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NEWS LOCAL

Small turnout at commercial fishing protest



By Denis Langlois, Sun Times, Owen Sound
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One of the main organizers of a “peaceful protest” Friday against the province’s new commercial fishing agreement with Saugeen Ojibway Nation said he figured more people would have showed up for the event.

There has been a lot of “talk” about the five-year deal, said Michael Hutt, and more than 1,000 signatures have been collected on a petition that calls for it to be repealed.

“Everybody complains, complains, complains so I figured, have a gathering to show your support (for the sports fishery). But, there’s a lot of people that I think are afraid to show up,” he said in an interview at the west-side boat launch.

Hutt said the protest was against the government of Ontario, not native commercial anglers.

About 80 people attended the event, which was held on the day the controversial agreement took effect.

Several police officers, including some in a police boat, stood watch.

Most people stood and chatted on the harbour wall. No one held placards or chanted slogans.

About six small recreational fishing boats with Canadian flags on them were launched at the start of the protest.

Hutt said he is concerned about the “future of fishing” and the safety of anglers on the water — because of gill nets — now that the agreement states that commercial fishing can resume year round in Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay.

He said he is also upset with the provincial government for not consulting with local sports fishing groups before the deal was signed.

“It feels like the agreement was done up and no one was told about it,” he said.

Dave Fidler, a recreational fisherman for about 50 years, said he doesn’t think the entire agreement should be repealed. Commercial fishing, however, should be banned from Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay, he said.

“I have concerns about what these gill nets will do to the fish,” he said.

Arnie Clark, an avid angler, said he would like the two bays declared “sanctuary waters” where sports fishing is allowed but not commercial fishing.

He said he would like the current agreement repealed and a new one negotiated with consultation from the sports fishing community.

Natural Resources Minister David Orazietti has said his ministry “very clearly represented the interests of non-Aboriginal anglers” while negotiating the agreement.

He has said SON voluntarily negotiated it with the province even though they are not obligated to do so under their treaty rights to fish.

A petition from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker was being passed around for people at the event to sign. It asks the Ontario Legislature to repeal the agreement immediately and re-negotiate a new one “in consultation with all key stakeholders including the sports fishing community.”

Walker, who was at the protest, said he will continue to meet with local sports anglers and other stakeholders and come up with possible amendments to the agreement to present at Queen’s Park.

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MP Larry Miller also showed up for the protest.

A meeting, organized by “concerned anglers,” is scheduled for Saturday at 9 a.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion in Hepworth.

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skyhawk41

I agree with Bev003. On the other hand, the smaller than expected turnout is typical of Canadians who prefer to talk about and criticize contentious issues, rather than show their disagreements with a personal demonstration on the streets etc. We are now living in a political climate where the average citizen who has a concern, is not being heard; just like peeing against the wind.

We should get our ultimate satisfaction by throwing the Liberal bums out at the next provincial election.

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Bev003

If this event had been held at a different time there might just have been a larger turnout. There is still a few of us that have jobs that require us to go to work every day. At least that's why myself and several others did not attend. Just so you know Machael we are not affraid!!!

20 hours ago 2 Likes Flag

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