



ENVIRONICS
R E S E A R C H G R O U P

**Focus Group Research:
Canada's Strategy for International Fisheries Governance
and to Combat Global Overfishing – Domestic Attitudes**

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Environics Research Group Limited

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INTRODUCTION

Methodology

Environics Research Group is pleased to submit this focus group report to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Environics conducted a series of 12 focus groups with engaged members of the general public and fisheries stakeholders in four cities and two fishing communities across Canada. These locations were Toronto (Nov. 29), Calgary (Dec. 1), Nanaimo (Dec. 2), Halifax (Dec. 6), St. John's (Dec. 7) and Clarendville (Dec. 8); two groups were conducted in each community. In Toronto and Calgary, both sessions (one with men and one with women to help DFO better define target audiences) were conducted with members of the general public who are interested in public policy issues, have at least some post-secondary education and who could be described as "opinion leaders." In the other four communities, the first session was conducted with a group of male and female "opinion leaders" and the second with fishery "stakeholders." DFO supplied Environics with lists of names of stakeholders to recruit. The stakeholders consisted of a mix of commercial fishers, as well as people who are involved in fish-related businesses such as owners or managers of fishing companies or fish processing plants, fishers' union representatives and people affiliated with interest groups reflecting various aspects of the fishery.

The discussion guide for the sessions was drafted after extensive consultation between Environics and DFO, and after DFO had provided discussion points, questions and background materials. Some background materials developed by DFO were also circulated at certain junctures in the sessions to give participants (particularly the non-stakeholders) more information on this issue. The first evening of groups in Toronto served as somewhat of a pre-test, or pilot, so as to make some minor adjustments to the discussion agenda.

In conducting the focus group sessions, some interactive workshop techniques were used. One technique used to help open up the discussion and learn – for example, current awareness of challenges facing the fisheries – involved a "paired exercise" whereby pairs or trios of participants worked separately for several minutes, and then brought data back to the group. This method generated a considerable amount of information in a short period of time and helped to make the participants more comfortable interacting with one another.

Objectives

Overfishing is rapidly becoming an important issue both for Canada and the world community. It is a complex issue, tying in what might at first appear to be conflicting interests of conservation, environmental concerns, national sovereignty and diplomacy, as well as economic issues. In recent years, there have been a number of overfishing incidents in international waters that have received media attention. As fishers continue to operate farther away from their countries of origin in search of fish, these incidents will likely continue.

DFO wishes to take a lead, both within Canada and internationally, in raising awareness of this issue in the hopes of moving toward solutions to the overfishing problem that take economic and environmental considerations into account. The Department believes that public awareness and advocacy activities in Canada and abroad will be an important way to disseminate information to various audiences about Canada's involvement in the overfishing and international fisheries governance issue and to build domestic and international support for these activities

This phase of the research was commissioned in order to identify the parameters of public advocacy in Canada and to establish hypotheses that could be explored further in future research. The focus group sessions were also able to build on the findings of past quantitative and qualitative research conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The specific objectives included:

- Assessing current awareness and understanding of the impact of fisheries to Canada and Canadians.
- Determining which issues are seen to be the most troubling facing fisheries and whether people feel that the federal government is doing enough to protect aquatic life.
- Gauging Canadians' level of concern about overfishing and the reasons for their concerns (i.e. is it a conservation issue about keeping fish stocks up or is it more of an economic issue in terms of keeping communities healthy and sustainable?)
- Probing differences and commonalities in attitudes and levels of interest in international versus domestic overfishing.
- Exploring reactions to DFO communications materials about the state of Canada's fishery and Canada's strategy to combat overfishing and improve international fisheries governance; and to identify which elements resonate in either a positive or negative way.
- Exploring understanding and views about international fisheries governance and management, as well as the concept of unilateral action (custodial management) and its potential trade and diplomatic tradeoffs and economic ramifications for Canada.
- Assessing understanding of, and support for, the concept of sustainable development and healthy oceans' ecosystems as it relates to the goals of the overfishing strategy.
- Identifying Canadians' information needs and desired information sources on this topic.

This research was also done to gain a better understanding of the views, attitudes and perceptions of the overfishing issue among different segments of the Canadian population. Distinctions between urban and rural and east and west coast Canadians, those who are economically dependent on fishing, and the general public were explored in considerable depth.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Key Findings and Conclusions

Canada's Fisheries

- Discussions with Canadians across the country consistently showed a firm attachment to the notion of a healthy, sustainable fishery, regardless of whether or not fisheries are relevant to them personally. People living in fishery dependent communities seem to underestimate the extent to which other Canadians do actually care about the fishery.
- Most participants, outside of fishery dependent coastal areas, saw the major challenges facing fisheries as being very much environmental and conservation issues. Overfishing/shrinking stocks were consistently mentioned; other concerns raised included risks from fish farming (aquaculture), and pollution.
- The importance of fisheries to Canada as a whole was very widely appreciated all across the country for environmental and economic reasons and a recognition of the importance of fish to Canada's historical development. However, Canadian participants were sometimes surprised to hear just how important fisheries were economically.
- There was some resignation to the idea that primary (resource-based) industries like fisheries may stagnate or decline, however, participants did not necessarily support that this had to be the case.

Overfishing – General Awareness

- Awareness of overfishing problems was almost universal and it created images of drag nets, rogue trawlers in Canadian waters and oceans devoid of fish. Various countries were blamed and there was some acknowledgement that Canada shared in some of this blame.
- Concerns about overfishing related both to economics and to the environment, as participants expressed a want/need for a balance between the economy and environment. General population participants were concerned and reacted emotionally to unemployment rates, but they also saw overfishing in the context of a threat to the global eco-system.
- There was a very widely held view that the “issue” around overfishing is really about foreign vessels invading Canadian waters and fishing illegally. The fact that the problem the government wants to address is actually regarding what happens in international waters was not well understood.

DFO's Efforts

- Most general population participants had no idea what DFO is doing about overfishing, but there was an assumption that it must be inadequate since the problem was seen to be worsening. Most people only vaguely recalled incidents such as the seizing of a vessel in the 90s, although notably, one individual recalled May 2004 incidents
- It was generally supported that in order to deal with the overfishing problem, DFO will need a diplomatic strategy that can be enforced. The perception was that Canada must work with other players such as international organizations, scientists and other

countries for lasting change. Awareness of Canadian diplomatic efforts on the overfishing issue and of the existence of organizations such as NAFO was almost non-existent.

- There were also concerns about whether or not Canada's own legal and illegal fishing were contributing to the problem. Stakeholder participants were more concerned that a stronger focus on global overfishing may divert resources away from domestic enforcement or other important programs.

