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**Letters to the Editor**

Ottawa Citizen  
Box 5020, 1101 Baxter Road  
Ottawa, Ontario K2C 3M4

Dear Editor:

**Re: Ottawa Citizen, June 29, 2005, *Salmon Farms, Fishing Can Coexist* by Hon. Geoff Regan**

Geoff Regan's letter extolling the virtues of his Department's regulation of the fish farm industry is consistent with the media lines supplied by the Department's *Sea Lice Communications Strategy* playbook.

The *Communications Strategy* provides the rationale for writing such letters. "Focus group research recently undertaken indicates that Canadians would feel more reassured about the industry if the Department can be seen as addressing concerns raised by environmental advocacy organizations." The reason that the public needs reassurance is that the public believes the Department of Fisheries is asleep at the switch. The Strategy admits that "to a large extent, the Department is seen as not fulfilling its duties as regulator of the aquaculture industry and preserver of BC's wild Pacific salmon stocks."

The *Communications Strategy* admits that the sea lice problem is a fish farm problem: "results from the 2004 marine monitoring indicate there are higher levels of the type of sea lice more commonly associated with fish farms."

Apparently "sea lice abundance, specifically *Lepeophtheirus* on pink and chum salmon, increased significantly over 2003. ... 62 percent of pink salmon and 64 per cent of chum salmon (9 and 7 per cent, respectively in 2003) appear to be infected by *Lepeophtheirus*. On average, each infected pink salmon carried four sea lice, chum 11."

The *Communications Strategy* sets out just how desperate the situation has become for the Department. It is no longer trusted either to effectively regulate fish farms or to protect wild fish stocks, and is an indicator of just how desperate the situation has become for wild salmon on a key migration route, where over 60 percent are infected with lice commonly associated with fish farms.

If the Minister was as candid about the problems brought on by poorly regulated fish farm operations as his Department's *Sea Lice Communications Strategy*, perhaps we might actually believe that he understands he has an environmental disaster rather than merely a communications one.

Yours truly,

John Cummins, M.P.  
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