



**PROJECT  
FOSTERING THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF  
AN INDIGENOUS  
REFLECTION AND  
VISION REGARDING  
MARINE PLANNING  
AND CONSERVATION  
INITIATIVES**

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**Technical sheet for the topic  
the blue economy.**



The objective of this sheet is to support and inform the thinking of First Nations as well as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) within the framework of this project. DFO, and more specifically the Marine Planning and Conservation Division (MPCD), Quebec region, is the partner department of this project.

As a reminder, the objective of this project is to allow the communities concerned by the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence Bioregion to develop a reflection and a vision on the topics of marine planning and conservation, in preparation for discussions with the government of Canada on these topics.

This sheet is a working document which aims to shed some light on the topic of "Meaning of blue economy and how to participate in it", which is presented here as a "blue economy".

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## TECHNICAL SHEET FOR THE TOPIC THE BLUE ECONOMY

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## Section 1.

### Description of the topic

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#### 1.1 The blue economy: definition of the concept

The Government of Canada wishes to steer a vision of the oceans towards a definition of the blue economy based on that of the World Bank:

**“The sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health. The relationship between sustainable economies and the health of the oceans is at the heart of a blue economy, which integrates stewardship activities and sustainable business growth.”<sup>1</sup>**

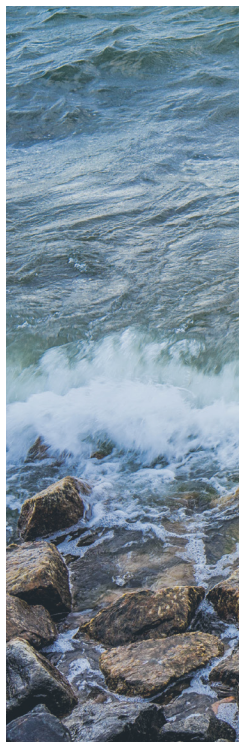
## 1.2 The Canadian Blue Economy Strategy (BES)

In the short term, the Government of Canada's Blue Economy Strategy (BES) draws our attention when it comes to the blue economy.

From an economic recovery standpoint, the federal government officially launched its public engagement campaign for the BES on February 8, 2021.<sup>2</sup> Targeted as one of the federal government's priorities, this initiative is also a priority within the 8 departments presented in the diagram below. The Blue Economy Strategy Secretariat (BESS) is the federal agency that was established to develop the strategic framework. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is also an interdepartmental leader in the implementation of the BES.



The vision for this strategy is to **"guide government actions and investments that will help Canada develop its ocean economy while advancing our conservation goals."**<sup>3</sup> The intention behind the BES is not to replace or invalidate the frameworks or strategies already in place in certain provinces, regions or communities, but to propose coherent programs and means adapted to each socio-economic, cultural and environmental context.



## REFLECTIONS:

Knowing that the main objective of the BES is to respond to the “urgent need” for economic growth through the exploitation of the oceans and their resources, how can this strategy be aligned with national conservation objectives of 25% of coastal and marine environments by 2025 and 30% by 2030?

According to you, how can the economic side of the BES be balanced with the preservation of the close link that the First Nations maintain with their coastal and marine territory, with the preservation of their activities, resources and ecosystems?

### 1.2.1 The scope of the BES

#### Geographical

While the BES is primarily focused on the 3 oceans surrounding Canada, other large bodies of water also support marine activities that benefit the country’s economy. Hudson’s Bay and James Bay, the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence, inland waters and fisheries could help increase and support the objectives and investments related to the blue economy.

#### Sectorial

Although BES has an ocean focus, it also considers coastal and freshwater environments, involving a range of sectors: commercial fishing, fish and seafood processing, aquaculture, shipping, ports and harbors, ship and boat building, coastal and marine tourism, offshore energy production, biotechnology, and forward-looking ocean industries.

SECTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CANADA'S BLUE ECONOMY

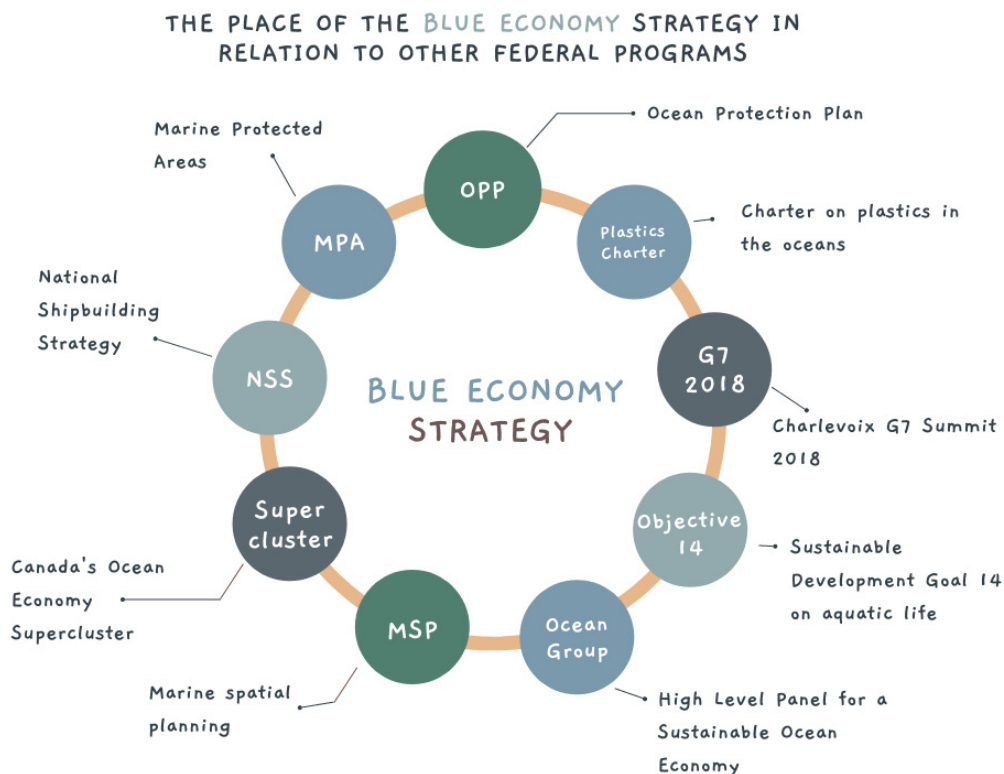


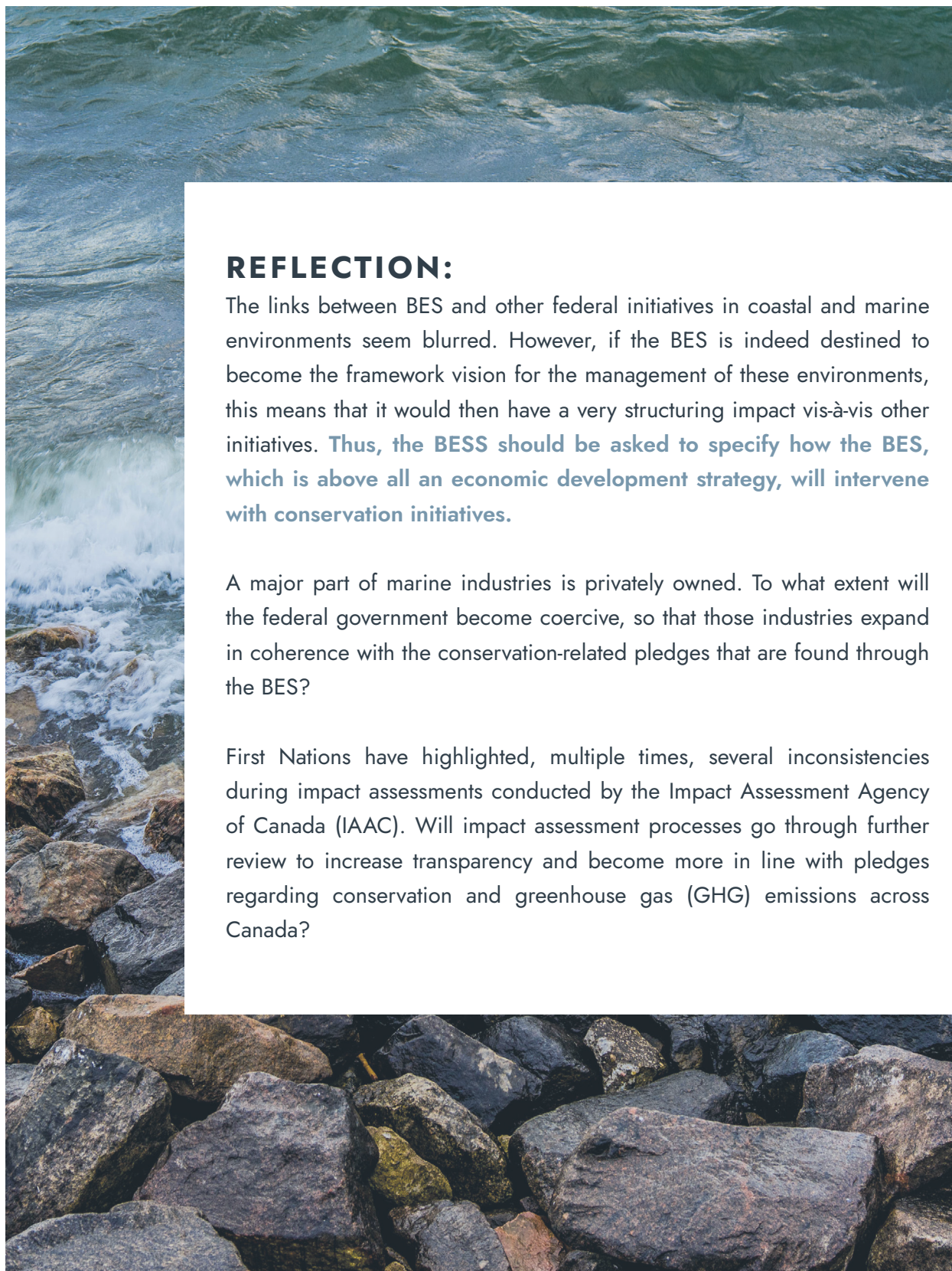
### 1.2.2 Link with other federal initiatives in coastal and marine environments

According to the BESS, the BES will be **the** overarching vision for stimulating a prosperous and sustainable ocean economy in Canada, while continuing to advance conservation goals, including ocean protection. Through BES, the Government of Canada aims to coordinate ocean space by linking existing programs (e.g., Oceans Protection Plan (OPP), Marine Protected Areas, National Shipbuilding Strategy) and define a coherent long-term vision.

For example, OPP is a complementary federal initiative to BES that aligns with BES’s overall vision. Thus, the BES does not replace the measures underway under the OPP, but presents a vision of how Canada can ensure economic growth in the marine sector while maintaining a balance with sustainability and respect for the oceans.

As part of Canada’s safer, cleaner and healthier oceans agenda, the OPP is an important driver of the blue economy. Marine spatial planning, the promotion of ocean science and innovation, marine protected and conserved areas, the fight against ghost gear and plastics in the oceans and other marine litter are other key elements of BES.<sup>4</sup>





## REFLECTION:

The links between BES and other federal initiatives in coastal and marine environments seem blurred. However, if the BES is indeed destined to become the framework vision for the management of these environments, this means that it would then have a very structuring impact vis-à-vis other initiatives. **Thus, the BESS should be asked to specify how the BES, which is above all an economic development strategy, will intervene with conservation initiatives.**

A major part of marine industries is privately owned. To what extent will the federal government become coercive, so that those industries expand in coherence with the conservation-related pledges that are found through the BES?

