

Council

CNL(03)50

***Canada's Statement to NASCO on the Adoption of the Williamsburg
Resolution on the Precautionary Approach***

Canada's Statement to NASCO on the Adoption of the Williamsburg Resolution on the Precautionary Approach

For a number of years Canada has been committed to the Precautionary Approach and has put in place mechanisms based on risk assessment and ecosystem considerations to help manage wild Atlantic salmon and aquaculture in a sustainable way.

Canada's approach to fish management and to aquaculture in many respects goes beyond the Williamsburg Resolution and its annexes. For example, our National Code on Introductions and Transfers of Aquatic Organisms provides a framework to address inherent risks associated with movement of fish. The new Species At Risk Act (to be invoked this month) requires recovery plans for endangered species. There is also the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act which provides for the need for assessment of risks to the environment and mitigation and monitoring plans to ensure protection of the environment.

Canada has worked diligently at the Standing Committee on the Precautionary Approach on the development of the Resolution and its various annexes drawing from Canada's current Precautionary Approach and risk assessment policies.

I would like to emphasise our commitment to conserve wild salmon stocks. Our first priority is conservation and over the years we have implemented many measures to protect wild stocks including closure of fisheries.

We fully support the underlying principles of the proposed Williamsburg Resolution as most of its content is derived from policies and current practices that Canadian governments and stakeholders follow.

The recent work on new annexes and the umbrella resolution is a positive development and Canada is committed to finalizing these documents rapidly with a view to reporting on its main aspects at next year's meeting. However, to follow government requirements on consultations Canada needs more time before finalizing recent additions such as the stocking guidelines.

Further, the North American Commission agreed on Wednesday to examine, prior to the next annual meeting, the differences between Canada's Introductions and Transfers Code and the NAC Protocols.

The Williamsburg Resolution ought to be a living document that remains at the leading edge of science and developments, to ensure that new or potential impacts on wild Atlantic salmon stocks are addressed. At the moment, it is imperative that we start from a solid base with which all Parties are comfortable. Canada seeks a general agreement on the principles and direction of the Williamsburg Resolution but at the same time patience on the part of other Parties for us to conclude our mandated consultations.