2. Hon E. Hudson 19.05.26

May 15, 2026

Honourable Joanne Thompson
Minister of Fisheries
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Thompson,

We are writing to express our strong support for the Prince Edward Island Shellfish Association's proposal to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) for the maintenance and enhancement of waterways across PEI.

Ensuring that our waterways are properly maintained is essential to supporting the long-term sustainability and recovery of the Island's wild oyster industry. Healthy, well-managed waterways are critical to protecting aquatic ecosystems, improving water quality, and enabling the successful return and growth of wild oyster populations.

As major stakeholders, partners, and members of an all-of-industry advisory table, we acknowledge the approach outlined in the proposal put forward by the PEI Shellfish Association as a timely and important initiative.

The proposed work will directly support the recovery of the wild oyster fishery by improving overall site conditions in PEI waterways. Activities such as the removal of dead oysters and shells, while preserving live oysters and spat, will help protect future stock and reduce disease spread. Rebuilding oyster beds through shell recycling and habitat restoration will further enhance growing conditions for new seed, including the planned reintroduction of MSX-tolerant oysters.

In addition to its environmental benefits, the proposal provides meaningful employment for fishers during a period of uncertainty, ensuring their skills remain within the industry while contributing directly to restoration efforts. This approach strengthens both the ecological and economic resilience of the oyster sector and helps support the availability of live oysters within the system, benefiting growers, processors, and markets over time.

The project's focus on data collection and ongoing monitoring will also provide valuable information on oyster health, mortality, and environmental conditions, supporting science-based decision-making and long-term management of the fishery.

Employment Insurance (EI) fishing benefits are vital to rural communities and coastal economies. These supports help ensure stability within the fishing sectors, particularly given the inherent risks associated with economic fluctuations and significant stock losses, such as those currently being experienced in PEI due to MSX and Dermo. In this context, we are requesting consideration of temporary measures to support fishers through a rehabilitation-focused program. We note that similar approaches have been implemented in the past, such as the Northern Cod Adjustment and Recovery Program (1994), which provided EI-based support tied to previous earnings.

While we acknowledge that stakeholders may have varying interests as we collectively navigate this crisis, we are united in recognizing that the strength of this industry depends on the strength of each of its parts. We remain committed to all sectors of the industry, and we believe this project will strengthen the industry as a whole.

As an all-of-industry group, we stand together in support of this proposal. We are committed to advocating on behalf of all members and strongly support the PEI Shellfish Association in this important initiative. We believe this work is essential to ensuring PEI's waterways are restored, maintained, and prepared for the successful reinvigoration of all aspects of the oyster industry.

Please take this letter as a clear expression of our collective endorsement and commitment to advancing the health, sustainability, and long-term viability of PEI's oyster industry. Thank you for your consideration.

Members of the Oyster Industry Advisory Committee

Bob MacLeod
President, PEI Shellfish Association

Jolene Millar
Executive Director, PEI Shellfish Association

Peter Warris
Executive Director, PEI Aquaculture Alliance

Richard Gallant
Executive Director, PEI Oyster Processors Assoc

Michele Koughan
Deputy Minister
Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism

Mary Hunter
Deputy Minister
Workforce and Advanced Learning

c: Honourable Heath MacDonald
MP Robert Morrissey
MP Kent MacDonald
MP Sean Casey
Monique Horne, Cascumpec Oyster Company
Martin O'Brien, Cascumpec Oyster Company
Aaron Sweet, Sweet Oyster Company
Jason Handrahan, North Shore Oyster Company