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What Has the Cohen Inquiry Got To Hide?

Delta, B.C.—The Cohen Commission claims that it is “undertaking an *ambitious scientific research program*” with researchers “chosen for their *academic credentials, professional publications, professional reputation, practical experience and knowledge relevant to the Fraser River sockeye salmon.*”

“This sounds like an impressive undertaking by the embattled Inquiry which recently dumped its Scientific Advisory Panel in response to public concern over its connections to DFO, but all is not what it seems,” stated John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-Richmond East).

The plan falls short on at least two points.

- The Inquiry’s terms of reference, its constitution, do not call for a detailed scientific research program; rather they mandate a review of DFO’s management practices. In fact the only mention of science is with regard to a consideration of the “Department’s scientific advice” as part of an overall review of DFO’s “policies and practices” with respect to the sockeye salmon fishery in the Fraser River:

“Consider the policies and practices of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans with respect to the sockeye salmon fishery in the Fraser River – including the Department’s scientific advice, its fisheries policies and programs..., and its fisheries management practices and procedures, including monitoring, counting of stocks, forecasting and enforcement.”

- Justice Cohen has refused to make public the names of the researchers and their resumes. This is unacceptable given that some of these researchers have been working for months. The secrecy exhibited by Justice Cohen in this matter is not befitting a public inquiry. The researchers are all paid by the public purse and folks have the right to know who they are.

The terms of reference for the Inquiry are explicit and clear. They mandate a review of DFO’s management of the salmon fishery in the Fraser River, not a scientific “show and tell” by DFO toadies.

“Justice Cohen has an obligation to abide by the regulation establishing his Inquiry or promptly follow his Scientific Panel as they exit the stage. If he intends to stick around, Justice Cohen has an obligation to conduct an open and transparent inquiry consistent with the terms of reference which govern it, terms under which he accepted the job.”

“To date Cohen has failed on all counts,” concluded Cummins.

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