

Presentation to the Cohen Commission of Inquiry
Kamloops Forum 21 October, 2010

My name is Jim Prudhomme. I am a Canadian born and raised, but I have lived and worked a good part of my life throughout the world – including Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. So I know what it means when people say that Canada is the *best country* in the world to live in. And, I am originally from Eastern Canada, being one of the “lucky ones” to have migrated here. So I am now from British Columbia, and can claim to live in the *best place* in the world.

I am a resident of Kelowna, where I live and work as an angling (fishing) guide. I am here today to speak on behalf of my fly fishing club (Lonely Loon Fly Fishers’ Society) and my many like minded angler friends and colleagues.

As anglers, we have experienced firsthand the connection between our wild Pacific Salmon and this wonderful place to live. We understand how vital the salmon are to the *heritage* and unique *character* of British Columbia. We are fortunate enough to see them in their role as catalysts in the ecological life cycle of B.C.’s many rivers and streams, including the Fraser River.

As anglers, and as residents, we are concerned about the steady decline of wild Pacific Salmon over these past years. We have followed the issues, and done what research we could, to understand the causes of this decline; not just the decline of the Fraser River Sockeye that are the subject of this forum-----but of the Pink, Chum, Coho and Chinook Salmon that share the same oceans, rivers and many of the same threats as our Sockeye.

It is clear to us that there are many factors contributing to this decline – climate change, overfishing in the open oceans, pollution, obstruction of migration routes and destruction of spawning habitat, to name but a few. It is also clear that some of these factors are beyond the scope and influence of the Cohen Commission.

But one factor, or threat, is clearly within the scope and influence of this commission, and that is Salmon Farms.

Salmon Farms are located in large numbers along our coastline, on the migration routes of our wild salmon. They produce non-indigenous fish, in open net cages, in a very “unregulated” fashion. The parasites and diseases that incubate in these ocean feedlots represent a *clear and present danger* to our wild Pacific Salmon, including our Fraser River Sockeye. They also represent a potential danger to many other marine organisms that inhabit our coastal waters and the oceans beyond.

The evidence to support this has been gathered, slowly and inexorably, by concerned scientists and citizens over recent years.

This evidence is becoming more and more undeniable. But, it is being produced with great difficulty, because of resistance from the Salmon Farm industry. The industry

continues to deny that Salmon Farms represent a hazard to the wild Salmon stocks, in much the same fashion as the tobacco industry resisted claims that cigarettes were a cause of lung cancer.

The Salmon Farm industry holds information and data, on parasites and diseases that have afflicted the farms over the past 20 years, but resists sharing this with the scientific community and the public.

The B.C. government has been no more helpful. It has taken six years and an Order from the Information Commissioner for the B.C. government to finally release sea lice infestation and disease data requested for the period 2002-03. Requests for more recent data are experiencing similar resistance.

We believe that this information is vital to a full investigation of the impact that Salmon Farms have on wild Pacific Salmon, including the Fraser River Sockeye. We believe the Salmon Farm industry and the government have a moral, if not a legal, responsibility to share this information in a fully transparent, comprehensive fashion.

We believe that the Cohen Commission has it within its mandate the responsibility to effect this.

We request that the Cohen Commission direct that all information relating to diseases and parasites occurring in the Salmon Farms since 1988 be released to public knowledge.

As an angler, representing anglers, I can assure you that our vision of British Columbia is one with a healthy, sustainable stock of wild Fraser sockeye salmon. As a proud Canadian, I can assure you that without our wild Salmon, British Columbia will be much, much less than what it is today.

Jim Prudhomme
Kelowna
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