

NEWS RELEASE

Hagen must be replaced as fisheries minister

January 29, 2003: For immediate release

VICTORIA - Premier Gordon Campbell showed extremely poor judgement by appointing Stan Hagen, minister of sustainable resource management, as fisheries minister after John van Dongen was forced to resign because of a police investigation into his handling of an aquaculture file, environmentalists and First Nations said today.

"Minister Hagen must resign immediately because the largest single campaign donation he received in the May 2001 election was from the Omega Salmon Group," said Chris Genoali of Raincoast Conservation Society. "Mr. Hagen also received funds from Heritage Aquaculture and Akua Feed Systems Inc. so he shouldn't replace Mr. van Dongen when there are other ministers who do not have this type of conflict."

Joyce Murray, minister of water, land and air protection, did not receive campaign contributions from aquaculture companies and could handle the fisheries file since her ministry is already responsible for waste management issues concerning fish farms.

"It is troubling to think that some research into issues like campaign contributions was not done before Mr. Hagen's appointment. However, it is even more troubling if Premier Campbell knew about these contributions and decided to appoint Mr. Hagen anyway," said Eric Blueschke of the Georgia Strait Alliance.

Because of the intense controversy in British Columbia about the aquaculture industries, both fin-fish and shellfish, it is vital that there is no appearance of conflict of interest concerning the minister responsible, said these members of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR), which is meeting today in Victoria.

"All along the B.C. coast, community groups, First Nations and conservation groups are working hard trying to force the provincial and federal governments to enforce Canada's Oceans and Fisheries Acts so that wild fish stocks do not suffer from the negative effects of fish farming," said Philip Hogan of the Heiltsuk First Nation.

CAAR is a group of conservation and First Nations organizations dedicated to reforming the salmon-farming industry. Visit www.farmedanddangerous.org for more information.

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