First Nations have highlighted, multiple times, several inconsistencies during impact assessments conducted by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC). Will impact assessment processes go through further review to increase transparency and become more in line with pledges regarding conservation and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across Canada?

### 1.3 The Government of Quebec's Maritime Strategy, *Avantage Saint-Laurent* (ASL)

At the provincial level, Quebec announced in 2015 its Maritime Strategy for the 2030 horizon. Currently, Quebec is developing its strategic orientations for 2020-2025 through a new maritime vision, *Avantage Saint-Laurent* (ASL), for which public consultations were held in the fall of 2019, but whose final version has still not been made public. The territory covered by ASL includes the fluvial section of the river, the estuary and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The northern coasts (James Bay, Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay) are also concerned.

Like the BES, ASL vision uses the concept of the blue economy as a frame of reference,<sup>6</sup> thus bringing to the forefront the sustainable development of the marine economy and the protection of freshwater and marine ecosystems. However, the investments proposed by this strategy seem to further promote the development of port infrastructure, in particular the Contrecoeur port terminal expansion project, and the increase in marine traffic on the St. Lawrence.<sup>6</sup> In addition, very little information is available on how the reference framework, based on the blue economy, will be developed and implemented, and what tools and mechanisms will be used to achieve the objectives.<sup>7</sup>

How ASL will fit into the BES is still a gray area. The 2 strategies overlap the same marine environment and overlap within multiple jurisdictions, for example with marine transportation and aquaculture. However, the federal government would try to supplement and remain coherent with ASL so as to align its levers of action with those of the provincial government and to avoid contradictory visions.



#### **REFLECTION:**

Considering the responsibilities of the Government of Quebec attached to various marine sectors, particularly in aquaculture, what will be the influence of the BES on these (e.g., modification of regulations)?



## Section 2.

### Portrait of the situation

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#### 2.1 Current situation

Several countries, including Canada, have recently committed to the sustainable management of nearly 30 million km<sup>2</sup> of their national waters by 2025, notably within the framework of the International Ocean Panel which promotes a transformation of the vision of the oceans towards a sustainable blue economy.<sup>5</sup>

**Bordered by 3 oceans, Canada is home to more than 7 million people in its coastal communities. Considering the significant human presence in marine environments, there is an increased need to reconcile multiple economic sectors (fishing, exploitation of natural resources, aquaculture, tourism, etc.), cultural (traditional use of fishery resources by the First Nations), social and environmental (conservation of marine species and ecosystems) to ensure the health of the oceans.**<sup>3</sup>

#### 2.2 Summary of the process initiated by the federal government

##### 2.2.1 First phase of public mobilization: February 2021 to June 2021

Saying that she wants to “develop the blue economy strategy through a co-development approach”, the previous minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada has led from February to June 2021 a national tour of virtual round tables (regional and thematic) with various coastal and marine groups. The Minister had mainly engaged in regional round tables at the political level, in particular with Chiefs of Indigenous communities. In addition, a few thematic round tables were held, such as on aquaculture and marine transportation, and to which some members of Indigenous Nations participated. A roundtable with the Mi’kmaq Nation of Prince Edward Island was also held.

On May 31st, 2021, the BESS also held an information session for First Nations in Quebec, from which the PowerPoint presentation is located [here](#).