Communications Approach

- Communications materials attracted a wide range of views. Some segments of the groups rejected almost any message from DFO due to the attitudes towards government that they brought to the table. However, most appreciate learning about Canada's actions to date. *"It should really be brought to the public eye."*
- General population participants liked to learn about progress being made on this issue and they wanted to know more about what other countries are doing, who Canada's allies are and what kinds of penalties can be meted out to offenders. Education of general population in Canada and Europe was suggested as an important part of the solution: enforcement, diplomacy and education.
- It was clear that care must be taken to avoid facts that create an impression that is the opposite of what was intended (i.e., the reference to eight citations of foreign vessels was consistently seen as a sign of a weak policy not a strong one and caused much frustration within the groups). Without context financial numbers, such as the \$45 million strategy, evoke a mix of reactions. Big dollar amounts should be explained consistently in terms of actions (i.e., \$15 million for increased monitoring) or broken down somewhat to provide greater detail on use (\$5 million for this, \$10 million for that). This not only aids understanding and acceptance but also limits the possibility of confusion when the numbers are used for different communications products.

Canada's Strategy

- There was considerable support for involving other government departments such as Foreign Affairs, Defence and Environment Canada in any overfishing strategy.
- There was a strong sense of indignation as foreigners were often perceived to be pillaging inside Canadian waters, as a result, people wanted to know what enforcement there was and what penalties can be issued.
- There was considerable support for taking a harder line and enforcing regulations in international waters. Participants found the lack of punishment very disconcerting, but there was little support for Canada taking unilateral action.
- Stakeholders were the most likely to favour strong action, but felt there were dangers to Canada if it went it alone without allies. International partnerships or alliances were seen to be critical to Canada's success.
- The possibility of there being retaliation in the form of economic sanctions against Canada was a consideration. But Alberta and British Columbia participants pointed out that we have already withstood US actions on softwood lumber and beef exports. Still,

there was general agreement that these possibilities have to be weighed against the potential advantages of taking any kind of unilateral action.

- There was universal support for making the principle of sustainable development the centrepiece of Canada's global strategy on international overfishing. Participants agreed that Canada needs to be seen to be acting out of concern for the global fishery and not just out of self-interest. The idea of Canada taking the lead on this issue was generally supported.

B. Suggested Future Public Opinion Research

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is already planning a second phase of qualitative research to be conducted in various European cities in the winter of 2005. This research will be invaluable as a baseline study of how engaged Europeans and fishery and environmental stakeholders look upon this issue. DFO has some medium-term strategies both in Canada and in Europe that will benefit from environmental tracking.

We suggest that a follow-up to this Canadian qualitative research would be a quantitative study. Focus group research can tell us something about the range of opinions and the kinds of language used by the Canadian public, but it cannot tell us with any precision how prevalent Canadians' opinions are. As DFO's policies in this area get implemented and communicated, it will be useful to measure the perceived their effectiveness through the use of omnibus questions on a national vehicle (i.e., FOCUS CANADA). It will also be very beneficial for DFO to track how the salience of this issue increases or decreases over time.

It is also possible that more qualitative research may be required down the road – if there are some major developments requiring a shift in approach or if DFO wants to test reaction to potential new policy measures or communications materials. The same holds true for the planned European sessions.

There will also be a need to conduct some follow-up research among stakeholders, as there are further developments on this file. A quantitative survey of stakeholders is not very practical. It might make more sense in the future to set up some intensive one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders to get their unvarnished opinions on DFO's latest actions dealing with overfishing.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

A. Initial Awareness and Impressions of Fisheries

Top-of-mind associations

At the start of every session with the general public, participants were asked to form groups of two or three, and to discuss what they knew about fisheries in Canada and what they most wanted to know more about the industry. The stakeholders were given a slightly different exercise whereby they identified problems facing the commercial fishing industry in general.

This exercise was very useful in terms of identifying how Canadians in various communities saw the fisheries and what their top-of-mind associations were. It was notable that there was a great contrast between how the general public relates to this issue in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) and how they react elsewhere in Canada. The farther away from NL, the more people tended to identify the fishery with environmental or conservation issues such as toxins, fish farm concerns, potential species extinction and concerns about how Canada is defending its sovereignty, etc. In NL, the preoccupation was much more tied to local economic considerations and job losses, and the level of knowledge about overfishing issues was that much higher.

In Toronto and Calgary, we were dealing with people living in cities that are very far from the coasts and where the fishery has little direct economic impact; though it should be noted that several participants in these sessions were either originally from Atlantic Canada or had family there. This was a sign of how the issue of the fishery is very symbolic to Canadians – even when they live far from the coasts. Participants in all the groups quickly became very animated on this topic and exhibited quite a bit of knowledge and concern over fishery-related issues.

Many of the top-of-mind concerns were environmental, with several participants in each session in these communities mentioning their concerns about toxic spills, PCBs in salmon from fish farms or mercury in tuna. Other top-of-mind issues mentioned that were environmental in nature included pollution contaminating fish, use of growth hormones with fish, use of drift nets by commercial fishers that also catch dolphins, etc. Many people in these sessions with the general public were under the impression that pollution was a major cause of shrinking fish stocks. It was noted that fish is becoming more and more popular as a food and that people like it because it is reputed to be less fattening and healthier. The flip side of this coin is that people were also very concerned about the safety of fish as a food source.

There was also a lot of awareness of the economic hardship facing the fishery sector, with many of the male participants, in particular, mentioning how fishing was a “very hard way to make a living” and that fish stocks were declining for a variety of reasons. Quite a few men in Toronto and Calgary made spontaneous mention of overfishing as being something that they knew was going on and seeing this as a threat to our fish stocks. The cod fishery was often described as being “dead” and there was a perception that NL was now an economic wasteland as a result of so many jobs being lost in the wake of the decline of the cod stocks.

It was also notable that in Calgary and in the general public session in Nanaimo, there was also quite a bit of discussion of overfishing on the west coast – particularly interception of salmon in the Alaska Panhandle – as well as discussion about issues involving the First Nations fishery, and the perception that they are totally unrestricted in terms of what they are allowed to catch and when. However, even in western Canada there was a lot of awareness of the poor state of the fishery in Atlantic Canada and the impact of overfishing. It should be noted that, to the

extent that overfishing was mentioned, it was done in a very generic way that typically included overfishing by domestic poachers and illegal fishing by foreigners in Canadian waters. The whole notion of there being overfishing in international waters was frequently not well-understood.

In Nanaimo, the top-of-mind issues mentioned by the general public were quite similar to what we heard in Toronto and Calgary. The emphasis was almost totally on fish farms and the environmental damage they cause, fish lice, preferential treatment for Native fishers, pollution and contamination of habitat. Not surprisingly, the focus was also very much on the salmon fishery almost to the exclusion of any discussion of other fisheries. The whole way of thinking about the fishery was quite different by the general public in Nanaimo, with many people aware of the economic impact of the sport fishing industry and recreational use.

Some of the questions that general public participants in Toronto, Calgary and Nanaimo came up with in terms of what they most wanted to know more about included:

What percentage of our economy is fishery-dependent?

Is Canada helping (regarding overfishing) or are we part of the problem?

What are the laws and regulations around the fishery?

What sizes of fish are allowed to be caught?

Are there rules about restoring fish we catch, the way there is for reforestation?

How much cod are the seals eating?

What are our boundaries?

How does offshore drilling affect fish?

How are fishing quotas set?

What is being done about pollution in the oceans?

