

September 8, 2022

The Hon. Joyce Murray, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast  
Guard  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6



Dear Minister Murray,

Re: DFO's Transition Plan Survey and Framework Dialogue

I write to you on behalf of Georgia Strait Alliance to inform you of our concerns around the current consultation process that your department is carrying out to inform the creation of an open-net transition plan. It has become clear through looking at the public online questionnaire and the sessions we have had with the open-net transition team, that this process is not being fully transparent with its intentions and as such, it is making it difficult for us and our supporters to engage with it.

Our team, who has been working on the removal of open-net fish farms out of BC waters for over two decades, believed that the consultation process would be in alignment with your government's commitment to have open-net salmon farms out of BC's waters by 2025, and would map out how we get there. However, in meeting with the transition team on September 1st, we could not get clarity on a timeline or the end goal of this process. The only thing the team was able to make clear is that open-net salmon farms will be out of BC waters "sometime down the road". This seems a dramatic step backwards in your government's commitment.

Georgia Strait Alliance is willing to be actively involved in this and other processes to inform a transition plan, however, as we pointed out to the transition team, we are unable to do so fully without clarity of what type of transition we are talking about and its timeline. A transition from open-net salmon farms to enhanced open-net farms or other types of in-water systems will require different recommendations and actions on our part than one focused on ensuring



salmon aquaculture is no longer in coastal BC waters. The same can be said for a transition happening by 2025 or one that will involve wild salmon being in contact with farmed salmon for an indefinite time.

Additionally, the public survey is vague and misleading as it fails to define terms such as “alternative finfish aquaculture production technologies” or “sustainable salmon aquaculture”, among others. This ambiguous language and the lack of opportunities for people to clarify their answers opens up the possibility of responses being misinterpreted and could inadvertently support technologies or strategies that the respondent might not agree with.

The survey also limits the ability of respondents to fully express their views in writing as the text boxes provided are limited to 140 characters for a whole section that contains 5 or more questions.

While we appreciate that an authentic consultation process must not necessarily leave the conclusion pre-determined, in this case, the commitment in your ministerial mandate does frame the conclusion around a specific outcome. Instead, it is clear to us that the transition team has already predetermined that open-net farms will stay in the water later than 2025, and the public questionnaire does not give the opportunity for people to oppose this idea.

We want to be clear with you that we are aware that a big transition like this one is not an easy thing to undertake and appreciate the difficulties behind the decisions you will have to make. However, the health of wild salmon as well as the communities that depend on them need to be the main objective of this transition plan. With this objective in mind, it is clear that the future of salmon aquaculture cannot be one where farms remain in BC waters past 2025.

At this time, we also write to inform you that if the consultation process remains as is, we will be launching a letter-sending tool to allow our supporters to fully express their views and concerns on the issue and warn them of the potential downfalls of answering the public survey put forward by the department.



We are convinced that as the Minister of this department you intend to do the right thing for wild pacific salmon and will listen to the concerns of British Columbians. During your time in office, you have shown leadership on the issue and we believe that you care about wild salmon.

We ask that you now change the survey to allow individuals in this province to speak openly and honestly of their vision on how open-net cage salmon farms should be removed from BC waters by 2025.

We look forward, regardless, to sharing our and our supporters' specific recommendations for the open-net transition plan and the future of salmon aquaculture in BC.

Should you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours truly,

Lucero Gonzalez Ruiz



Biodiversity Campaigner  
Georgia Strait Alliance

