

The Union calls for owner-operator, fleet separation, adjacency: Do you agree?

Fishermen speak out

FOPO HEARINGS:

“Relevance of the Principle of Adjacency and the Owner-Operator and Fleet Separation Policies in the Pacific Region”

On June 7th and 9th, the House of Commons Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (FOPO) held hearings on the importance of adjacency, owner-operator and fleet separation policies in BC.

Witnesses from the Union argued that Canfisco’s control over fishing licenses and the processing sector must end. “We are asking for **fleet-separation** so that the fleet is no longer owned or controlled by processors. We are asking for **owner-operator** provisions that reflect the needs of working fishermen while acknowledging present BC circumstances.”

The Union also called for the Federal Government to work with the Province to establish **adjacency** to prevent companies from taking northern fish elsewhere for processing, leaving northern fish plants empty. Coincidentally, the federal Liberals passed a Resolution at their Winnipeg 2016 Convention calling for the establishment of a ‘Declaration of Adjacency’ to protect coastal communities.

Independent studies published in the Journal *Marine Policy* vol 68 June 2016 show that in 2012, CFC owned 89 salmon seine licenses or 38% of seine licenses. The study showed that CFC owned 5% of all salmon licenses (including seine, gillnet and troll) and the five percent ownership gave them a whopping 19% of the total salmon catch (all gear).

CFC harvested 18% of the total catch of roe herring in 2008 and 24% in 2012. CFC bought 30% of BC herring in 2016.

The Union argued that on top of direct ownership of licenses, CFC used loans, contractual obligations, joint ownership, access to other licenses or quota, and conditional sales agreements to increase their control over fisheries harvests. The Union presented estimates that Canfisco controlled 70% of salmon harvests. Canadian Fish disagreed but provided no data to FOPO on their ‘controlling agreements’ with fishermen.

CFC’s Rob Morley told the Committee that CFC only owned 4% of the salmon licenses and the CFC has little control over where fishermen delivered. CFC buys 29%-48% of total salmon landings.

Christina Burrige, Executive Director, BC Seafood Alliance stated that her organization represented the majority of license holders in BC. She testified to FOPO that fleet separation policies would devastate BC fishermen and fishers with ITQs did well.

Bruce Turris, Executive Manager, Canadian Groundfish Research and Conservation Society said 25% of trawl licenses are ‘co-owned’ by processors accounting for 50% of catch. Morely said CFC owned 21% of groundfish quota and 15% of hake quota.

Des Nobels and Jim McIsaac from T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation argued that corporate control of fisheries and the DFO drive to privatization through ITQs has to be stopped. ‘Active fishermen are losing up to 70% of the value of their catch to quota owners.’

Marc Allain, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters Federation explained that DFO’s Atlantic PIIFCAF policy gave processors 8 years to divest themselves of licenses or of control over licenses. Except for a few small fisheries, fishers and their communities on the Atlantic Coast are now benefiting from owner-operator and fleet separation policies.

Contributed by: Joy Thorkelson

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Corporate Concentration in the Salmon and Herring Fisheries

Table 1
Processor ownership of salmon and roe herring licenses from 1993 to 2012, showing number of licenses owned and the percent that number represents of the total number of licenses in that fishery.

	Dominant processor			All processors combined		
	1992	2008	2012	1993	2008	2012
Salmon seine	81 (15%)	87 (34%)	89 (38%)	134 (25%)	94 (37%)	91 (39%)
Salmon gillnet/Troll	4 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)	1 (0.0%)	11 (0.3%)	5 (0.3%)	4 (0.2%)
Salmon total	85 (2%)	89 (4%)	90 (5%)	145 (3%)	99 (5%)	95 (5%)
Herring seine	19 (8%)	59 (23%)	75 (30%)	71 (28%)	87 (35%)	81 (32%)
Herring gillnet	33 (2%)	112 (9%)	156 (13%)	129 (10%)	194 (15%)	177 (15%)
Herring total	52 (3%)	171 (11%)	231 (16%)	200 (13%)	281 (18%)	258 (18%)

Corporate concentration and processor control: Insights from the salmon and herring fisheries in British Columbia.

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