



January 14, 2021

The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
Prime Minister's Office
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

Re: Open Letter Regarding the Aquaculture Blue Economy Opportunity and Recent Decision for the Discovery Islands

Dear Prime Minister:

The strong potential of Canada's aquaculture sector aligns closely with many of your government's stated priorities. We continue to be hopeful that within those priorities there can be smart growth of our sector under your government. There is arguably no other sector that has the same potential for good middle-class job growth, sustainable food development and security, a low-carbon footprint, rural coastal community economic development and the potential for real and lasting Indigenous reconciliation.

Numerous reports under your government have been produced that identify this great potential, as highlighted below:

"The central message of this report is that there is an ocean of opportunities for aquaculture in Canada. Our country has the world's longest marine coastline, the largest number of freshwater lakes, a diversified aquaculture industry, a rigorous regulatory regime and world-class aquaculture-related research. Canada is, therefore, well positioned to help supply the growing global demand for fish and seafood and to do so sustainably – environmentally, economically and socially. The Committee supports the goal of doubling Canadian aquaculture production within the next decade."

(Senate Report on Aquaculture: "An Ocean of Opportunities," 2016)

"What would Canadian leadership in global food production look like?...Increase global market share (for aquaculture) to 0.6% (from 0.2%) and exports by almost US \$2.6B. Do so by adopting...an economic development strategy that reforms ill-adapted traditional fisheries regulations for this emerging subsector to create opportunities for provincial, regional and aboriginal stakeholders..."

(Advisory Council on Economic Growth "Barton Report", Feb 2017, pp.10,12)

“Achieving our growth targets hinges on all sectors meeting their full potential. Right now this is not always the case. A key example is the Canadian aquaculture sector, which has the potential to nearly double production from 200,565 tonnes in 2016 to 381,900 tonnes in 2028 to meet rising demand.

However, there are significant barriers to achieving this growth:

- ***There is not a strong economic development focus for this sector within the federal government***
- ***Licensing requirements do not facilitate long-term growth strategies...***

(Agri-Food Economic Report from Canada's Economic Strategy Tables: The Innovation and Competitiveness Imperative, 2018)

“The largest potential (global carbon reduction) gains for food production lie in the sustainable expansion of marine aquaculture.”

(Expert Paper for the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, 2019)

Aquaculture represents the future of reliable seafood production while reducing pressure on wild stocks in a growing world hungry for seafood. It is also the key for coastal job growth where there are few other jobs. Other ocean-resource countries around the world, including the United States, China, and Russia, have aggressive plans to develop their marine aquaculture sectors.

Marine farm-raised Atlantic salmon sector is close to 90 per cent of the value of the entire aquaculture sector in Canada. It is the anchor from which the total sector – shellfish, seaweeds, new marine and land-based technologies – can develop and thrive. Our recent market research for Canada revealed that salmon (the vast majority of which is farmed Atlantic salmon) is by a large margin the top seafood choice of Canadians, making up more than 30 per cent of their seafood diet, and even more importantly, Canadians (and the world) want more Canadian Atlantic salmon.

However, to date, and despite good-faith constructive efforts by our sector, your government has not delivered one positive structural or program change for the aquaculture sector that supports growth. Minister Jordan’s decision on the Discovery Islands, one week before the holidays, at the end of an unprecedented year of emotional and social upheaval and stress, is a terrible blow to the sector’s positive aspirations. The stress for our federally and provincially recognized “essential” employees, already at a high with COVID-19, has been severely exacerbated by this decision. We are deeply concerned for the present mental and physical health of our British Columbia employees, their families and their futures.

The consultation process employed to reach this decision was superficial: industry was given a single short opportunity to speak with the Minister and local communities were not granted any meeting. Multi-year peer-reviewed federal science establishing a minimal impact of farms to wild salmon was sidelined. This decision does not bring people together to create a pathway towards real reconciliation.

We will continue to hope and work for a reasonable path forward. The solution is relatively simple. Effective federal leadership will bring multiple interests together to develop a vision, strategy and plan for the sustainable growth of aquaculture across Canada. Your government can still do this, and realize the clear opportunity for Canada to be a global leader.

The explicit identification of a federal department that can champion the development of this sector is also critical. DFO seems structurally and culturally unable to do this. Without a significant new commitment to change in the department, another department must be given the responsibility to champion our sector.

We remain committed to working with you to realize the Blue Economy opportunity for this modern, forward-looking and innovative sector. But we stand together against a flawed decision that undermines the future for Canadian opportunity, our employees and communities.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Woodland
Chair, CAIA
President & CEO
Nu-chah-nulth Seafood LP



Timothy J. Kennedy
President & CEO
Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance

CC:

Hon. Bernadette Jordan, PC, MP, Minister of Fisheries & Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
Hon. Chrystia Freeland, PC, MP, Minister of Finance
Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, PC, MP, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development
Hon. Marie Claude Bibeau, PC, MP, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
Hon. Carolyn Bennett, PC, MP, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Hon. Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade
Terry Beech, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of DFO
Premiers and Lead Ministers for NL, NS, NB, PEI, QC, ON, BC
Mr. Erin O'Toole, PC, MP, Leader of the Official Opposition
Mr. Richard Bragdon, MP, Critic to the Minister of Fisheries & Oceans
Mr. Pierre Poilievre, MP, Critic to the Minister of Finance
Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party