As one might expect, general public participants in Halifax and in NL had a somewhat more focused view in terms of what they knew about Atlantic fisheries. Participants tended to get right into a discussion of the economic issues around the industry. They identified such issues as depletion of stocks, overfishing, and specific fish stock issues taking place in the NAFO Regulatory Area. In Halifax, issues around the Native fishery also came up. In some ways, the general public responses in Halifax were quite similar to those in central Canada and the west, with a lot of top-of-mind discussion about the environmental hazards of fish farms and concerns about toxins in the fish they eat. The general public in Halifax tended to see themselves more as consumers of fish and seafood than as people who were economically dependent on fishing.

In St. John's and Clarenville, the focus was much more on how the government manages the fishery, and the perception that there is too much bureaucracy and a lack of enforcement of overfishing regulations. There were a lot more specific mentions of employment-related issues, such as finding work for unemployed fish plant workers and retraining programs for fishers who can no longer work. Some participants began talking about issues relating to overfishing in international waters right off the bat, specifically mentioning the problem with overfishing in the Nose and Tail of the Grand Bank and the Flemish Cap – an area that lies just outside of Canada's 200-mile limit. There was also some talk of a lack of dialogue between the government and fishers themselves.

In the east, the kinds of things that people wanted to know more about tended to be more detail-oriented and technical, such as:

How are native and non-Native quotas set?

How are small independent fishers treated?

Who decides on how to divide up the resource?

When will Canada stand up to foreigners who overfish?

Why is there still no cod 12 years after the start of the moratorium?

What are the penalties to foreigners who overfish?

What species are most endangered?

What is Canada doing about overfishing? Is there any real surveillance?

Perceived importance of the fishery to Canada

There was an almost universal perception among participants that the fishery is very important to Canada. It was clear that, even in areas of Canada that are very removed from the fishery industry, there was a perception that fishing is an integral part of the historic economic evolution of Canada. In fact, several people mentioned the fact that, in some ways, Canada owes its very existence to the discovery of huge cod stocks off Newfoundland in the 16th century. If anything, the participants tended to overestimate the economic importance of fishing to Canada as a whole with some people estimating that it could be as much as 20 percent of our exports! However, it was also generally acknowledged that fishing was not as economically important to Canada as a whole as some other primary industries such as forestry and farming.

There was also an acknowledgement by most participants that when the fishery is in trouble, all Canadians pay a price (i.e., some participants suggested that taxpayers as a whole end up footing the bill for retraining and Employment Insurance). In Calgary, it was also noted that when the fishery is in bad shape, more people from coastal communities migrate to Alberta. It was understood that fishing was a way of life and a form of sustenance in coastal communities, and that it is an industry that needs to be protected. Some participants, who tended to view the fishery more as an environmental issue, mentioned that the fishery was important to Canada because when it was in trouble and fish stocks were collapsing it could have consequences for the whole marine eco-system. Whether people related to the fishery more on economic terms or on environmental and conservation terms, it was widely understood that there is a ripple effect of the state of the fishery on the rest of the economy and the eco-system.

Some people in Toronto, Halifax and Calgary also mentioned that fishing is important in terms of its impact on the consumer. When the fishery is in a state of collapse and fish stocks disappear, it will inevitably make fish more expensive at the supermarket. There were also comments about the need for a country like Canada to be self-sufficient in food, and how fish was becoming more and more popular as a food as people seek lower fat foods and as a result of the growing popularity of foods such as sushi. There were some concerns that there would be a looming scarcity of fish to eat as areas of the world get “fished out”. It was notable that in Nanaimo, and to a lesser extent in Calgary, people also identified fishing as being important because of all the tourists who come to do sport fishing. Participants in Nanaimo also took a more ecological view of the fishery. One participant expressed this as follows:

“Fishery is like a bell weather of how our environment is doing. It’s the canary in the coal mine.”

In Halifax, some people expressed the view that fishing was one of several resource-based industries that was very important in a certain region, but not important in others. The importance of the fishery to Nova Scotia was comparable to the importance of wheat in Saskatchewan. In Newfoundland and Labrador, it went without saying that fishing was seen as being very important to the provincial economy and also as a way of keeping outport communities alive. There was also a sense among the NL participants (which seems to be false

based upon the results of other discussions across the country) that the rest of Canada did not recognize the importance of fishing and was not concerned about the plight of fishers.

“There was a lot more fuss over Alberta beef getting into the U.S. than there ever was about fish.”

Future of the fishery

Prior to sharing background information and fact sheets, for the most part, Canadians in all communities tended to regard the fishery as either a declining industry or as a stagnant industry. The prevailing view across the country was that fishing on the east coast was an industry in a long-term decline. Many people described it as inevitable that the fishing industry could only get smaller and employ fewer people. The perception that the fishery is in decline came from a combination of powerful images that so many people seemed to carry of drastically reduced fish stocks – of which the case of the Northern cod is the most obvious example – and perceptions of chronic high unemployment in fishery dependent communities.

With a few exceptions, most participants have a top of mind impression that primary industries like fishing and forestry are the “old economy” and that, in the future, Canada would probably rely less and less on these kinds of jobs. Some people remarked that fishing was a very tough way to make a living and that young people today probably don’t want to do it and would rather “work in an office somewhere”.

By the end of the discussion there were also some dissenting views on the future of the fishery. A couple of people remarked that more and more fish was being eaten in Canada and so in that sense the fishery was becoming more important. There was some also mention in St. John’s and in Clarenville that the fishing industry was not necessarily shrinking but simply changing and adapting – some mentioning how within a year of the cod moratorium, the fish and seafood industry in NL had one of its best years by focusing more on crab and shrimp and molluscs. Though it was also noted that even though these new areas of fishing were generating revenue, there was a sense that they were not creating jobs the way the cod fishery and fish packing had in the past.

In Nanaimo, there was somewhat more optimism and awareness of a more diverse fishing economy (i.e., sport fishing, tourism, etc.). However, even there, people expressed the concern that, between threats from overfishing and from pollution, it was doubtful that the fishing industry could remain sustainable in the long run. Outside of Nanaimo and a couple of participants in Calgary, participants in the rest of the sessions knew very little about the west coast fishery. It seemed from what was said in these sessions that when Canadians think of the fishery, they think primarily of Atlantic Canada, unless they literally live by the Pacific Ocean. There was, however, still some recollection of old conflicts over salmon stocks being intercepted by Americans in the Alaska Panhandle. Notably, there was also the viewpoint that the Atlantic fishery represented the more traditional way of the industry, whereas the Pacific fishery was more modern.

In NL, participants expressed a very localized view of the industry and spoke with great scepticism. There was some hope that, possibly, the fishery could become more important if Canada could create more “value-added jobs” in fishing and also diversify into other new types of seafood. But most people in both St. John’s and Clarenville felt that the federal government wanted the fishery to shrink and wanted to simply manage the decline of an industry. Some people suspected that the long-term government strategy was to get small operators out of the

fishery and let it be dominated by large corporate fishing interests. There was the perception that, however important fishing might be to the Province, since NL's proportion of the Canadian population was steadily shrinking, fishing was destined to become less and less important to Canada as a whole.

