

Speaking Notes

HONOURABLE JOHN VAN DONGEN
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FISHERIES

SEAFOOD SUMMIT III

VANCOUVER

8:30 A.M. - WEDNESDAY JANUARY 7TH

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

INTRODUCTION

- On behalf of Premier Campbell and the province, of British Columbia, thank you for the invitation to speak at this year's seafood summit. I am very pleased to be here.
- I hope all of you had an enjoyable holiday season.
- It is encouraging to see so many of you at this event. Your presence reflects your continuing commitment to the seafood industry and to the coastal economy.
- Before I get into the business of this year's meeting, I would like to reflect a little on events of last year – it was without doubt one of the most challenging years on record for Canada, British Columbia and your businesses and certainly these events will affect us for a long time into the future.
- We learned a lot of new acronyms: SARS, BSE, COOL (Country of Origin Labeling), and how fragile some of our businesses and the economy in general can be to apparently unconnected events.
- September 11, 2001 will continue to profoundly affect how we conduct business with our largest trading partner.

- The Rapid rise of the Canadian dollar took everyone by surprise and it will have a profound effect on our ability to compete for market share.
- I'm not sure who was first responsible for re-defining "problems" as "challenges" – but it is not just spin – it is an attitude - challenges beg action and solutions.
- So, I believe your theme for this years Summit - "focusing on the challenges ahead" is particularly apt as it reflects a willingness to work to create solutions and to make things happen.
- As the premier reminds me..... and as I say to my staff..... "we get paid to find answers and achieve results, not just to talk about the problems".
- Today, I would like to discuss some of the challenges that the seafood sector is encountering and what we as government are doing to find answers to these challenges and achieve results.
- As I announced at the last Summit, the province commissioned a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) assessment of the seafood sectors – commercial fishing, processing and aquaculture and, the Tidal Water Sport Fishery.

THE SWOT.....

- Premier Campbell made a New Era commitment to develop a Strategic Plan to renew the fisheries industry. This SWOT stems from that commitment.
- While the bulk of this work was done by consultants, I would like to thank the various sector representatives, industry members and federal and provincial agencies who provided information and feedback to this process and participated on the steering committee. The Seafood Alliance was also represented on this committee.
- SWOT assessments are for the most part not rocket science and in many ways, they state the obvious.
- The benefit of a SWOT is in having all of that obvious information in one place in a structure that lends itself to analysis so that focus can be brought to bear on truly strategic issues – it describes the issues in a way that you can grab hold of them.

- The SWOT also helps to allocate responsibility as some of the follow up is the business of government and some falls to industry.
- Here are a few comments on themes in the report.

SWOT FINDINGS....

- Industry needs to continuously adapt the marketing of their products to consumers' unique and often changing demands – it is a buyers' market – no matter how much we would wish it otherwise.
- Global seafood consumption is rising and outdoor recreation has emerged as one of North America's fastest growing tourism activities.
- However, we compete for the consumer's dollar in a global food market - not just seafood - and in a global tourism industry – not just sportfishing – there is lots of competition out there.
- Sustainability and traceability are becoming business requirements – the European Union will require full traceability by 2005.
- Country of Origin Labeling and the US Bio-Terrorism Act requirements are essentially traceability issues.
- An aging workforce and a need for more sophisticated and technical knowledge and skills are on the rise – this is true of many industries.
- The seafood industry will have to compete with other industries for qualified employees and needs to develop appropriate retention strategies such as on-going training.
- The success stories of the British Columbia seafood sector do not get the coverage they deserve.
- The public image of the global fisheries and seafood sectors is often negative....recent articles about fishing down the food web, the decline of large predatory species, the various “hit lists” such as the one from the Monterey Bay Aquarium have raised the issue of long-term sustainability of seafood production in the public mind.
- Recent US FDA comments on mercury in some fish species adds further confusion in the public mind.
- The SWOT is definitive on the need for a single, effective industry organization which we believe should include both the wild and farmed seafood industry.