**To stimulate your thoughts, here are some elements that were discussed during the round tables with the members of the Indigenous communities that were present:**

**The lack of work force is a major issue within fish and seafood processing industries. A retention strategy for the workforce would be beneficial and highly relevant to reduce the impacts of current seasonal positions. For one, a cyclic variation of the fished species could extend factory work periods and potentially alleviate the impact of the seasonal nature of current labour.**

**Information and data that are relevant to First Nations must be easily accessible to ensure sustainable collaboration.**

**Given that there are many stakeholders, and key issues related to the BES, it would be beneficial to create a permanent committee, or roundtable for its elaboration and implementation to ensure that First Nations are well-informed.**

**Although most positions might be found within the federal public service, it would be relevant to offer them to First Nations members. For instance, within marine protected areas, positions that pertain to the interpretation of the territory and fishery guarding could be offered.**

At the same time, an online public engagement has been underway since February 8 and will end on June 15, 2021. For more details on the engagement, DFO has produced an information kit to fuel reflections on BES which also includes several questions. This [engagement kit](#) is available in Innu-aimun, Mi'kmaq and Inuktitut. For a more abbreviated version, you can directly consult the [website](#) and navigate from one thematic tab to another.

**Ministerial round tables and the online engagement are the first engagement step for the development of the BES.**

### 2.2.2 Beginning of Indigenous engagement: winter 2022

Following the first engagement phase, the BESS has committed to fostering Indigenous mobilization, the latter of which has begun in January 2022. The National Indigenous Fisheries Institute (NIFI) is mandated by the BESS to organize an online mobilization series with Indigenous communities and organizations, which targets Canadian provinces and territories. The NIFI aims to produce a summary report of all questions and feedback that were expressed during online sessions.

On January 18, 2022, a first virtual mobilization session was organized for First Nations across Quebec. You can [hereby](#) find the PowerPoint presentation of the event.

#### **The following components were addressed by the BESS during the online session mentioned above:**

- **The BESS highlighted that reconciliation is amongst key priorities within the BES.**
- **The BES not only aims to focus on diverse sectors that are embedded within the oceans, but also those that are connected to fresh water, which is further attached to the marine sector.**
- **The BESS seeks to move away from working in silos and to increase coherence between the departments that involved within the BES.**
- **As of now, the BES focuses on the federal level; therefore, the BESS has not fostered engagement on the provincial level just yet. The current priority for the BESS is to first clarify its vision at the federal level.**
- **The BESS aims to personalize the development of the BES according to the diversity of geographic locations, all the while considering the contexts that occur on different coasts. It further seeks to avoid a monolithic approach.**

**Here in are some of the questions that were asked by First Nations during the online mobilization session, along with the answers provided by the BESS.**

- **How will fresh water be integrated, and considered within the BES?**

*Answer: As soon as a fresh water body is connected to the marine sector, it will be included within the BES. Fisheries and aquaculture, which take place in fresh water bodies, will also be included.*

- **Will the BES be used as a portal towards existing programmes, with additional support? Or will the BES hold its own financial means to support First Nations?**

*Answer: The BES is a policy frame that acts as a means to organize economic, environmental and governance priorities. We aim to use the BES to identify both the lacks and priorities within funding opportunities. According to the lacks that will be highlighted, we could, for one, create new funding opportunities.*

- **What is the timeframe for the BES?**

*Answer: We aim to develop a first draft for the upcoming five years, then it should be updated.*

- **Will the BES encompass regional priorities and characteristics?**

*Answer: The vision of the BES remains national, yet it might differ depending on location. For instance, how climate change is addressed on the field will change based on needs and priorities.*

- **How are investments distributed amongst provinces and territories? Will you allocate funding based on what you have heard in mobilization sessions?**

*Answer: Unfortunately, we have yet to determine how funding will be invested and distributed. However, we take note of all feedback that has been provided. We also keep in mind the wish for funding to be allocated to First Nations and further managed on a local scale.*

## Economic, environmental and governance priorities highlighted by First Nations

The BESS wishes to learn about the **economic, environmental and governance priorities of First Nations to direct the BESS**. Note that First Nations had until March 11, 2022, to submit their feedback. As mentioned above, this step aims to guide future endeavours related to the BES. The following are examples that pertain to all three areas of priorities:

