

Blue Economy Strategy Engagement from T.Buck Suzuki Foundation

The big questions and ways to share your ideas

How do we ensure that our ocean opportunities are equitably shared?

More equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities can be realized by engaging with communities and prioritizing socio-economic wellbeing in all developments. Within BC fisheries equitability has been damaged because of corporate consolidation. Equitability suffers when access to marine resources is given to groups that are not connected to the resource, and when the benefits of marine resources are extracted away from coastal communities.

- We want to see the government build collaborative governance capacity with our coastal communities – fostering these social skills is imperative for building equity and bringing people together to share knowledge, build a common understanding of our ocean, and identify activities that we can all support. Given governance complexities, we desperately need federal support for local and sub-regional collaborative governance.
- Ensure that all fisheries access rights, licences and quota, are held locally by harvesters, First Nations, and coastal communities for active participation.

Are there other ideas that you think would help us develop Canada's Blue Economy Strategy?

- The wellbeing of coastal communities needs to be at the forefront of the BES, as well as the importance of less tangible values of the coastal economy: food systems, transportation, ecosystem connections, stewardship and monitoring of local resources, and intergenerational transfer of knowledge. Coastal management should be transparent and inclusive of the communities it affects.
- Invest in ocean knowledge systems and connect the individuals working on marine innovation across Canada. The federal government should create a national innovation network, to share successes and failures in marine innovation, a collaborative oceans research network, national fisheries research network, and coastal green technology network. Include harvesters, First Nations and coastal community representation in all.

- Build coastal infrastructure, build our harbours, expand our coastal communications networks, and build robust marine highways along our coasts.
- Support marine cultural continuity by investing in indigenous led projects, like the Haida Raspberry Cove Mini Cultural Village Project.

Are there additional themes that you think the Government should explore?

Expand the focus beyond ‘new’ industries and consider reinvigorating existing core marine industries. The wild capture fisheries in British Columbia have enormous potential. A focus on improving the management and policies of this industry could liberate more of the economic value that exists in our oceans. Focusing on enhancing the whole value chain of fisheries in BC would improve economic value, create sustainable well paying jobs in coastal communities, and increase the socio-economic wellbeing of coastal adjacent communities and beyond.

Do you have ideas that could strengthen Canada’s leadership role in ocean health and developing a sustainable blue economy?

Canada’s Blue Economy Strategy needs to set a high standard for transparency and inclusivity. We need to prioritize citizens, communities, Indigenous rights, and the environment and focus on equity more than corporate monetary profit and GDP as the measure of ‘success’. Canada needs to:

- Build collaborative governance capacity with our coastal communities.
- Ensure that all fisheries access rights, licences and quota, are held locally for participation.
- Invest in ocean knowledge systems with: harvesters, First Nations and coastal communities.
- Build coastal infrastructure: harbours, communications, and marine highways
- Invest \$10M in the Haida Raspberry Cove Mini Cultural Village Project.

How can Canada’s Blue Economy Strategy support the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 agenda?

The BES can support the SDGs by considering the intersectional impacts of industries – supporting industries that provide benefits across a number of SDG’s; for example, wild fisheries can be managed in a way that enhances food security (SDG 2), provides decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), responsibly produces (SDG 12), minimizes carbon footprints through innovation and the revival of fisheries infrastructure (SDGs 9 & 13), enhances sustainable oceans (SDG 14), reduces inequity and poverty (SDGs 1 & 5), and contributes to

sustainable communities (SDGs 3 & 11). Focusing on helping industries that provide benefits across the SDG's is a great way to have a major cumulative impact on our contribution towards global sustainability, equity and wellbeing.

Focusing Canada's blue economy on growth and prosperity for all

Advancing the participation of Indigenous peoples

How can the Government collaborate with Indigenous communities to enable them to achieve their ocean-related economic development plans?

One important project we would like to see receive support is the Haida mini cultural village at Raspberry Cove in Gwaii Haanas. We would like to see \$10M allocated to link the Land-Sea-People plan with culture, BES and Reconciliation.

