

Shelburne County fishermen stand up against industrial salmon farms in vital fishing areas

Shelburne, NS July 28, 2011: A group of twelve fishermen representing twelve independent family businesses from Sandy Point, West Green Harbour, Shelburne Harbour and Jordan Bay met in Shelburne on Monday with Shelburne MLA and Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister Sterling Belliveau to express their collective opposition to Mr. Belliveau's possible approval of aquaculture leases and licenses in the Jordan Bay, West Green Harbour and outer Shelburne Harbour areas. The group also expressed serious concerns about what they believe is a seriously flawed process used by the Nova Scotia government in determining suitability of aquaculture sites.

"We are standing shoulder-to-shoulder in demanding answers from Mr. Belliveau before he approves any more of these salmon farms in our pristine bays and harbours," one of the fishermen said. The New Brunswick-based, multi-national firm Cooke Aquaculture (\$500 million annual sales) has applications now under consideration review near the lucrative lobster grounds in West Green Harbour and Jordan Bay and in Shelburne's outer harbour.

The fishermen asked Belliveau to address their concerns about conflicts between aquaculture and existing fisheries, industry-created aquaculture policies, citizens having to bear the burden of research, sites approved which are not suited for fin fish growing, breakdown of the public consultation process, need for a better regulatory process and the lack of adequate regulation leading to irreversible damage. "None of these issues were addressed by Mr. Belliveau," said another fisherman who attended the meeting. "The most common response by Belliveau to questions and concerns was that "they would be addressed in the process."

Ricky Hallett, who has fished lobster out of West Green Harbour for 32 years, attended the LFA 33 meeting in Bridgewater recently where he questioned Belliveau on the science which has been made public about the high catches of berried lobster (females bearing eggs) in the area proposed for the salmon farms. Several other fishermen expressed strong concerns about the salmon farms at that meeting. Belliveau assured Hallett and the others all questions and concerns from fishermen would be addressed at the July 12 department open house in Shelburne.

"I've been asking questions about this science for three years now and expected Mr. Belliveau to follow through on his promise from the LFA 33 meeting. I couldn't be more disappointed, especially since one of the important jobs of the Fisheries Minister is to protect the existing fisheries."

The twelve fishermen do not suggest they represent all of the fishermen in the county, but say that, if Belliveau's staff had not limited the meeting to twelve fishermen, there would have been more at the meeting. "We are not alone in this by a long margin, I can assure you," added another fisherman.

Some of the fishermen at the meeting and many others in the community felt that the July 12 public meeting fell far short of the expectations of many for solid answers from Mr. Belliveau and his staff. On July 5, Belliveau was presented with a list of 52 questions by Shelburne County citizens with the request that all be answered on July 12 and/or posted on the department web site by July 26. Belliveau failed to even attend the meeting in the centre of his riding and not one of the questions has been answered twenty-two days after the request was made.

Concerned Fishermen of Shelburne County

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