-senat.ca/pofo.asp>.