There was some limited discussion about perceived differences between the east coast and west coast fisheries. One point that was very clear was that the only place where there was very much awareness of the west coast fishery at all was on the west coast itself. Even in Calgary, people tended to be more aware of the issues around the east coast fishery. There was some vague awareness that "*they catch lots of salmon on the west coast*", but all the news stories about the cod fishery in NL and the various conflicts between native and non-native fishers in Nova Scotia (NS) and New Brunswick (NB) had much higher profiles in the news. It was also noted that, in NL and NS, fishing was a large part of the whole provincial economy. Even in Nanaimo itself, it was acknowledged that British Columbia (BC) was far less dependent on the fishery than were some of the Atlantic Provinces because there were so many other big industries in BC such as forestry, mining, high-tech, tourism, film, etc. It was also felt that the fishery in BC was more industrialized and modern, with bigger ships.

Challenges for the fishery

The discussion on major challenges facing the fishery was often somewhat of a repeat of the initial discussion about top-of-mind fishery-related concerns. There were some relatively predictable regional patterns. People in Nanaimo, Toronto and Calgary tended to see the challenges more in terms of environmental issues, including sustainability and conservation considerations. In contrast, in both NL communities, and to a lesser extent in Halifax, the identification of challenges for the fishing industry revolved almost entirely on the cod moratorium and its impact on the local economy. It was also notable that in Halifax and the NL sessions, there was also mention of the seal hunt. But again, this was within the context of the apparent abundance of seals that were supposedly "eating all the cod."

Some of the challenges to the fisheries that were specifically identified most frequently included:

- Overfishing by foreigners
- Keeping the fishery sustainable
- Preventing depletion of fish stocks
- Impact of pollution and global warming
- Maintaining a balance between economics and maintaining stocks
- Fish farm dangers
- Bad "government" science that has sent the industry in the wrong direction
- Government not paying enough attention to fishers themselves
- Domestic poaching by natives and by others
- Lack of money for research
- Lack of enforcement of rules
- Lack of penalties for foreign overfishers
- Keeping fish safe to eat for consumers
- Decline of the seal hunt leading to seal eating too much cod

B. Role of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Government's handling of fisheries

Participants had a variety of impressions of how the federal government is dealing with the fisheries overall. By and large, the impression tended to be quite negative and cynical – and perhaps uniformed. People could not identify specific government policies or decisions with which they disagreed. Rather, it was more that people assumed the government must be doing a poor job since the consensus was that the east coast fishery in particular was in such peril. In the absence of any other information, people tended to blame government mismanagement. Many participants in Toronto and Calgary confessed they really knew little or nothing about what the federal government was actually doing with regard to the fishery. But they assumed that if the fishers were upset, jobs were being lost, PCBs were turning up in salmon and cod stocks were still no where to be seen – the government must be “screwing up.”

In Nanaimo, in particular, and also among the women in Toronto and Calgary, there was a strong impression that the Canadian government was weak and unwilling to take a stand on fishery-related issues. They were under the impression that Canada never stands up for itself internationally. Some mentioned how Brian Tobin had once “led the fight” over turbot. With little awareness of the details, they expressed frustration that what they saw as a strong, positive action was left with no follow-through. It was also noted in Nanaimo that the federal government is thought to be completely fixated on the east coast fishery and that next to nothing was getting done on the Pacific coast.

In NL, the consensus was that the fisheries were a relatively low priority for the federal government as a whole. It appeared to be a common perception that NL has few seats in the federal Parliament and therefore isn't seen as a vote-winning issue for the government. That being said, some participants did acknowledge that the federal government has many other priorities such as health care and the economy as a whole, and that it was not realistic to expect them to make fisheries the top priority. Another comment made frequently in all the Atlantic coastal communities – particularly among stakeholders – was that DFO tends to spend time and money enforcing regulations to the letter in-shore when they can fine Canadians for minor infractions, but that they did almost no enforcement against foreign vessels. In Nanaimo, the stakeholders complained that there was a lack of resources to enforce domestic regulations.

Another issue that came up quite a bit in Halifax and in Nanaimo, in particular, was the belief that DFO had gone through some massive cuts in funding in the 90s and that there was now insufficient resources to be able to enforce the most flagrant domestic violations and standards. DFO was widely seen to be suffering from a severe shortage of human resources.

Some typical comments on the role of government were as follows:

- *The federal government is stuck at a red light.*
- *They don't have the will to make fisheries a priority.*
- *They talk a lot, but they don't put their money where their mouth is.*
- *They do just enough to keep everyone quiet.*
- *They let other countries get away with murder while they police every minor transgression done by Canadians.*
- *Politicians know nothing about fish and won't consult fishers.*

- *Government has to worry about health and the military and the economy – fisheries aren't worth enough votes.*

Assessment of DFO's role

The overall awareness of DFO varied enormously in the sessions. In the four sessions conducted among stakeholders, awareness of DFO was almost universal and the same could be said for the general public groups in Atlantic Canada and, to a slightly lesser extent, in Nanaimo. It should be noted that, in cities like St. John's, Nanaimo and Halifax, DFO has quite a high local profile as a result of occupying large buildings that local people see on a daily basis. It was notable that among the stakeholders in each community and among Atlantic Canadians, there appeared to be a strong sentiment that the actual employees of DFO who worked in the community were very good local people who were very well-informed and well-meaning. But there was a lot of concern among stakeholders that the "bureaucrats in Ottawa" were misdirecting the DFO staff on-site.

As mentioned above, it was also noted that the federal government spending cutbacks of the 90s had been so drastic in the case of DFO that the people working for DFO always seemed to be "run ragged" due to understaffing. One point that needs to be stressed is that stakeholders in all communities drew a major distinction between the DFO employees that they deal directly with and the faceless "bureaucrats in Ottawa." Over and over again, stakeholders were very complimentary about the expertise and professionalism of the DFO staff with whom they work. But they felt that the funding of the Department has been so mercilessly cutback that these people find it almost impossible to do their jobs properly.

In Toronto and in Calgary, awareness of the Department was very low and, in some cases, non-existent. A couple of women had some vague awareness of the acronym DFO, but otherwise it was unknown. A couple of participants, once again, made some reference to Brian Tobin but with little memory of what had actually happened. One or two people also remembered having heard something about an international vessel being pulled over in May 2004, but did not link the incident to DFO. People generally assumed that there was some federal government department or agency that concerned itself with fishery related issues, but the name recognition of the Department was very low.

When it came to the desired priorities for DFO, there was some consensus that these ought to include fighting overfishing by foreigners, and dealing with pollution in the ocean and working to make fishing a sustainable industry. A lot of people, especially in Halifax, were also under the impression that the Coast Guard was too small and needed reinforcements. Some people in the west added that they thought that DFO needed to put more of a priority on scientific research on the oceans and fishery so as to make better decisions. In Nanaimo, a lot of people wanted the protection of fish habitat to be a higher priority with more money for salmon enhancement programs, along with more scientific research and accurate fish counting. There was also a prevalent attitude in Nanaimo that DFO and the federal government in general were always systematically neglecting western Canada and the west coast fishery. There was a feeling that DFO's priority is, overwhelmingly, the east coast fishery and that the resources dedicated to fisheries issues affecting the west coast are much too low.