What are the main barriers and challenges to increasing private sector ocean-related investments in Indigenous communities and for Indigenous communities and businesses to invest in ocean sectors?

Intergenerational disenfranchisement, for example, progressive exclusion from the fisheries industry (via access to licence and quota) and lack of opportunity for new and young fishermen to enter the industry, or former-returning harvesters to purchase licence and quota that was lost, is a barrier that we see in fisheries in BC.

How can the benefits of our blue economy be more equitably shared with coastal communities and underrepresented people in ocean sectors?

Build collaborative governance capacity with our coastal communities – fostering these social skills is imperative for bringing people together to share knowledge, build a common understanding of our ocean, and identify activities that we can all support. Given governance complexities, we desperately need federal support for local and sub-regional collaborative governance.

Ensure that all fisheries access rights, licences and quota, are held locally by harvesters, First Nations, and coastal communities for active participation.

Developing the necessary labour force and skills

What actions could be taken to grow talent and develop the skills needed for ocean sectors?

Within the fisheries sector there is a need for programs to prepare new fish harvesters who want to enter the industry. In December 2020 the United States congress passed the Young Young Fishermen's Development Act, a grant program to provide training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for young fishermen. A similar program is needed in Canadian fisheries.

How can good quality employment opportunities in our blue economy be better promoted?

Within the fisheries sector, supporting organizations that enhance community connectivity can create pathways for new people to enter the fishing industry. Supporting organizations can broker or encourage the exchange of knowledge and skills and support incoming participants in any industry, for example, the BC Young Fishermen's Network is one hub of knowledge exchange and support in an industry that desperately needs to enable new entrants. A program similar to the US Young Fishermen's Development Act would also promote opportunities for new people to enter the fishing industry.

How can underrepresented groups (e.g. women, Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, youth, and persons with disabilities) be encouraged and helped to develop ocean-related skills?

The fisheries sector has problems with recruitment, because licence policies are prohibitive and the future of fisheries is not being valued as it should. The high cost of licenses and quota results in easier access for wealthy individuals, who tend to not belong to underrepresented groups. By switching to an owner-operator policy in BC, our fisheries would become more financially accessible, more equitable, and therefore more accessible to underrepresented groups.

How can the Government and private industry work and support traditionally underrepresented groups to eliminate barriers to effective recruitment and retention in ocean sectors?

The fisheries industry has developed increasing financial and physical asset barriers to entry which limit the ability for young fishermen to become small business owners or licence holders. These barriers have resulted in a progressively aging group of active fish harvesters with few

new entrants. This threatens the future of the industry, as a disproportionate number of skilled personnel retire over the next decade. The government can change its fisheries licensing and management policies to support new entrants and allow existing harvesters to make a viable living in their occupation. If secure in their work, harvesters will have more flexibility to invest back in their industry and communities by making time to support new entrants, sharing their knowledge, exploring innovative alternatives, and taking on appropriate risks. If the full value of Canada's fisheries are captured locally, harvesters will be able to stay for the long-term while innovating to improve the sector as a whole.

If you work in an ocean sector, what do you see as the current and pending skills and labour gaps?

Within fisheries in BC there is an impending labour gap as aging fish harvesters leave the workforce and few new entrants are in a position to be able to take on the work. This is a result of the inappropriate cost of licenses which makes accessing quota increasingly difficult for independent owners or new entrants. In addition, the uncertainty of the prosperity of the profession – caused by policies that disenfranchise fish harvesters from decisions in their industry hurts the retention of labour in our fisheries. Due to financial barriers fish harvesters are forced to turn to leasing licence and quota from corporations or foreign entities that decide on the value of product, and when or where to fish with displaced deciding factors – specifically bottom line earnings. This trajectory can be shifted by the government if policies change to empower fish harvesters, draw fisheries values into local coastal communities and if the barriers to entry to the industry are addressed. Once harvesters are supported through the fishing industry, the transfer of valuable skills and knowledge can happen.

