

NEWS RELEASE

Minority Report Applauded

April 9, 2003: For immediate release

MP John Cummins should be congratulated for his frank and accurate report to Parliament about how the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans is promoting net-cage salmon farming at the expense of wild salmon, conservation groups said today.

"This report is a clarion call for Fisheries Minister Robert Thibault to urgently redirect the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)," said Dr. Craig Orr of Watershed Watch Society.

In his report, Mr. Cummins (MP Delta-South Richmond) says: "In its rush to promote aquaculture, the Department has lied to its Minister, advised him to lie to Parliament and lied to the public."

Mr. Cummins is a member of the House of Commons fisheries committee. "His minority report exposes the misuse and abuse of powers by DFO's handling of the fishfarm issue", said Jennifer Lash of Living Oceans Society.

"This refreshingly candid examination of DFO's role in the controversy over net-cage salmon farming will assist us in our work to reform the fish farming industry," Ms. Lash said.

Critics of the fishfarm industry have said repeatedly that DFO is in a conflict of interest by its promotion of fishfarming while at the same time supposedly protecting wild fish stocks and fish habitat.

"Mr. Cummins' report highlights this conflict and clearly states that the laws of Canada are being flouted with disastrous consequences for our wild fish," said Suzanne Connell of the Georgia Strait Alliance.

With this report, Minister Thibault must now take the necessary steps to ensure that his department will coordinate its work and do what taxpayers expect it to do - act in the public interest rather than as a promotion arm of the fishfarm industry, Ms. Connell said.

"The best part of this report is the recommendation that the time for study is over and that it is time for action," said biologist Alexandra Morton, who has witnessed the devastation of wild pink salmon stocks in the Broughton Archipelago, off northeast Vancouver Island.

"Urgent action is desperately needed, and perhaps this report will prod the government into taking the strong actions necessary," she said.

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