In Calgary and Toronto, people tended to see DFO's desired priorities more in terms of fighting against pollution in the oceans and replenishing fish stocks. Many participants in these cities drew parallels between fishery and forestry policies and were under the impression that if

forests could be replenished through reforestation, the same ought to be done in principle with fisheries.

In NL, the desired top priority for DFO was clearly to deal with overfishing. It was often said that Canada had to stop being so passive on this issue and instead start taking a hard line – even if this meant some unilateral action by Canada that could have some retaliatory consequences.

One point that was made repeatedly by stakeholders and to a lesser extent the general public in St. John's, Clarenville, Halifax and Nanaimo was that DFO badly needed more resources and more people to be able to enforce rules properly. The broad consensus was that the Department was so gravely understaffed that even the most routine domestic inspections were being neglected and that the quality of the science from DFO was declining. Also, there was at least some reference in most of the groups suggesting that DFO should re-examine the operation of fish farms. This was an unprompted discussion. Participants described fish farms as bad for the environment and bad for human health – though there was some uncertainty about whether or not fish farming fell under DFO's jurisdiction. Another priority that was mentioned in NL was for DFO to do more research and have programs on fish and seafood products other than cod that could be a good substitute for cod in case if it never comes back.

C. Reaction to the Overfishing Issue

Top-of-mind associations with overfishing

When participants were asked for their top-of-mind impressions and associations with the word “overfishing”, many of the images were quite consistent across the country. The most potent images were of drift nets scooping up everything off the ocean floor, including dolphins, and with wasted “by-catch.” Some people saw parallels between fish in the year 2004 and what happened to the buffalo on the plains in the nineteenth century.

However, there were some subtle differences in these associations from place to place. In Toronto, Calgary and even in Nanaimo, the images tended to more of the above-mentioned drift nets in the high seas and a more generalized notion that “mankind” is greedy and fishing in unsustainable ways. There was also more consciousness of overfishing being tied into conservation issues, with lots of comments about how whole species are being wiped out. But, awareness of the specifics of how exactly overfishing is occurring in international waters and who is doing it was not very high among most participants.

In the Atlantic communities, the top-of-mind associations with overfishing were much more focused on the image of foreign trawlers illegally fishing in Canadian waters and sneaking off with their catch. There was also more specific reference to international ships sitting right at the 200-mile limit and taking everything in sight – particularly on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap. In contrast, in Nanaimo, it was noted that the continental shelf is much smaller on the Pacific coast and that as a result very little commercial fishing on the west coast happens outside of the 200-mile limit in the first place. Therefore, they are much more concerned with the possibility of American overfishing in the Alaska Panhandle and with local poaching within Canadian waters.

It was notable that even in places like St. John's and Clarenville, where the issue of overfishing has had plenty of publicity over the years, there were still some apparent major misconceptions. Most participants would continually dwell on the notion that overfishing meant foreign boats

fishing illegally *within* Canadian waters. The idea that the overfishing issue was really more about what was going on in international waters where Canada has limited powers to enforce any quotas often seemed to go right over peoples' heads.

Some of the specific words people used to describe how they thought of overfishing were as follows:

- *People fishing where they shouldn't be fishing.*
- *An empty ocean.*
- *Big drift nets scooping up everything.*
- *Dolphins caught in drift nets.*
- *Lost jobs/boarded up fishing villages.*
- *Human greed/killing the goose that lays the golden egg.*
- *Foreigners with factory trawlers pillaging everything.*
- *Ships full of fish sailing away to other countries.*

Overfishing as a Canadian and a global problem

Participants almost unanimously took the view that overfishing was a major problem for Canada as a whole, though in Atlantic Canada people sometimes wondered if people in central Canada realized it. The participants in Toronto and Calgary tended to think that overfishing was very much a big problem both for Canada and for the world as a whole. People in those cities pointed to all the job losses and the rising price of fish at the supermarket as being signs that this problem is affecting everyone at least indirectly. In the NL communities of St. John's and Clarenville, the problem of overfishing tended to be seen by participants in much more local terms, such as how the local economy was being affected and what was going on off NL. They were more sceptical of how overfishing was seen to be a problem for the rest of the country.

Outside of NL, participants were also quite receptive to the idea that overfishing was not just a Canadian problem but also a problem for the whole world. It was pointed out several times that "*fish do not carry passports*" and that the oceans of the world are all interconnected. Some people hypothesized that one of the reasons for the more recent overfishing off Canada was that other fish stocks around the world had already been wiped out by overfishing and therefore ships from other countries had to travel further and further to get fish. It was noted by some that the oceans are a "common resource" for the world and that when one area is overfished, it will inevitably have a ripple effect all over the globe. Some participants who were well-informed on conservation issues were concerned about how whole areas of the globe were being "fished out," and how drift nets were destroying coral and destroying sources of food for whales, etc. They often commented on how the state of our oceans was critical to the global eco-system. A participant noted: "*Even if one country overfishes, it affects all other countries – eventually.*"

In contrast, to the extent that overfishing was seen as a "global" problem in St. John's it was in the context of fishing boats flying under flags of convenience and fishing illegally or that countries from around the world were guilty of overfishing off NL. The more typical feeling in NL was that they had enough to worry about in terms of the local impact of overfishing without also concerning themselves with the rest of the world. A typical comment in St. John's was:

"It (overfishing) must be happening everywhere, but we don't hear about it anywhere else and only here do we have prime fishing grounds outside our 200-mile limit."

The level of awareness as to which specific countries were guilty of overfishing varied considerably from community to community. It was also noted by some participants in every community that Canada is probably part of the problem. Our fish industry was suspected of being just as greedy as those of other countries. Also “bad science” from DFO was suspected of having led our fishers to think they could catch a lot more than they should have in the 80s and it was pointed out that Canada has its share of poachers as well. One stakeholder in Halifax noted:

“This is really all about Newfoundland, this isn’t that much of an issue for the rest of us. They will tell you the cod are all gone because of the seals eating too many of them or because of foreign overfishing. They will blame everyone except themselves.”

Awareness and concern about overfishing in international waters

As has been mentioned, many – if not most – general population participants, including the session in NL, did not seem to grasp the full concept of overfishing in international waters by other countries. When they were asked about overfishing, the general public participants tended to automatically imagine foreign trawlers illegally fishing inside Canadian territorial waters. People were understandably very quick to demand that drastic enforcement action be taken against this. But when participants were given a detailed explanation of how much of the overfishing problem is actually in what is happening beyond the 200-mile limit, there was some acknowledgment that the solution may not be so simple. Some of the better-informed general public participants in St. John’s, Clarenville and Halifax were much more aware of this side of the issue and virtually all of the stakeholders understood this to be the case.

Once overfishing in international waters was explained to people, they had no trouble at all understanding how this poses a major threat to Canadian fisheries and to the global ocean ecosystem. It was universally understood that fish “know no boundaries” and that if there is mass overfishing in international waters, then it will cause fish stocks to decline in Canadian waters. In NL, there was some concern that international ships were sitting just beyond the 200-mile limit. Their perception is that these vessels overfish on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks where the cod spawning grounds and “straddling stocks” are located.

