

How uninformed the Nova Scotia NDP Government is about aquaculture

During a meeting today with Premier Darrel Dexter Representatives from the Ecology Action Center discussed the Aqua culture situation in Nova Scotia and Here is what the Premier and the provincial fisheries minister had to say about peoples concerns: I particularly like the second paragraph. How stupid are they. Idiots!

Hi Guys. As you know we met with Premier Dexter and Fisheries/Environment Minister Belliveau this afternoon. We had 45 minutes and a half dozen key issues to discuss. In the end we got an hour. We tried hard to have a good, respectful dialog and to that end were successful. The mood was reasonably relaxed and discussion flowed well. Aquaculture got more time than any other issue. Rob Johnson led that part of the discussion beautifully. He solidly made the case for a moratorium with many of the key arguments we're all familiar with. He spoke of the growing market for "green" (non-net-pen) salmon. The opportunity to get it right in NS instead of repeating the mistakes of all the other jurisdictions (named them) Also pitched the idea of funding innovation in closed containment through a business incubator approach. Planted the climb-down seed by acknowledging that the aquaculture problem was not of their doing (it was those other guys) and that they don't have to wear this but they do need to deal with it. Pointed to the growing coalition of allies from all walks mobilizing against open-net salmon farms. He indicated that the issue was growing and would get hotter before it got cooler. I spoke up for wild salmon and tried to correct misinformation they understood about wild Atlantic salmon and aquaculture. I also expanded on the business incubator opportunity for developing closed containment – integrating environment and economy, creating technology and manufacturing jobs, etc. I don't think we changed their minds and didn't really expect that we would. But we did deliver the message.

Through our conversation we learned: The Premier and minister have bought into much of the industry viewpoint. When Rob brought up closed containment the premier immediately said "But that's not economically viable - it doesn't work economically". He also raised the issue of land-based closed containment as having a huge carbon footprint (i.e. bad for the environment). Belliveau said that for every issue (presumably only those raised by opponents) there is "another side of the story" and that he would just like to "get that out there" to the public. He said that the concerns of the lobster fishermen are misplaced. That lobster stocks have dramatically increased since fin-fish aquaculture and that he has personally seen increased catches around salmon farms. He also said that salmon farms have a very small footprint (said something about how you could fill the whole Bedford Basin in Halifax with all the pens in the province and there'd be no problems (I didn't quite understand this comment). **When I raised the issue of impacts on wild salmon the premier said "Yeah, but there gone now anyway. They've been gone for 20 years". I tried, with limited time, to correct this gross misunderstanding – in particular that we still have very healthy stocks all along the Northumberland Strait.** When I mentioned disease and parasite transfers from feedlot salmon to wild fish the premier said "well, that goes the other way too, right?" referring to wild fish spreading viruses and/or lice to aquaculture fish. I said that it was more likely to work in reverse (pen-fish to wild) but that regardless, the solution was obviously to have a barrier between the two (i.e. closed-containment). At the end of this segment of the meeting the Premier said that sustainability is the government's main priority with aquaculture and other things... like forestry. "It's got to be economically and environmentally sustainable". He then pointed to the pulp company bailouts as an example.

