

Letters to the editor in the Chronicle Herald

(July 14, 2012)

Recognize reality

In his June 10 letter to the editor, titled “Singing same tune,” Premier Darrell Dexter states: “Those who farm and harvest the sea in an environmentally sustainable way deserve our support.” This statement also implies that those who farm or harvest the sea in an environmentally damaging way do not deserve our support.

We agree with the premier on both counts. That is precisely why the 115 groups who make up the Coalition for Aquaculture Reform in Nova Scotia DO support shellfish and closed-containment fin-fish aquaculture and DO NOT support open-net pen salmon feedlots which are being placed in increasing numbers along our coastline. Shell fish and closed-containment fin-fish aquaculture does not result in tonnes of raw feces being dumped directly into our coastal bays and harbours, the release of harmful viruses and pesticides into the marine environment and the killing of nearby wild species. Open-net pen salmon (and trout) feedlots do — and there is plenty of scientific evidence that confirms this reality.

It is high time that Premier Dexter acknowledged these inconvenient truths and stopped supporting those that farm the seas in an environmentally damaging way with free access to our much-loved coastal waters and multi-millions of our hard-earned tax dollars.

Raymond Plourde, Ecology Action Centre, on behalf of the Atlantic Coalition for Aquaculture Reform

Listen to the people

Premier Darrell Dexter (July 10 letter) took exception to my previous comment about his presence at a peaceful protest against a proposed large open-pen fish farm in Port Mouton Bay while he was in Opposition. He publicly denounced the proposal for this farm and his comments at the time would lead one to believe that he opposed such a large operation in principle, not just specific to this site.

His statement about being contacted by Friends of Port Mouton Bay to participate in a protest, against the expansion only, may be true; but that is of little consequence in light of what we know now. The fish farm planned for this site was by Cooke Aquaculture. If Dexter and the NDP were still in Opposition, I’m certain they would oppose large open-pen fish farms because of the proven environmental damage resulting from these operations.

In government, he not only does not oppose, but has allocated \$25 million of taxpayers’ money, without consultation, to support the same company for major expansion. If Mr. Dexter had paid any attention to the 108 groups represented at the conference on open-pen fish farming in Halifax on June 4, he would have been aware that the majority of people from every shoreline, beach and river estuary community from eastern Cape Breton to Digby are not only opposed to the methods of large fish farm companies, but are livid about the financial assistance to a company already making big profits at the expense of the environment.

Fred Giffin, Liverpool

Opportunity knocks?

Ralph Surette's excellent July 7 column outlines the tensions open-net salmon farming is creating, not only in communities around Nova Scotia but in the NDP itself. The premier and his government support these salmon farms and Cooke Aquaculture in many areas of the province. However, on the Eastern Shore, where there is strong opposition from lobster fishermen, salmon fishers and the larger community, no such farms have yet been started. Maybe there is an opportunity here.

Why not use this area in a controlled experiment and use the expertise of Dalhousie and BIO to pursue a solution to the world-scale problem of pollution and disease in open-net fish farms? Twenty years from now, we can compare the effects of the two methods on the fishery, the economy and the environment. Who knows? We might be able to show the world the way to a better solution — and keep some NDP members happy.

Candace Stevenson, Halifax