It should be noted that the vast majority of participants were not aware of any measures being taken specifically by DFO to combat the problem of foreign overfishing in international waters. There was however a definite sense that Canada needs to take some leadership on this issue and make a longer term commitment. *“I’d support it, as long as it’s not a flavour of the month.”*

Among the stakeholders on the east coast and some general public participants in St. John’s and Clarenville, there was limited awareness of the existence of NAFO (Northwest Atlantic Fishery Organization) as an institution whose role is to deal with this problem. However, a couple of stakeholders in NL had personally attended NAFO meetings and were able to inform and update the group.

Most participants believed that foreign overfishing in international waters is a far greater threat to the fishery than is domestic overfishing in Canadian waters. That being said, there were a lot of concerns in Halifax and Nanaimo about how much poaching and overfishing was being done domestically. This could take the form of local fishers exceeding quotas, people fishing without licenses and fishing by First Nations which was widely believed to be totally unregulated. It was further felt that even if these domestic infractions added up to a lot less actual damage to world fish stocks than what is happening internationally, Canada must set an example for the world. It

was suggested a number of times that if we in Canada want to take the lead on international overfishing, we had better make sure our own record is unblemished. It was also noted that, while Canada has the jurisdiction and power to enforce domestic regulations, our ability to do anything about what happens in international waters is more limited, and therefore some people felt that we should concentrate on trying to take action where we can make a difference – in our own waters.

Reaction to background information

A two-page document entitled *Background on Fisheries in Canada* was circulated to all participants. They were asked to read it and make note of any points that attracted their attention.

Overall reaction to the document was mixed. Some of the general public groups – particularly outside NL – found it quite interesting and were inclined to take the information in it at face value. In many cases, people who had previously known absolutely nothing about what DFO was doing about foreign overfishing were impressed that anything was being done at all. The document gave them the impression that “progress was being made” on this issue.

Among all stakeholders and the general public in NL, there was a lot of scepticism about the document. They often commented that “we have seen all this before” and that the same thing could have been written 20 years ago. They tended to be very dismissive of whether the government would actually follow through on any of the actions mentioned.

Certain specific points in the backgrounder attracted a lot of notice both in a positive and in a negative way.

- Many participants remarked on the fact that Canada is the fifth largest exporter of fish and seafood in the world and that the value of our exports totalled \$4.5 billion. For many participants in Toronto, Calgary and Nanaimo, and the general public in Halifax, it was a bit of an eye opener to know that the fishery was that big. Many had no idea that Canada was so close to the top of all countries in terms of fish exports. Among the stakeholders and in NL, these numbers came as much less of a surprise. In fact, some of those people wondered what four countries exported MORE than Canada if Canada was number five!
- The concept that “fish know no boundaries” was often noted from the document.
- There is a reference in the document to “rogue vessels.” Participants wanted an explanation of what that meant. For many, it created an image of a pirate ship with a skull and crossbones flag, or of ships under flags of convenience that are not responsible to anyone.
- The words “International cooperation must put an end to overfishing or else overfishing will put an end to the world’s fisheries” was also frequently underlined by participants across the country.
- There were very mixed reactions to the line about how “Canada’s Prime Minister has made it clear...” Some people, particularly away from the coasts, found this to be quite a strong statement that made them feel that action was being taken and that the issue was

being taken seriously. But stakeholders and coastal participants often interpreted it in an almost sarcastic tone as meaning “*stop overfishing or else...we will tell you to stop overfishing again!*”

- People tended to like the statement that Canada will try to find international partners, but they wanted to know more about what other countries were doing on this issue – who were our allies and who was being an obstacle.
- The reference to \$45 million dollars being spent on this issue was a major flashpoint in almost every session. Although a small minority of people thought this seemed like a lot of money to be spending on this issue; the most common reaction was that if the fishery was worth \$4.5 billion dollars a year to Canada, why was it being proposed that we spend only \$45 million a year on protecting the fishery from the ravages of overfishing? Participants quickly did the math and saw that this was just one percent of the value of the exports and when they were told that the \$45 million was to be spread over five years, it further fuelled their feeling that it was all “window dressing.” The amount was frequently described as “peanuts.”
- In Halifax and in Nanaimo, the stakeholders had a particularly negative reaction to this spending of \$45 million because they assumed that any additional money spent on international overfishing would be a dollar taken away from all the other underfunded important work that DFO does and yet it would not be enough money to make a real difference in preventing overfishing.
- People were generally glad to know that there would be some aerial surveillance, but they also wanted to know what other countries were doing to contribute toward the enforcement of NAFO regulations in the NRA.
- The reference to two or three Canadian Coast Guard vessels patrolling the NRA only drew people’s attention to how small our navy and coast guard are. “*How can you expect two ships to police the whole north Atlantic? It will be like looking for a needle in a haystack.*”
- One passage in the document that sparked ridicule in almost every session was the reference to Canada conducting 171 inspections and issuing “**eight citations**” to foreign vessels for fishing violations. Over and over again, participants made derisive remarks about how eight citations seemed like nothing to them and they wondered how many other vessels were getting away with overfishing. Also, the link between increased inspection and decreased citations led many to question the effectiveness of the action. In any case, there is no explanation of what a citation is and whether it leads to any punishment. People wanted much more information on the penalties.
- The fact that there is improved international cooperation and European support was seen as a good thing, but for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in general, and especially for stakeholders, there is a lot of scepticism that this will ever actually reduce overfishing and make a real difference to them. The line saying that there are “no easy or fast solutions” made one St. John’s participant remark “*people were probably saying that 100 years ago.*”

- Stakeholders in Nanaimo, in particular, were very upset that the document claims to be about “Canada’s” strategy on international overfishing, yet there was no mention whatsoever of anything being done on the Pacific Coast – it all seemed to be about the Atlantic overfishing only.

It was very notable how in discussing this background document as a whole, participants kept coming back to the fact that there were “*only eight citations*”. This was almost invariably seen as a sign of what an inadequate strategy Canada must be currently pursuing to deal with international overfishing.

As mentioned earlier, there was a lot of curiosity about what other countries were doing on this issue and whether Canada was left “holding the bag” for the world. There was little awareness of the role of other countries so, instead, people tended to speculate based on national stereotypes. It was assumed sometimes that most western European countries are very progressive and environmentally-friendly and therefore they were probably “good guys” who were active on this issue. There was often an assumption that some Third World countries that are desperate to feed themselves are more likely to be guilty of overfishing and to be less scrupulous about a long-term conservation issue like this. The east coast stakeholders and the general public participants in NL had different views about the role of European countries. Many participants assumed that Canada is probably taking the global lead on this issue because they associate Canada with being a “boy scout” among nations and trying to do what’s good for the world as a whole. There was quite a bit of curiosity about where the U.S. stood on the overfishing issue.

Some participants also blamed multinational fish companies for this situation. They felt that fishing was now happening on a large corporate scale in a way that it never did before and, as a result, fish are getting fished out rapaciously. There was thought to be nothing left for “the little guy.” It was also noted that the technology for fishing had advanced to a point where it was now possible for large factory ships to overfish on a scale that never could have been done a generation ago.

