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Belliveau's salmon farm approval draws criticism

By [Timothy Gillespie](#)

Within minutes of the government news release announcing Fisheries and Aquaculture minister Sterling Belliveau's approval Tuesday of two large salmon farms in Jordan Bay, near Shelburne, community groups, scientists and others voiced their strong opposition to the decision.

"For this project to provide the benefits the government projects," says Mayday Shelburne County spokesperson Sinday Horncastle, "there would have to be a different business model."

She says that the Jordan Bay sites lies between Shelburne Harbour and Port Mouton Bay, two locations which have failed to support industrial open-net aquaculture without damaging the surrounding habitat. "Jordan Bay is simply too shallow to support these large farms."

"While the government may claim that the Jordan Bay sites were put through a rigorous review process, what was not put through the same rigorous process was the province's record on monitoring and enforcing their own environmental guidelines for open net pen salmon farms", said Inka Milewski, science advisor for the Conservation Council of New Brunswick.

Milewski is the lead researcher on a study being done in Shelburne Harbour to document the recovery of the sea bottom after a fish farm has been abandoned. Her results, to be released in late January, show that the sea bottom at the former Sandy Point salmon farm in Shelburne Harbour remains grossly polluted one year after fish farming has ceased. Milewski said the terms grossly polluted and polluted are used in a DFO Expert Opinion report (2006/001) to classify the state of the sea bottom due to organic loading.

"My research and examination of the historic monitoring record of several other salmon farm site in the province indicates that the provincial government has been unable to prevent sites from becoming polluted or grossly polluted. The province's solution for polluted sites is to simply to allow it to fallow for a year or two or to allow the farm to relocate, often just 100 metres away. There is nothing special about the oceanographic characteristics of the proposed Jordan Bay salmon sites that tells me these farms will not become polluted or grossly polluted in the fullness of time."

"We believe that the science presented to minister was simply ignored," added Horncastle. She told SCT that the minister refused to meet community representatives and fishermen from the Jordan Bay area. At a meeting with a department official to discuss their concerns about the tons of fecal and food waste which one million or more fish would create, and where the waste would end up, the official told Horncastle that "it would just go away."

"We don't consider this a failure on our part," says Horncastle of the decision, "but we do think the department and Cooke are setting themselves up for failure with cages on those sites."

One member of Mayday Shelburne County, who asked not to be named, said, "There is a groundswell of opposition to this government around here and we are looking forward to the next election."

Social media channels are abuzz with comments about the decision. One SCT reader commented with praise, saying "Guess we can add this to the list of new jobs the NDP have created in Shelburne". Another said, "More pollution for Shelburne, yeahhhh. This is a real sin, a disgrace, an affront to Nova Scotia."

Other comments online include: "It's a disastrous decision which will come back to haunt this Government economically, environmentally, and with a devastating impact upon concerned local citizens."; "The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture - not even fully re-located - is in no position to provide the "enhanced environmental monitoring" as promised . Third party consultants cannot effectively monitor a fish farming operation."