<p><b>Economy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support of the Atlantic Integrated Commercial Fisheries initiative (AICFI)</b></li> <li>• <b>Support commercial fishing businesses</b></li> <li>• <b>Support organizations that stem from the Indigenous Resource Management Program</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recognize Indigenous knowledge</b></li> <li>• <b>Protect coastal and marine sites that are significant to First Nations</b></li> <li>• <b>Move towards the two-eyed seeing approach (Netukulimk)</b></li> <li>• <b>Move towards fishing sustainable practices</b></li> <li>• <b>Increase the number of Indigenous fishing guardians</b></li> <li>• <b>Maintain balance between conservation and economic incentives</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Governance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Put forward Indigenous rights holders</b></li> <li>• <b>Respect rights that are protected under the Constitution Act</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop workshops focusing on the two-eyed seeing approach, Indigenous traditional knowledge and the Netukulimk for non-Indigenous partners and the government</b></li> <li>• <b>Prioritize oceans as common resources</b></li> <li>• <b>Respect Indigenous, and Treaty rights to make an income from oceans</b></li> <li>• <b>Recognize the diversity that is found across Indigenous peoples and integrate the former within the BES</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop collaborative partnerships within the BES</b></li> <li>• <b>Support Indigenous peoples in the maintenance and the management of protected areas</b></li> </ul>

## 2.3 Upcoming changes/Next steps

Following the public mobilization, which includes roundtables and an online survey, along with virtual engagement sessions, as well as the indigenous mobilization sessions, the Government of Canada will proceed to writing a summary “What We Heard Report”. This retroactive document, which should have been published during the fall of 2021, should be made available on the [website](#) of the BES shortly.

Currently in development, the SEB is expected to be released later in 2022. Once released, no mobilization is planned at this time. However, Indigenous communities and organizations will be engaged in the development of new initiatives that will flow from the BES. Individual co-development initiatives may also be considered as required. In addition, Indigenous communities will be consulted on new marine initiatives that may affect Aboriginal and treaty rights.

## Section 3.

### Avenues for reflection

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#### 3.1 Opportunities for First Nations

**The Blue Economy Strategy (BES) would target certain more important sectors in Quebec: marine transportation, offshore oil and gas, fish and seafood processing, commercial fishing, Indigenous fishing and means of traditional livelihoods, shipbuilding and aquaculture.<sup>3</sup>**

The BES is currently at the stage of a blank page, because the federal government says it wishes to integrate the reflections of all stakeholders in the marine environment. It wants to know the opinions, thoughts and concerns of the First Nations, the current gaps and the opportunities related to federal marine activities that particularly affect them (aquaculture, marine transportation, quiet vessels, maritime liability, OPP, noise strategy, marine spatial planning, etc.). This is an opportunity for First Nations to influence the development of the orientations of the BES.

Some opportunities could be offered to coastal First Nations communities in Quebec. We could highlight socio-economic projects focused on the development of marine resources, management of recyclable materials from fishing gear (e.g. lockers, worn ropes, buoys, etc.), many recreational tourism and/or cultural opportunities related to traditional activities and territories, etc.

## Some initiatives for sustainable exploitation and development of marine resources

- ✓ Fourchette bleue is a program aimed at diversifying Quebec consumption of marine products from the St. Lawrence. It promotes little-known edible marine species, with the aim of reducing fishing pressure on species at risk. Fishmongers and restaurants offering at least two valued species to their customers can receive the Fourchette bleue certification.<sup>12</sup>
- ✓ The Mi'gmaq and Maliseet Fisheries Management Association (MMAFMA) cultivates macroalgae at sea and thus supplies companies processing algae for food. This aquaculture site is also used by researchers from various Quebec institutions.<sup>13</sup>
- ✓ Tashii Paddle School is a recreational tourism business owned by the Ahousaht First Nation and located in Tofino, British Columbia. This school offers canoeing lessons and guided pirogue and canoe tours. These tours are also an opportunity to talk about the local Indigenous culture and connect visitors with the surrounding nature.<sup>14</sup>

It would be desirable and necessary to achieve a fair balance in the way investments will be distributed across these activity sectors. The priorities and needs of First Nation communities should be reflected through the funding of future projects.