Identifying barriers to inclusive growth

What barriers prevent some groups from fully participating in ocean sectors?

Access to resource rights, and the ability to engage in collaborative governance, are not as equitable as they should and can be – this prevents many groups from having a voice in ocean governance, from participating in ocean sectors, and even from interacting with the ocean in ways that are important to their socio-economic and cultural wellbeing. Government policies can support better processes in governance and decision making by involving those who depend on ocean ecosystems and marine industries, to ensure that they shift to become more inclusive, transparent, culturally rich, and socio-economically sustainable.

In which areas can strategic action be taken to support and improve equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in the blue economy?

It starts with decision making and governance – beyond the engagement period for the Blue Economy Strategy – stakeholders and rights-holders need to be included, actively, in the continuing, adaptive management of coastal resources. If industry, institutions and governments are the only ones continuing to be ‘at the table’, the blue growth we pursue will only increase the inequity and exclusion of groups from the benefits and stewardship of marine resources and coastal spaces. Coastal communities, industry workers, and Indigenous groups and nations need to be heard when they speak up and share their intimate knowledge of the marine environment and what impacts growth is having in their homes, on responsive timescales. The conversation needs to continue past this initial engagement and the government needs to commit to being accountable and responsive to the data, knowledge and narratives coming out of Canada’s coastal communities.

What steps can the Government take to ensure that benefits from the blue economy strategy are equitably distributed?

Further including stakeholders and rights-holders into the adaptive management and governance of their marine spaces so decisions can be responsive to ensuring the values stated in the Blue Economy Strategy are being achieved. It is imperative that the government develop regulations that fight corporate consolidation and hoarding of access/rights to resources in existing and developing industries. The government needs to revisit legislation that currently allows for foreign or corporate entities to extract wealth from ocean resource value chains. The priority of our laws and regulations need to be the wellbeing and health of coastal communities, local resources, and their stewards – now and in the future.

How can the proportion of underrepresented groups in managerial and decision-making roles in ocean sectors be increased?

The local, traditional, and experiential knowledge held by coastal populations needs to be respected in collaborative management of ocean spaces. Additionally, long-term workers in industry should be held-up as leaders in their respective industries when consulting and working on collaborative decisions. This knowledge needs to be respected, valued and incorporated into decision making. Requiring the unpaid labours and advocacy work of invested groups to alert decision makers to issues and press them to fix issues is inappropriate at the level that it currently exists –more diverse voices need to be proactively incorporated into deliberation and decision making. This can include meaningful partnerships, but more importantly, the government should deliberately hire diverse backgrounds, skills, and cultures, into the teams that will be responsible for managing and influencing the directions of growth in the blue economy.

Positioning Canada's blue economy for growth and success

Natural environment: enhancing environmental sustainability of the ocean and climate change resilience of coastal areas

What are some effective ways to enhance environmental sustainability in the oceans?

Encourage and allow processes for more regional stewardship by coastal communities. Allow regional development of industries to reflect what is needed for local wellbeing; certain areas may require different industries to prosper, environmentally, socially and economically. Provide financial support for fish harvesters who want to upgrade gear or technology to more sustainable options. These upgrades can be cost prohibitive for harvesters.

Are there opportunities for the Government to work with Indigenous communities and organizations, the private sector and not-for-profit organizations to support ocean health and climate change adaptation?

Yes, the government can engage continually and more meaningfully with organizations that represent coastal communities to advance ocean health and climate change adaptation on a regional scale. Seeking out and incorporating the knowledge and narratives of those who work closely in ocean environments, with coastal communities, and who have long standing connections to their marine resources, then, being responsive to the concerns raised by these stakeholders and rights holders is necessary for more timely and appropriate responses to growth and development and how that can align with the values of ocean health and strong climate change adaptation.

What actions can be initiated to enhance coastal resilience and what roles could industry partners play in these efforts?