Awareness of DFO’s overfishing strategy

For the most part, there was very little awareness on the part of the general public of what DFO’s actions have been to date in terms of dealing with international overfishing. The most that any individuals were aware of was that, in the past, Canada has had what were described as “*flash in the pan*” type incidents, such as the conflict over turbot. But it was suggested that these did not lead to any ongoing progress on the issue. The stakeholder groups in the Atlantic provinces had much more awareness of some of the mechanics by which fishing on the high seas is **supposed** to be managed and there was more reference to the existence of such things as NAFO and the NRA, etc. – and also of the Law of the Sea.

In all the sessions – stakeholder and non-stakeholder alike – there was little real knowledge of whether or not fisheries in international waters around the world were well-regulated. There was certainly a consensus that it was NOT well-regulated in the North Atlantic since there has been such a dramatic decline in fish stocks. But no one had any idea of what was going on in other bodies of water such as the Pacific or Arctic Oceans. Even in Nanaimo, people were more willing to express an opinion about how the Atlantic fisheries were managed in international waters than they were about how the international Pacific fishery was managed. With the exception of one or two fishers in Nanaimo, who was aware of some of the tuna agreements

applying to the high seas in the Pacific, the fishers on the west coast who participated in the focus group did not tend to venture into international waters and did not really think about it.

In all the sessions, it was acknowledged that in order to deal with the overfishing problem, DFO would have to work with other players such as international organizations, scientists and the equivalents of DFO in other countries. This was seen as something that had to happen since it was understood that there had to be some sort of a diplomatic strategy. Some of the general public groups also mentioned working with the United Nations since that is the first international organization that came to mind as having a mandate to resolve international conflicts. Participants had a more mixed view of whether DFO should work with international environmental or conservation organizations. It was thought that these groups could give Canada some moral suasion in the court of world opinion. Also, in cities like Toronto and Calgary the whole issue of overfishing is often seen very much as a conservation issue with environmental implications.

Some of the stakeholders and people in NL had more of a mixed opinion of environmental groups since some of them associated these groups with very “extreme” behaviour (i.e. tree spiking, boycotts, ruining the seal hunt, etc.). One point that was made repeatedly, especially among stakeholders, was that DFO needed to also involve fishers themselves and listen to what they have to say. It was also suggested that Canada and DFO sponsor a summit of countries bordering the North Atlantic and try to build alliances to get some enforceable regulations for the high seas.

Reaction to news release “Government of Canada Announces New Measures to Combat Foreign Overfishing”

As was the case with the “backgrounder” that was circulated earlier in the sessions, opinions of this news release were very mixed and coloured by the prejudices about the government that different people bring with them into the process. The general public outside of Atlantic Canada and Nanaimo was quite complimentary on the whole. They saw that steps are being taken and that progress is being made, and that the Minister seems to be on the case. Participants in other groups were more hostile and sceptical about the government and were therefore more suspicious of the source of the news release. The stakeholders in Atlantic Canada claim to have “*seen it all before.*” They were convinced that this was all government propaganda to promote the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and to give the *impression* that action was being taken. There was some vague awareness of the points mentioned in the release which was issued in May 2004 on the part of some stakeholders, notably one person in Calgary, but awareness was not high.

Some specific points were raised regarding the content of the release:

- Many people were shocked by the 15,000 tonnes of illegally caught fish – which seems like a huge amount.
- The dollar figures used in the news release were confusing to many people, leading to even more scepticism. People wanted to know how all the various millions added up to the \$45 million mentioned in the background information, and they wanted to know if the money was per year or spread over a longer period.
- The notion of “eminent Canadians” had somewhat of a negative connotation – to many participants it seemed to suggest “political hacks” getting a sinecure.

- The fact that the number of Canadian vessels patrolling will be tripled and that international boats have been boarded was well-received and is a good thing to play up. The fact that the Minister is described getting “angry” also got some favourable comment.
- It is fine to say, “Canada expects all fishing nations...” – but what if they don’t, what recourse is there?

Canada’s strategy

There was almost universal support for the notion that international overfishing should become a “signature issue” for Canada. The idea that this could be to the 2000s what the fight against land mines was to the 90s for Canada went over very well. However, people cautioned that we needed to show that we were serious about it. They suggested that Canada needs to put in a lot of diplomatic effort, spend money and make sure that our own domestic fishing behaviour is beyond reproach. Some participants wondered just how much power and influence Canada actually had in the world, but still felt that it was worth a try.

“Canada has seen enough of the devastation to our cod fishery as a result of overfishing that if we are not going to lead – who will?”

For the most part, people felt that Canada’s strategy was going in the right direction, but there was a concern that there would be no follow-through, and that our threats and attempts to exert pressure on other countries might have no teeth and could be seen to be empty.

D. Priorities for Action

Desired action

Many participants across the country, and not just people in Newfoundland and Labrador or among stakeholders, were frustrated with the slow pace of change when it came to dealing with overfishing. They wanted to see Canada take strong decisive action and “play hard ball.” They expressed a desire to see more Coast Guard, more naval ships, more surveillance and more enforcement – and more punishment. Some of the NL participants pointed out that on a diplomatic level Canada would always be at a comparative disadvantage against an institution as powerful as the European Union and that having more talks had never led to any progress.

Stakeholders and the general public in NL had a variety of ideas for what Canada ought to do about foreign overfishing. The kinds of solutions suggested tended to revolve around more surveillance, more patrols, perhaps getting cooperation from the U.S. navy and, most of all, having “a common rule book” for countries fishing in these waters. Some Clarenville stakeholders felt that the NAFO regulations could do the job, but that Canada was in a better position to enforce those rules. There was also support for Canada unilaterally enforcing regulations and quotas in parts of the Atlantic that are adjacent to Canadian waters. Though stakeholders all understood this to mean “custodial management,” this terminology was not well-known among the general public in NL – or anywhere else for that matter.

One man in St. John’s pointed out:

“Sometimes, it takes one country to stick its neck out for things to change. Before Iceland unilaterally declared a 200-mile limit, countries only had 50-mile limits, then other countries all followed Iceland’s lead.” The implication being that Canada should do the same.

Diplomatic action and enforcement

The consensus in most of the groups was that Canada has been trying to take diplomatic action on this issue for a very long time. This was felt to be important, but it was also thought to be critical that Canada back it up with enforcement and show that “we mean business.” Participants outside of NL were very cognizant of the need for Canada to educate Canadians and educate world opinion on the international overfishing issue. It was suggested that unless Canada has solid allies and agreements to back us up, there would be little real progress. That being said, it came across loud and clear from participants that there needed to be some force used to back up the diplomatic strategy, otherwise there is no reason for the countries that are doing the overfishing not to ignore the rules.

It seemed that in theory Canadians like the idea of using diplomatic tactics. This fits in well with the image Canadians seem to have of themselves. They also felt that Canada needs to be prepared to be more forceful when talking doesn’t work – as seems to be the case. It was also widely believed that if the U.S. were in Canada’s position with regard to overfishing, they would take much more aggressive action and would not be so concerned about retaliation. In the end it was thought that they would get their way.