### 3.2 Findings and issues related to BES

Depending on the nature of the BES-related projects, some could create environmental problems affecting socio-economic activities and traditional practices upheld by coastal First Nations. The latter are directly impacted by the quality levels of resources, along with the coastal and marine ecosystems. The following table provides some examples.

<p><b>Marine traffic<sup>8</sup></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underwater noise disturbing aquatic life</li> <li>• Production of greenhouse gases (GHG), SO<sub>x</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> and fine particles</li> <li>• Wastewater discharge that can cause bacterial pollution, algal blooms and suffocation of aquatic species</li> <li>• Ballast water discharge that can cause the introduction of invasive alien species</li> <li>• Dredging for shipping lanes causing a variety of environmental impacts, including the resuspension of contaminants hazardous to aquatic life</li> </ul>
<p><b>Offshore oil and gas extraction<sup>9</sup></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oil spills fatally affecting marine organisms</li> <li>• Seismic blasts affecting the behavior and physiology of aquatic life</li> <li>• High GHG emissions</li> <li>• Drilling platforms altering bird migration and increasing mortality</li> <li>• Drill cuttings pollute water and cause mortality of benthic organisms</li> </ul>
<p><b>Marine aquaculture<sup>10</sup></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-density livestock production increasing the spread of disease and viruses<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• Water contamination by organic waste, suspended solids, phosphorus and nitrogen compounds</li> <li>• Intensified nutrient load that can cause eutrophication of waters</li> </ul>

The many environmental issues related to economic development in the marine environment must therefore be seriously studied before approving projects.

In addition, as part of the 2019 consultation for Quebec's new maritime vision, the Conseil de la Première Nation des Innus Essipit produced a brief highlighting a few findings and issues related to the axes proposed by the new provincial maritime strategy. **Since the points raised are likely to apply to other coastal communities, here are a few:**

Maintaining and accessing a quality resource is an important issue for the community, in terms of food, social and ceremonial (FSC) fishing, hunting for migratory birds and commercial fishing. The protection of marine species at risk as well as the entire marine ecosystem must therefore be a priority. This particularly requires more acquisition and sharing of knowledge on marine environments, as well as the creation of new marine protected areas. Also, the province must act with transparency in its decision-making regarding the reconciliation of social-economic uses and conservation.

The current and future increase in marine transportation on the St. Lawrence and in the Saguenay Fjord must not undermine marine tourism, which relies in particular on biodiversity, the coastal and marine landscapes and ecosystems. An effective maritime strategy must be balanced between preservation and economy. Already existing marine economic activities should be supported financially and not endangered by new competing projects. Special support in the promotion of marine tourism should be provided for.

Access to quality disembarkation infrastructure (including docks) is an important issue for the maintenance and prosperity of commercial, recreational tourism and cultural activities. Simplified access to government funding for the maintenance of these infrastructures would be desirable given the heavy financial burden they represent for local and regional managers. In this regard, the funding received within the framework of the QMS for the repair of the Quai des Escoumins was greatly appreciated, although it was difficult to obtain.<sup>6</sup>



## CONTACTS AT THE FNQLSDI FOR ANY COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS SHEET OR THE PROJECT:

**Laurie Leblanc-Rajotte**, conservation project officer, marine  
planning and conservation project

[lleblanc-rajotte@iddpnql.ca](mailto:lleblanc-rajotte@iddpnql.ca)

**Coralie Lessard Bolâtre**, conservation project officer, marine  
planning and conservation project

[clessard@iddpnql.ca](mailto:clessard@iddpnql.ca)

Generic FNQLSDI email address [info@iddpnql.ca](mailto:info@iddpnql.ca)

and reception phone number: 418-843-9999

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