Industry professionals are often some of the most in-tune with the environments they work in – especially in industries such as wild fisheries. Fish harvesters have a vested interest in healthy marine ecosystems that support biodiversity and abundance; they can provide timely and critical first-hand information on resource status and environmental health. Valuing the voices of harvesters can help increase sustainable fishing activities and help support resilient coastal communities.

What types of information and services are needed to support decision-making and adaptation?

Decision making should be responsive to the input and needs expressed from rights and stakeholders of marine resources – including industry workers and coastal residents. More regionally appropriate and timely (adaptive/dynamic) decisions will support resilience and sustainability.

How could the United Nations’ Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development be used to inform the development of the blue economy strategy?

With more nations and regions turning their attention to and focussing their efforts on ocean science and sustainable development there are fresh opportunities to collaborate, align efforts, and be generative and innovative with our directions. Canada is not the first nation or region to embark on a comprehensive marine strategy and intelligent use of networks and inclusive collaboration can allow us to learn from other’s experiences and amplify efforts for sustainability and equity.

Science and data: advancing ocean observation and data collection and supporting world-leading scientific research

How could enhanced access to data support innovation, economic growth, and cutting-edge scientific research?

In BC fisheries there are opportunities to explore innovative and forward-thinking projects, tending to diverse ocean needs. Two examples of such projects include 1) addressing issues of ocean pollution through gear loss, and 2) monitoring fishery stock abundance using non-invasive eDNA samples collected in the water. These projects bring together fishermen, industry, and science to explore new ways of tackling ocean problems. There are a variety of methods available for data collection on these projects including ROVs, UAVs, Sonar, and water sampling for genetic material.

A data repository can be created using these collection methods, which will then be able to act as a starting point that future projects may build off of. While the secondary benefits from these data collection methods are unknown, they will create space for scientific research opportunities and innovation in our coastal waters beyond their initial use.

What data and knowledge gaps need to be filled to support better ocean-related decision-making?

Ocean mapping would greatly benefit from an update to the online geospatial ocean and fisheries data. To make some fisheries decisions it’s necessary to map the footprint and impact of fisheries in BC. However, fisheries data available through the BC GIS Data Catalogue and the BC Marine Conservation Database are out of date, thus making the datasets incomplete

and/or unreliable for analysis. Good mapping comes from good data, and the more widely available and accurate ocean data is, the better information there is to help inform marine planning and decision-making processes. In addition to having more robust commercial fishery data available, local fishing knowledge should be a priority for collection, as it is essential to making informed ocean-related decisions.

Commercial fisheries

How can Canada's approach to fisheries management continue to improve while enabling fishers to derive top value from their harvests?

A major shift in BC fisheries policy and regulation is needed to allow fish harvesters and coastal communities to realize the true value of our fisheries. The current system has led to consolidation and access rights to BC's fish resources into the hands of few and made it unviable for many harvesters (new and established) to purchase rights to fish. When harvesters are beholden to large corporate interests and certain agreements that are entered into to allow the right to fish, the value of our fish resources and the work and skill of harvesters is wildly undercut. By respecting the knowledge and skills of fish harvesters and supporting them in their work, we can drastically change the current value and long-term sustainability of our wild fisheries industry. We can also improve the value and viability of our fishing industry, once fish are landed, by respecting our fish resources through greater local processing and value-added opportunities in the supply chain.

Given the economic, social, and cultural importance of fisheries to Canada's coastal regions, what actions would best position the industry to remain viable and sustainable over the long-term?

By changing fisheries policies in BC to prioritize coastal community well-being and center active fish harvesters as key players and experts in the industry, we can strengthen the sustainability and economic value of BC fisheries. The current system has led to incredible value being leached out of coastal communities. Harvester knowledge is essential to the industry thriving, and a healthy fishery adds tangible and intangible value to coastal communities and the nation as a whole. Enabling harvesters to thrive will allow a more innovative, sustainable, and prosperous industry to emerge. This requires that harvesters are able to influence policies that affect them and the marine resources they rely on, as well as ensuring they can access licence and quota at fair values and maintain a respectable living. Coastal communities also need to be respected as the stewards and gateways to marine resources and should have a say in what values matter to them in industry development.