“I may not like what the Americans are doing in Iraq, but at least they are willing to put their money where their mouth is.”

In NL, both the general public and the stakeholders were more inclined to stress Canada taking aggressive action – though even here this was still in the context of hopefully involving other countries. They wanted Canada to board more vessels, and take control of those parts of the Grand Banks that are beyond the 200-mile limit, unilaterally if necessary (although, paradoxically, the expectation was to have U.S. support before proceeding), and enforce regulations there.

An unprompted solution was to add education as part of the solution. General population participants identified the need for public advocacy without using the term specifically. They suggested that Canada’s strategy needs to be a blend of enforcement, diplomacy and education – through a global lens.

Possibility of retaliation

Participants had very divergent views on the issue of aggressive Canadian policies on overfishing provoking possible retaliation by Europe and other countries. Interestingly, in Toronto and Calgary, the women’s groups were much more willing to endure retaliation as a price Canada may have to pay for “doing the right thing.” They took a more emotional and almost moralistic view of this. The men in these cities were more dispassionate on this issue. They liked the idea of Canada taking a hard line but they were also concerned about the economic impact on Canada as a whole and they wondered how grave the consequences might be if Canada took steps that were viewed as being illegal by other countries. Nonetheless, it was noted that Canada has already put up with major retaliation by the U.S. on the softwood

lumber dispute and the ban on Canadian beef imports without really grave consequences. Canada's economy as a whole was described as doing relatively well despite these events.

Others – particularly away from the coasts – recognize that there are things that other countries could do that could be very harmful to Canada and that we have to be careful not to escalate things too much. If Canada is going to take steps that could cause retaliation, we need to have some allies and not pit Canada against the rest of the world. Overall, the consensus was that it was better to do something than to do nothing and some people wondered if any progress was possible without at least a bit of a “carrot and stick” approach. Most participants in NL were convinced that other Canadians would not be willing to risk retaliation that might affect the economy in their provinces, though as was mentioned, there is reason to believe that many Canadians outside of NL, particularly in Calgary and Nanaimo, would in fact be prepared to endure at least some retaliation.

With regard to how resources dedicated to dealing with overfishing should be allocated, the feeling was that diplomacy, while very important, does not necessarily cost very much – “words are cheap.” Enforcement was thought to be where more of the money needs to be spent because if Canada is going to take steps such as boarding more vessels, doing more inspections and deterring rogue vessels, it will mean major reinforcements for the Coast Guard and DFO inspectors and possibly for the Navy – and these are all things that cost a lot of money. Several people commented that, whatever we spend, it had better be more than a mere \$45 million over five years.

What would success on the overfishing problem look like?

Participants felt across the board that if Canada succeeded in solving the problem of overfishing on the high seas, that success would be quite obvious. Participants expected that success would mean that there would be jobs again in the outports of eastern Canada, that fishing villages would flourish again, that cod stocks would come back, that fewer foreign ships would be found to be doing anything illegal, that Canada will have a list of allies working with us on this issue and that the global fish stock situation will improve. Some also expected that success might mean cheaper cod and other fish at the supermarket.

Involving other departments

For virtually all participants, it went without saying that other government departments besides DFO would have a role to play in dealing with overfishing. The feeling was that Foreign Affairs Canada would obviously have to “carry the ball” on diplomatic efforts and negotiations. The Department of National Defence was also seen as needing to play a role in enforcement through the use of naval vessels and surveillance aircraft. Many participants also wanted to see Environment Canada playing a role on this issue since so many participants saw this as being very much an environmental issue that ties into the preservation of species in the oceans.

It also went without saying for the vast majority of participants that coastal communities and fishers need to be involved on this issue though people were not always sure of just what form this involvement should take. There were some concerns that the fishers themselves may know a lot about fish, but they don't always understand some of the diplomatic issues and that they may demand action that goes further than is advisable. Still others stressed repeatedly that the fishers would be in the best position to advise the Department on where the problems were. But it was also pointed out that, just because these people's advice is solicited, does not mean that it always has to be followed. It just has to be taken into consideration.

Custodial management

As has been mentioned earlier, awareness of this term was very limited. When people were asked what the term custodial management meant most had no idea. Some guessed that it had something to do with janitorial duties! There was clearly a lot of support for Canada taking some kind of concrete action to deal with overfishing international waters. It was only in NL – particularly among stakeholders – that the term “custodial management” was ever used spontaneously. Some in NL described it more in terms of Canada declaring areas of the Grand Banks adjacent to the 200-mile limit to be part of our “economic zone” that we need to unilaterally start to police. Some went so far as to say that Canada should simply annex these areas to our 200-mile limit and set an example for the world. It was suggested that before Iceland took unilateral action in the late 70s declaring a 200-mile limit, the norm was for countries to only have a 50-mile limit. In other locations, such as Nanaimo, people liked the idea of Canada taking stronger, more aggressive action, but they wondered if Canada had enough naval and coast guard resources to actually enforce it.

International fisheries governance

None of the participants was familiar with this term in these precise words. When people were asked to describe what they thought it meant, however, they tended to describe more or less what it is. They imagined that it meant some sort of process or treaty that governed how fisheries were supposed to happen around the world, and that it would take into consideration environmental and conservation issues, as well as issues of national sovereignty. Some members of the general public wondered if it was connected to the United Nations or to some sort of Law of the Sea process. Some people commented that it was a rather dry-sounding, bureaucratic expression for a concept that should be promoted widely. However, there was very little in the way of ideas for how better to describe this. In some ways, the name was seen by some to be a bit of a misnomer since what happens now on the high seas through the NAFO process cannot really be described as “governance.”

Sustainable development

Stakeholders, and better-educated and more environmentally-conscious participants, were very familiar with the precise definition of the term “sustainable development.” Others did not know it by this terminology, but when the concept was explained and described to the groups, there was a unanimous sentiment that this was a very laudable principle that should absolutely be the centre-piece of Canada’s policy to combat overfishing. Some of the stakeholders mentioned that Canada would get very little traction in the world community if we sound like we only want to limit overfishing so that our own fishing industry can make more money. It was suggested that if Canada stressed a universally praised principle like “sustainable development,” then we could position our wish to provide leadership on this issue as being motivated by altruism and a desire to protect the world from its own greed.

Communication methods

It is difficult to conclude anything about the methods by which Canadians would like to get more information on this issue. There was nothing unique about how Canadians want to be informed about the issue of overfishing compared to how they would want to be informed about any other issue in the news. There was a variety of preferences, suggesting a need for a mixed approach. Some people regard television news as their primary source of news and so they would expect to learn about developments on international overfishing through reports on the televisions

news. Other people tend to refer more to newspaper or magazine articles. The people who were the most interested in finding out more about the issue often mentioned wanting to find out more through the Internet. They wanted to be able to easily see what progress was being made through the DFO website and perhaps also through web links to latest developments and to conservation groups. Among stakeholders, the same was true except that many of these people also expected to learn more through their own trade publications.

It is notable, however, that many participants wondered why the Canadian media (local or national, depending on the location of the group) was apparently not reporting on this issue – having not recalled seeing stories on the news related to the issue.