- I think the point here is that the efforts of the Seafood Alliance need to be continued, enhanced and more strongly and widely supported.

MINISTRY ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE SWOT

- Some of my ministry's activities related to challenges defined in the SWOT include:
 - Support for organizational development in the salmon harvesting sector through the Pacific Salmon Harvesters Association.
 - Support for an initiative to evaluate Integrated Groundfish Management.
 - Technical and financial assistance to the salmon industry in seeking certification under the Marine Stewardship Council for their fisheries.
 - We also think that a national strategy is needed for eco certification of Canada's fisheries and I will be raising this with my counterparts at the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers.
- We are working with the Seafood Alliance on traceability initiatives to ensure that the requirements of the seafood industry are recognized under the national Can Trace program.

ADDITIONAL POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A number of other positive things have happened over the past year.
- We are very pleased that Agriculture and Agri-food Canada have assumed some responsibility in the area of international seafood marketing.
- We need to ensure as a province that we achieve a fair share of these marketing dollars for the B.C. industry.
- Agriculture and Agri-food Canada also have a national seafood value-chain roundtable that brings together government and industry. I want to see us involved in that.
- This is one of eight commodity roundtables which are looking at barriers and potential solutions to increase Canada's trade position regarding food.

- Together with Fisheries and Oceans, Canada and the Federal Treaty Office, my ministry and the Ministry of Treaty Negotiations set up a process to examine the fishing component of proposed treaty settlements.
- We need a vision before we move forward with new one-off treaty arrangements....a broad long-term vision of the fishery including how fish will be shared between Treaty and non-Treaty participants and how we will deal with the associated management challenges.
- We expect the report being done by Peter Pearse and Donald McRae to be submitted by the end of March.

PCFAM

- A Pacific Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers has been established under the Agreement on Inter-Jurisdictional Cooperation.
- The Council was established this summer to strengthen cooperation, communication and coordination between our governments on the management of Pacific fisheries, oceans, and aquaculture and aquatic habitat issues.
- Federal Minister Regan was here on December 22 – ten days after becoming minister to have the inaugural meeting of the PCFAM to show his willingness to address Pacific fisheries issues as promised by the new Prime Minister.

CONCLUSION

- As you can tell by what I have spoken about today, your summit title, “challenges ahead” is quite appropriate.
- I would like to remind you that your industry is worth over a billion dollars to the provincial economy including commercial fisheries for salmon, herring, ground fish, shellfish and aquaculture production of salmon, clams and oysters.
- It is a tough, competitive business that will need the dedication of all of us here today for its continued success.
- The BC Seafood Alliance has been committed to the conservation and sustainability of the seafood sector since its inception in June 1999.

- Over the past 4 ½ years you have been bringing together the sectors to actively promote the B.C. seafood industry.
- I encourage you to reach out broadly. Coalitions always involve compromise but they will invaluablely lead to greater effectiveness.
- Your leadership and vision combined with the willingness of members to volunteer their time is the key to the continued viability of the seafood industry.
- We know that we need to position BC as a preferred supplier of seafood products based on: healthy resources; sustainable, science-based management, harvesting and production methods, and the highest quality and traceability standards.
- And before I finally conclude, I cannot fail to mention a few words about the 2010 Winter Olympics considering the very room we are sitting in today will be humming with activity.
- As Premier Campbell has repeatedly said..... “Every region of British Columbia stands to benefit from hosting the 2010 Winter Games”.
- He is right, we can all benefit from these games.
- Starting now, we are on the world stage and our international profile is growing.
- Making a link to the Games is a great opportunity to position B.C. seafood on world markets as a preferred supplier.
- Your opportunities are endless.....
- Thank you for inviting me to speak today. On behalf of the Premier and cabinet I wish you all a productive summit, and a prosperous New Year.

-END-