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# Minister praises SON for agreement

## First Nations have no obligation to negotiate a deal, David Orazietti says

The Saugeen Ojibway Nation “voluntarily” negotiated with the province for a new commercial fishing agreement even though they are not obligated to do so under their treaty rights to fish, Natural Resources Minister David Orazietti said Thursday.



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### Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources David Orazietti.

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Those rights are “unfettered,” he said. First Nations officials are not compelled to negotiate, for example, catch quotas or the timing or location of commercial netting with the province or to consult with other stakeholders, such as sports anglers.

“I commend the First Nations for, while they have a court-recognized treaty right that is without exception, that they were prepared to sit down with the Ontario government, the Ministry of Natural Resources, to enter into an agreement because they too are concerned about the long-term sustainability of the fishing resource,” he said in a telephone interview.

Orazietti is scheduled to attend a ceremonial signing Monday of the five-year agreement which, among other things, permits commercial fishing to “resume in Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay on April 26 and continue year round over the term of the agreement.”

The signing event is tentatively set to take place at the Saugeen First Nation band office.

Both Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker and MP Larry Miller, along with many sport anglers, have

raised concerns about the agreement's potential impact on the area's recreational fishery and events such as the Salmon Spectacular derby. The province has also been criticized for not consulting with sports fishing groups and others before signing the deal.

A group of "concerned anglers" has scheduled a "town hall-style, non-confrontational information meeting" on the agreement for April 27 at 9 a. m. at the Hepworth-Shallow Lake Legion in Hepworth.

The group, in a letter to The Sun Times, says the agreement could adversely impact sports fishing in the area.

"Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay should be declared sanctuary waters by MNR and SON from all forms of commercial fishing," the letter says. The two bays are confined, have been stocked with fish by the Sydenham and Bruce Peninsula sportsmen's associations for decades and support a "tremendous sports fishery," group member Arnie Clark said.

He said the agreement should be revoked pending full consultation. Former natural resources minister Donna Cansfield said in 2008 that there would be consultation with all parties before the next agreement is signed, he said.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters released a statement Thursday that says the agreement will impact the Owen Sound Salmon Spectacular and the recreational fishery on Lake Huron.

"The provision in the agreement that allows for the netting of fish in close proximity to the mouths of tributaries could negatively affect the spawning runs of several fish species. And the expansion of the commercial fishing area into both Colpoys and Owen Sound Bays could pose a serious threat to public safety and impact negatively on conservation of the resource," the statement says.

The OFAH is criticizing the province for not consulting with "all affected parties" before signing the agreement.

Orazietti said the MNR "very clearly represented the interests of non-Aboriginal anglers" while negotiating the agreement.

"Staff are well aware of the recreational importance of, for example, the Salmon Spectacular derby, the recreational opportunities and the tourist opportunities and how that is important to the region and the economy and have very clearly made those representations as part of the discussions," he said.

People have also criticized the agreement for including an \$850,000 payment to SON over five years.

Orazietti said the money is to be used to ensure the "management and sustainability" of the fish resource.

"This is not, as some may suggest, a payment for fishing. That is absolutely the furthest thing from the truth. It's about the expenditures that need to take place to make sure the resource is managed properly."

Orazietti said this is the first time the province has made the commercial fishing agreement "transparent."

He said he is confident both recreational and commercial anglers can safely coexist on Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay and a "thriving" sports fishery can continue.

"I believe that no one that has an interest in the fishery in the region wants to see any negative impacts. That's the reason why we have been working with the First Nations and that's the reason they have been working with us. They also want to see the sustainability of the resource and so do I," he said.

Orazietti met Tuesday with Owen Sound Mayor Deb Haswell, Walker, Saugeen First Nation Chief Randall Kahgee and Chippewas of Nawash Chief Scott Lee at his office at Queen's Park.

Haswell said she was pleased with the meeting and the MNR's commitment to distributing information to the public on the agreement as soon as possible.

"Owen Sound's interest is to make sure all fishing communities can be safe on the bay," she said Wednesday.

Walker said he reiterated to the MNR at the meeting it was wrong to not consult with recreational anglers when drafting the deal.

"I communicated that had the local sport fishing groups and I been involved in the discussions, perhaps the outcome would have been more positive," he said in a statement.

He said he pressed the MNR to initiate communication with local sport fishing associations and keep the lines of communication open.

"It is my hope this is the start of meaningful dialogue to find a solution that meets the aboriginal community's needs while continuing with the sport fishing traditions of the area. The goal needs to be that this matter can bring the community together rather than one that perpetuates frustration and finger pointing," he said.