



Rally today: Salmon feedlots out of our oceans

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Groups of lobster fishermen and concerned citizens from coastal communities gathered on the steps of the Nova Scotia Legislature today to protest the rapid expansion of industrial-scale salmon farms being supported by Sterling Belliveau, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Environment.

Lobster fishermen from St. Mary's Bay, who will no longer be able to fish in the 209 acre in-shore waters that Cooke Aquaculture salmon farms will cover, brought their traps to the legislature to show the importance of the lobster fishery in their community.

"St Mary's Bay has the best quality lobster in the world," said Sheldon Dixon, Tiverton lobster fisherman, in a speech to the crowd, "and these farms are going right in one of the best spots to catch them. Why would we want to risk the most profitable and sustainable industry we have for the chance at a few low-paying jobs on a salmon farm?"

Community members worried about the untreated waste that up to 2 million salmon will put directly into the water. Karen Crocker of Freeport, from the St. Mary's Bay Coastal Alliance, brought with her a tub of foul-smelling anoxic mud from the beach near Cooke's existing salmon farm in the area at Grand Passage. A member of the crowd, dressed in a life-sized lobster costume covered in salmon poo, drove Karen's point home with a sign reading "Would you eat me?"

Large groups came all the way from St. Mary's Bay and Shelburne Harbour, but event organizers had mixed feelings about the crowd coming to Halifax. "We shouldn't have to come all the way here to have our voices heard," Karen Crocker said. "Minister Belliveau has refused to discuss this project with us on several occasions. His idea of a consultation seems to be us asking questions, and him refusing to answer them. That's why we're here."

The local Bear River First Nations community also opposes these farms, as does the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. Sherry Pictou, from the Bear River First Nation spoke about the need to protect the existing fishery that her community relies on. "This is not a case of misinformed people opposing an industry they don't understand. We know what large open-net salmon farms have done in New Brunswick, and we see what Cooke's existing farm is doing to our bay. We've studied the science and we know these leases should not be approved."

Throughout the day, the protesters emphasized that they were not anti-aquaculture or anti-development. "Open-net salmon farms set the lowest possible standard," concluded Rob Johnson, the event organizer and Sustainable Seafood Coordinator of the Ecology Action Centre. "If Nova Scotia wants to develop an aquaculture industry, it should encourage advanced closed-containment technologies and small-scale shellfish farmers. This would still bring high quality

jobs to NS and set us up to be exporters of expertise and technology. The rest of the world is moving away from open-net salmon farms because of the noise, waste and disease problems, and it's disappointing to see the provincial government trying to bring such a destructive technology here."

While Minister Belliveau was invited to the event to speak directly to the affected groups, he did not attend. Protesters remained confident that they could stop the sites from being established. "It would be best if the Minister realized his mistake and put these industrial-scale developments on hold," said Johnson. "These leases shouldn't be approved without a Sustainable Coastal Development Strategy in place, or any consideration of sustainable economic development needs."