

Stakeholder Perceptions of the Nova Scotia  
Aquaculture Regulations Implemented in 2015  
A Foundation for Social Licence?

By

*Meghan Samaine Terpenning*

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of  
Master of Marine Management

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

December 2018

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Thank you firstly to my research participants who took the time to share their knowledge with me. Thank you to the Ocean Frontier Institute who funded this research. In addition, thank you to the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia for providing me with an internship and expanding my knowledge of the industry. Thank you to Debbie Erickson, Greg Terpenning, Avyi Koulas, and Shaye Donald for their never-ending encouragement. Additionally, thank you to my second reader Stefanie Colombo for taking the time to review this project. Finally, thank you to my supervisors Ramon Filgueira and Lucia Fanning whose guidance and feedback greatly benefitted this research; your advice and encouragement had an immeasurable effect on this project and I cannot thank you enough.

## ABSTRACT

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Nova Scotia is in need of socio-economic opportunities in coastal rural areas, which aquaculture may provide. However, aquaculture is a particularly contentious industry in Nova Scotia with public concern over the environmental impacts and potential conflicts with other marine activities. As a result, in 2014 an independent review by two lawyers made a number of recommendations for an aquaculture regulatory reform in the form of the Doelle-Lahey Report (2014). This review incorporated input from a variety of stakeholders throughout Nova Scotia and was widely supported. The resultant regulations released in 2015 incorporated many, but not all of the recommendations from the Doelle-Lahey Report (2014). The new regulatory framework has received criticism from multiple stakeholder groups. The present research aims to understand how the province's reaction to the Doelle-Lahey Report (2014) in the form of the aquaculture regulations has affected industry development. A comparison between the current regulations and the Doelle-Lahey Report (2014) was undertaken followed by semi-structured interviews to understand how stakeholders perceived the identified differences and the industry more generally. Specifically, stakeholders in academia, industry, and government categories tended to believe that the current regulatory framework is sufficiently strong, and more recommendations from the Doelle-Lahey Report (2014) should not be incorporated into the regulations. In contrast, stakeholders in the NGO and community categories would have preferred more recommendations from the Doelle-Lahey Report (2014) to be incorporated in the new regulatory framework. Further, it was found that stakeholders thought the regulations may have direct effects (e.g. the new regulatory process) and indirect effects (e.g. social acceptability due to transparency, legitimacy, accountability, and procedural fairness) on industry development. As participants across all stakeholder categories thought there could be improvements in transparency, increasing transparency should be prioritized in future decisions. Additionally, improving clarity and publicly available information may also shift stakeholder concerns away from transparency and towards the standards and practices in place. As a result, increasing transparency may also increase the perceived legitimacy, accountability, and procedural fairness and allow for more socially acceptable aquaculture practices.