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NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

March 15, 2019

Making the International Year of the Salmon a turning point

British Columbians are rightly concerned about the state of several wild Pacific salmon stocks. I share that concern.

As the MP for North Vancouver and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, I know full well that salmon are more than just food.

They are intrinsically linked to our identity, they are fundamental to Indigenous communities and they are a significant indicator of overall environmental health.

Salmon are keystone species keeping ecosystems in balance, providing food for wildlife and people and, at the end of their lives, supplying nutrients to forests.

They are of great importance for BC's recreational and commercial fisheries and for tourism.

Unprecedented threat

Since the 1980s, wild Pacific salmon have faced challenges due to a multitude of stressors, including climate change. Our government understands the unprecedented threat that human impacts pose and is responding with an unprecedented effort.

Last October, at the International Year of the Salmon launch attended by over 100 leaders in salmon conservation from government, Indigenous groups, NGOs, academia and industry from around the Pacific Rim, I introduced Canada's Wild Pacific Salmon Policy 2018–2022 Implementation Plan.

This five-year plan, developed through extensive consultation, outlines concrete actions we will take to rebuild wild Pacific salmon populations and their habitats.

I also announced that Fisheries and Oceans Canada had responded to all of the recommendations of the Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon in the Fraser River.

Moving forward

There are now several key areas on which we collectively need to focus and the federal government is taking action in all of these areas:

- 1) Habitat protection - We are bringing in a new Fisheries Act to restore protections for fish habitat that were lost under the Harper government, and working closely with the BC government on land and water use policies that can impact critical habitat.
- 2) Habitat restoration - In partnership with the province, we have created a BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation

Fund, contributing more than \$100 million over six years, enabling salmon and habitat restoration projects in communities across the province.

3) Fisheries management – Last year, we reduced the Chinook salmon catch by a third to limit pressure on these stocks; we are presently reviewing potential fisheries management plans for 2019. We are also building on our existing conservation work by investing more than \$50 million to enhance our national fisheries enforcement program.

4) Climate adaptation - Climate affects the dynamics of Pacific salmon through changes in ocean and freshwater habitats. We are researching how warming waters affect salmon through all life stages, and the implications for ecosystems.

5) Improved stock assessment – In the Fall Economic Statement we committed an additional \$107 million to support the implementation of the Fish Stocks provisions of the renewed *Fisheries Act*. These resources will help improve Pacific salmon stock assessments and contribute to a better managed fishery.

6) Enhanced science - We need a better understanding of why some returns from the ocean have been so poor in recent years. Something is happening in the North Pacific and we need to understand how salmon returns are being affected. That's why DFO recently co-sponsored a research expedition to the North Pacific of twenty-one scientists drawn from five countries (Russia, US, Japan, South Korea and Canada) and why we have hired 29 new scientists in the Pacific region.

More can certainly be done to protect our biodiversity, but no previous government in Canada has marshalled the collaboration of all interested parties - plus the resources needed - to achieve results for Pacific salmon protection over the next several years.

Our goal is to manage Pacific salmon stocks in a way that conserves and rebuilds these populations, to protect biodiversity while concurrently enabling fishing opportunities for First Nations, commercial and recreational harvesters.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that resources are managed sustainably and protected wisely, so our children and our children's children can benefit from them for years to come.

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