How can fishers be supported to transition to carbon-neutral business operations?

Current fisheries regulations in BC have led the cost of licence and quota to inflate to values accessible mainly only to large corporate entities. Many harvesters have to lease licences and quota from corporate or foreign entities, and are increasingly unable to prosper from the value of our fisheries. Without secure livelihood and revenues, there is little financial room for harvesters to invest in sustainable technologies, or even conduct regular improvements on their vessels. For vessels not owned by those actively fishing, harvesters have little say in what technologies are adopted. A change in licencing policy will support harvesters to be able to invest in carbon-neutral upgrades. For owner-operators, financial revenue may be a barrier to improvements, and could be supported through federal funding for carbon neutrality efforts. Revitalizing local fish processing can also help minimize the carbon footprint of our boat-to-table seafood supply chain.

What do Indigenous communities and businesses need to increase their participation in this sector?

Indigenous communities should be consulted on a case by case basis to determine how to support their business needs.

We will note that current licensing policy in BC has degraded aspects of Indigenous ownership of fisheries. In the 1970s, First Nations harvesters represented close to one-quarter of the workforce in the commercial fishery, including many of the most successful captains. However, control of many I and F category licences intended for Indigenous harvesters have since fallen into the hands of investors and processors. As a direct result, many Indigenous harvesters are now tethered to fishing for a licence owner with no ability to negotiate price for their catch. Concerted efforts today to expand Indigenous access are further constrained due to outside investors and foreign interests driving up licence and quota prices in a fully open market.

What can fishers do, or need, to better manage climate change impacts on fish stock health and species availability?

Harvesters need to be able to make in-season decisions based on real time data and observations of fish stocks. As climate change leads to more frequent stochastic events and other shifts in marine species activity, distribution, and timing of life events, the fisheries industry needs to be able to adapt responsively and responsibly. This is only possible by utilizing the knowledge, insights, and observations of those who work with these resources – fish harvesters. A process is required to allow more adaptive in season efforts, timing of openings, etc.

How can the sector or Government best support innovation to reduce by-catch, lessen impacts to marine mammals, and achieve other environmental objectives, while increasing the efficiency of commercial fisheries?

To be able to innovate and improve fishery sustainability and efficiency fish harvesters in BC need more security. If BC policies are changed so the monetary value of fisheries is captured by harvesters and not other non-fishing entities, then these harvesters will have more revenue to innovate and upgrade their vessels and operations. Innovation can be further incentivized through government grants that are accessible to harvesters and support upgrading gear and technology. Upgrades and innovation can be a huge financial barrier and is not prioritized by harvesters who are struggling to make a secure income. Fish harvesters have the most intimate knowledge of fisheries and proximal incentive to innovate and increase sustainability in their socio-ecological systems; therefore, they are also most likely to find creative and valuable solutions.

How can the sector or Government address the changing nature of the workforce, including an aging demographic, and best support the next generation of fishers?

Fisheries policy change in BC is the primary step towards creating an industry that is accessible to new entrants. By addressing the issues around licence costs – caused by ITQs speculative investment, license stacking, and corporate consolidation, new entrants will be able to start their own businesses and the prospect of becoming an owner-operator will improve.

There is also a huge lack of training and support for new prospective entrants. Introducing a program similar to the United States' Young Young Fishermen's Development Act, a grant program to provide training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for young harvesters, would break down barriers to entering the fishing industry.

What else might be needed in the medium- and long-term to ensure economic recovery from COVID-19 and growth?

- We need the government to build collaborative governance capacity with our coastal communities – fostering these social skills is imperative for bringing people together to share knowledge, build a common understanding of our ocean, and identify activities that we can all support. Given governance complexities, we desperately need federal support for local and sub-regional collaborative governance.
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