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Dear Minister Shea:

On August 26 you sent duplicate letters to many people dismissing the impact of salmon farms on British Columbia. I can only imagine the response to collapse of the world's largest sockeye salmon river, the Fraser River, has come directly from Ottawa. Your letter provides stark insight into the Federal Conservative government's course of action.

With an entire ministry at your disposal you told the public:

"The coastwide scope of the decline that has occurred across all Pacific salmon species suggests that this decline is associated with much larger ecological events than localized salmon farming."

This is entirely inaccurate as there has NOT been a coast-wide collapse across all Pacific salmon species, quite to the contrary. The people of British Columbia are looking at a bull's-eye collapse pattern with good returns all around the dead center – which is our extremely valuable Fraser River sockeye.

Really interesting – even within the Fraser River, the Harrison sockeye, which scientists report migrate to sea via fish farm-free Strait of Juan de Fuca, are returning at twice the DFO forecast.

The missing Fraser River sockeye salmon were observed as smolts by DFO as they migrated in the river. They were abundant and large. They entered the sea in late spring 2007, turned north into a heavily industrialized salmon farming area, where I examined some of them as they were being infested with sea lice and then they disappeared. These are the only sockeye that collapsed to less than 10% of forecast.

While you are telling the public all salmon species collapsed coast-wide, your highest-ranking BC official is publishing letters in newspapers also telling us that fish farms are not responsible for the collapse because the lice species I and others counted on the young sockeye in 2007 are not found on farm fish. First of all, there were two species of lice on the sockeye smolts, the large salmon louse and the smaller *Caligus*. Second, the fish farm company on the Fraser sockeye migration route, Marine Harvest, frequently reports *Caligus* in their website data. Specifically they report 16.5 *Caligus* per fish for a total of 8 million breeding on the Cyrus Rocks farm early this July as our newest sockeye generation was passing that farm. Because *Caligus* frequently jump fish to fish this species is also a strong potential disease vector.

As he exonerates fish farms, he goes on to say he will work with First Nations and other fishermen to conserve sockeye. Minister Shea, you closed this fishery at the beginning of the season there has been **extremely little fishing on this stock of sockeye**. Your Ministry has absolutely no valid scientific or legal reason to omit fish farmers from the investigation and ensuing action to protect the Fraser sockeye.

You also wrote that DFO has "taken significant action..." by "monitoring" farm lice and doing "ocean circulation studies." These are studies, not "**significant action**." Your letter tells people you can't protect our salmon with closed-containment farms until this is "**practical and realistic**" for the fish farmers with head offices in Oslo, Norway. Minister Shea, you work for the people of Canada. Your primary mandate is protection of our wild salmon and whatever else is going on in your office no one has rescinded this mandate yet.

History is clearly repeating itself. In 1997, DFO scientists reported that the collapse of Canada's North Atlantic cod stocks, one of earth's greatest human food supplies, was because DFO ignored the science, misinformed the public, offered plausible but inaccurate theories, reprimanded scientists who spoke freely and took no action(1). **No one in DFO was held accountable when Canadians lost this vast resource.** Here in 2009, I would argue you and your department are ignoring the science, misinforming the public, offering plausible but unconfirmed theories and taking no action on a highly documented and obvious factor that reoccurs worldwide wherever there are salmon farms(2). You must be held accountable or it is clear from experience where this is heading.

The Fraser sockeye contribute far more to the economy and employment than salmon farms and they transport ocean nutrients into much of this Province feeding the trees that produce oxygen, remove carbon and help stabilize our climate. An enormous number of British Columbians live in the Fraser watershed and are breathing oxygen produced by salmon fed trees. These are planetary systems we literally cannot live without. First Nation women have written me in anger and anxiety at losing an essential part of their diet.

The very concept of farming salmon in net pens is unconstitutional in Canada because it attempts to privatize

ocean spaces and own schools of salmon in the ocean. The industry appears in violation of many sections of the *Fisheries Act*. It breaks the natural laws of wild salmon, which never remain stationary. Your record of fish farm defense includes a recent assertion that the industry's by-catch of wild fish is not a "significant problem." And you refuse to acknowledge the science and act on the information that the fish farm viral ISA pandemic is spreading in imported salmon eggs(3).

Reading the outpouring of articles, letters to editors, emails to me and the 17,000 signatures thus far on my letter to you asking simply that you enforce the *Fisheries Act* on salmon farms I don't think western Canada is ready to loose their fish like eastern Canada. The actions required are simple:

1. Within your investigation on the fate of our sockeye, require full disclosure of the health and stocking of every salmon farm in BC from 1986 – present and run analysis against health records in enhancement facilities near and distant from salmon farms, including the 2007 salmon farms from Campbell River to Port Hardy.
2. Close the fish farm fishery on the Fraser migration route just as you have closed commercial and sport fishing.
3. Apply the Canadian *Fisheries Act* to fish farms and start laying charges for violations.
4. Support the Canadian fish farmers who want to reinvent their industry on land, with an eye to siting these facilities in job-starved towns
5. Ensure that marketing of both farmed and wild salmon is maximized to benefit us all, instead of driving down the price of both
6. Remove your science branch from the political DFO body and reinstate the Fisheries Research Board - which was a cutting edge, world class, Canadian, scientific powerhouse. Start using, instead of muzzling, your scientists.
7. Form local area management councils comprised of the people who depend on wild salmon and understand the complexities of their regions.
8. Apply the phenomenal wealth of science now available to harness the salmon's own remarkably successful biology to restore our runs.

If you won't take these steps please resign along with your Pacific Region senior staff and make way for people who will honor *Fisheries and Ocean's* contract with the public of Canada, present and future generations, to protect our salmon. The enormous pink salmon return this year – fish that were allowed to go to sea without farm lice, is a clear statement by the fish themselves that British Columbia can have abundant wild salmon, even running through the biggest city in our Province, Vancouver, City of the Salmon

Wild salmon are a gift on a magnitude far greater than any oil well, river power project or the few jobs from a Norwegian industry that imports fish from the south Pacific, throws them in our ocean and pulls out less fish.

Read the list of 17,000 people and counting who have signed my letter www.adopt-a-fry.org <http://www.adopt-a-fry.org> asking that you apply the laws of Canada to salmon farms. They are First Nation chiefs, business people, politicians, entertainers, environmentalists, stream keepers, they are the people of British Columbia, not a fringe group you can brush aside. Minster Shea, you have failed us in your response to the collapse of earth's largest sockeye salmon run and this is not alright with British Columbia.

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- 1 Hutchings, J.A., Walters, C. and Haedrich, R.L. 1997. Is Scientific Inquiry Incompatible with Government Information Control? Canadian Journal of Aquatic Science. Vol 52.
- 2 Ford, J.S. and Myers, R.A. 2008 A Global Assessment of Salmon Aquaculture Impacts on Wild Salmonids. PLoS Biology 6(2)
- 3 Vike, S., Nylund, S., and Nylund, A. 2008. ISA virus in Chile: evidence of vertical transmission. Archives of Virology. Vol. 154. (note: "vertical" means via eggs)