



Canadian Committee for a Sustainable Eel Fishery Inc.

Statement by CCSEF Following Testimony of Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Before the House of Commons Standing Committee

February 13, 2024

(Tantallon, NS) –Today’s testimony by Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Annette Gibbons before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans reveals that the elver fishery, currently under serious consideration for premature closure, could remain open if proactive enforcement measures were made a priority by DFO and other government agencies such as the RCMP and the CBSA.

Suggestions by Deputy Minister Gibbons that new regulations, currently in development by DFO, must be finalised before the fishery can be opened are patently false. It is incredibly disappointing the Government of Canada is spreading such falsehoods.

Should Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Diane Lebovillier decide to finalize her intention to close the 2024 elver season, instead of deploying robust enforcement strategies to curtail illegal harvesting, she is choosing to support transnational organised crime – Chinese companies buying elvers from illegal poachers protected by Canadian biker gangs – rather than honest, hardworking Canadians who have legally fished elvers for 30+ years, paid their taxes and supported their local communities.

Minister Lebovillier instead should adopt the recommendation of CPC MP Clifford Small to delay the opening of the elver fishery, arrest and charge all illegal harvesters who choose to ignore the temporary closure, and then open the fishery to lawful commercial licence holders committed to the orderly operation of the fishery and conservation of the resource.

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