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## **Problems Aplenty Even With Massive Salmon Returns**

**Delta--** “Four years of mandated inactivity has seriously reduced the capacity of the fish processing industry, severely restricting its ability to gear-up for what has become the largest salmon return on the Fraser River since Hell’s Gate,” said John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-Richmond East).

Fishermen are finding a shortage of the ice required to assure the quality of their catch. At least one processor is trucking ice to Vancouver from Prince Rupert, while others are reported to be bringing ice in from Bellingham.

“Cold storage facilities are at or near capacity. According to some they are filled with native *food-fish* destined for the black market,” Cummins noted.

Fishermen complain that the lack of space at cold storage facilities has led to fewer buyers prepared to be on the water for Wednesday’s opening on the Fraser River.

“This fiasco could have been averted somewhat with a more prudent management of the fishery. All the signs of a large return of Fraser sockeye have been there for at least the last couple of weeks,” Cummins said.

In the old days when the International Commission was in charge there would have been weekly fisheries all summer and the growing size of the return would have been evident to all. The companies would have had time to gear-up for the peak of the return, have their workers in place, sufficient quantities of ice on hand, collector boats and crews at the ready.

Instead the industry was forced to sit on the sidelines uncertain if the Department would even allow a fishery, let alone a series of openings for all gear types the returns warranted.

Following three mini fishery openings on the Fraser, Area E gillnetters are about to begin a 32-hour fishery. “Given the shortage of ice and the strained capacity of the processing industry, three 12-hour fisheries over several days would have been more prudent and may have allowed for a more orderly fishery.”

“The Department’s missteps in the management of this year’s fishery should be the subject of a long and serious look by the Cohen Inquiry yet there is little chance of that happening given that the Department is pulling the strings on Cohen’s puppet show,” said Cummins.

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