NOV 01 2016

Senator Fabian Manning
Chair, Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Dear Senator Manning,

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank the Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (the Committee) for its study and subsequent report entitled *An Ocean of Opportunities: Aquaculture in Canada*, released on July 30, 2015, and adopted by the Senate on June 22, 2016.

I am pleased to receive the Committee’s recommendations concerning how best to grow the aquaculture sector in Canada while ensuring its economic, environmental and social sustainability and protecting the marine ecosystem. I also note that the majority of the recommendations are consistent with actions and initiatives that are already being undertaken by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), other federal departments and agencies, and provincial, territorial and industry partners through the new Aquaculture Development Strategy, accepted by the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers (CCFAM) in June 2016.

Regarding the very comprehensive recommendation on the legislative and regulatory framework for aquaculture in Canada (outlined in recommendation 1), I am aware of the wide range of views on the need for and possible scope of new federal aquaculture legislation, and agree with the Committee’s conclusion that this is a complex issue. I understand that pressure for a comprehensive overhaul of the regulatory regime for aquaculture has been building for several decades and is increasing now that companies have begun to operate in more than one province. The regulatory patchwork across provinces is leading to inconsistent management of aquaculture across Canada, higher costs for operators, and a perception among some Canadians that the regulatory regime is not providing enough protection for the marine environment.

In order to make progress on this recommendation, I will initiate discussions with my provincial and territorial counterparts to explore how federal, provincial and territorial responsibilities could be clarified through new legislation. The ultimate goal would be to establish a clear and transparent legislative and regulatory framework that would enable ordered and sustainable industry expansion, generate new investments, and create new employment opportunities, while assuring Canadians that the environment in being protected. New legislation could set out consistent national requirements that would provide certainty
for industry and establish an even higher standard of environmental protection. As you have indicated, renewal of the federal-provincial/territorial Memoranda of Understanding, where appropriate (and development of them where they do not currently exist), would follow the development of any legislation.

With respect to the other recommendations in the Report, the year that intervened between the report’s release and its tabling and acceptance by the Senate coincided with the development of the new CCFAM Aquaculture Development Strategy, the successor to the National Aquaculture Strategic Action Plan Initiative (NASAPI), which begins in 2016 and concludes in 2019. The new Strategy sets out a collaborative three-year plan that will address a number of the Report’s recommendations regarding the management of the sector through:

- improved public reporting on the environmental and socio-economic impacts of aquaculture (Recommendation 1);
- work between federal and provincial/territorial partners, with industry and interested parties to enable access to new fish health and feed products (Recommendation 3);
- work through the Strategic Management Committee of the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers to create consistent and equivalent standards governing debris in the marine environment (Recommendation 7); and
- work between federal and provincial/territorial partners on improving information collection and sharing in support of improved program delivery and transparency through public reporting (Recommendation 10).

A performance and delivery framework will be established by the CCFAM Strategic Management Committee with work plans and achievements reported annually to Ministers. At the federal level, this work is also supported by the governance and public reporting elements of the Sustainable Aquaculture Program.

As you know, scientific research and evidence-based advice underpin our commitment to sustainable aquaculture in Canada, so we were very pleased to note the Committee’s recognition of Canada’s excellent work in aquaculture research. The Report contains four significant recommendations that are currently being addressed:

- New regulations for aquatic invasive species were enacted in 2015 and are supported through continuing collaborative research projects into environmental impacts, husbandry approaches, and the evaluation of new technologies to manage aquatic invasive species as they are developed (Recommendation 5);
- New research into far-field effects of marine aquaculture is being supported through the Investing in Ocean and Freshwater Research in Canada funding from Budget 2016. Research and advice on the potential impacts of pest control products used for sea lice management on non-target organisms continues to be a priority for DFO’s National Contaminants Advisory Group (Recommendation 6);
Research priorities for aquaculture within DFO continue to be focused on aquaculture-environment interactions and addressing regulatory questions. This research is done, where appropriate, in collaboration with other government scientists, academics and industry. Going forward, these priorities will include re-establishing fish health, environmental performance, and sustainable production research priorities for both freshwater and marine aquaculture as part of the Aquaculture Collaborative Research and Development Program (Recommendation 8); and

The state of knowledge nationally and internationally continues to be analyzed, to compare best practices for both science research and regulation; research findings continue to be communicated through a variety of fora, including the Canadian Aquaculture Research and Development Review (Recommendation 9).

Reporting on Science initiatives takes place through annual Departmental reporting cycles for the Sustainable Aquaculture Program.

With respect to the single recommendation that lies outside of my responsibility, I understand that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is modernizing the livestock feed regulatory framework that applies to the importation, manufacture, sale and export of livestock feeds in Canada. In the interim, the aquaculture sector has taken steps to seek approval of new ingredients using the processes currently in place. The Agency will publish a formal regulatory proposal for the modernized Feeds Regulations in its Forward Regulatory Plan: 2016-2018.

Once again, on behalf of the Government, I would like to thank the Committee members for their diligence in preparing this report, and more specifically, for their vision in identifying the vast potential that exists for aquaculture in Canada. We all share the Committee’s commitment to advancing sustainable aquaculture development for the benefit of all Canadians today and tomorrow.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dominic LeBlanc, P.C., M.P.