



Wild Salmon Defenders Alliance

#213 - 46693 Yale road
Chilliwack, BC
V2P 7Z4
Telephone: 604-792-0867

July 17, 2016

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

Subject: Approving long-term leases to ocean fish farms - a reckless decision

We have learned, to our great disappointment, that your government approved six-year leases for the salmon farming industry to continue to use the Pacific coast to raise Atlantic salmon in open-net cages mal-placed on migration routes of wild salmon. To make such a reckless and provocative decision in your new position as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, shows that you are putting the interests of fish farm operators ahead of those of wild salmon. You have ignored the mandate of your Prime Minister, to use science to make your decisions and frankly this looks like corruption.

Over the years, your department has been alerted to the increasing and unacceptable risks open-net fish farms pose to wild salmon, not least in the Cohen Commission recommendations, and more recent scientific evidence of the potential presence of Heart and Skeletal Muscle Inflammation (HSMI) in farmed salmon samples from a B.C. aquaculture facility in 2013-2014, diagnosed by your own scientist, Dr. Kristi Miller. Fish farms pollute BC with viruses and are breeding grounds for sea lice that are known to be vectors for diseases. In Norway, fish farms applied all sorts of chemicals, but ultimately lost the battle against devastating sea lice problems and this is beginning to happen on the BC coast.

First Nations along the rivers have compelling reasons to believe fish farms threaten salmon stocks and view these long term fish farm leases as a direct threat to all Indigenous Nations, impacting Aboriginal Title and Rights to a fishery. The federal government has a fiduciary duty and responsibility to ensure that the interests of Indigenous Peoples are protected with as minimal infringement as possible. Furthermore, publically and with great fanfare, the Trudeau government committed to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This includes article 19 which states the following:

"States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them."

In approving long term leases to fish farms with no consultation whatsoever, the federal Liberal government has failed act in good faith by not obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples impacted by this decision. This decision damages the

credibility of the Trudeau government, and has damaged its relationship with Indigenous peoples who repeatedly asked to DFO to remove salmon farms from wild salmon habitat.

We note that your father, Romeo LeBlanc, former Minister of DFO under the Pierre Trudeau government, created an additional system of advisory committees that permitted fishermen to have a larger voice in fisheries management. You have the opportunity to build on his legacy by ensuring Indigenous people are included as legitimate decision makers in fisheries management and repair the damage that has been done. All the conditions are in place to accomplish this with Justin Trudeau's commitments to co-management of oceans and fisheries and the promises he made to implement UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations.

This situation warrants a meeting at the earliest possibility between yourself and the Indigenous Peoples whose Aboriginal Title and Rights are impacted by the decision to grant long term leases to fish farms. The purpose of the meeting would be to set up a co-management regime that includes Indigenous people to govern fisheries and oceans, to review the mounting scientific evidence of the dangers fish farms pose to wild salmon, to have DFO drop its the appeal of a court decision that struck down conditions of license permitting Marine Harvest to transfer farmed salmon infected with disease into open net pens, to fully implement the Cohen Commission recommendations, and to discuss legislating fish farms out of the ocean. The only sustainable way for aquaculture and wild salmon fisheries to co-exist is to move fish farms onto land in containment.

Most regrettably you have now made a decision that locks Canada into long-term agreement with foreign corporations such as Mitsubishi. This means we are in a position to doubt the integrity of your government. By ignoring your own mandate you have eroded the democracy of Canada and that is extremely concerning.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding these urgent matters.

Eddie Gardner, President
Wild Salmon Defenders Alliance

Cc First Nations Wild Salmon Alliance
Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance
Union of BC Indian Chiefs
First Nations Leadership Council
Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council
Stó:lō Tribal Council; Stó:lō Nation
Skwah First Nation, Chief and Council
Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation
BC Assembly of First Nations
Shuswap Nation Tribal Council
Sekw'el'was Chief and Council
Musqueam First Nation Chief and Council
Squamish First Nation Chief and Council
Tseil Waututh First Nation Chief and Council
Cheam First Nation Chief and Council
Sts'ailes Chief and Council
Nathan Cullen, NDP; Fin Donnelly, NDP
Elizabeth May, Green Party of Canada
Namgis First Nation