

Dear Ministers,

I recently received responses to concern I raised about Infectious Salmon Anemia (ISA) virus in wild Pacific salmon from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Keith Ashfield and the Minister of Agriculture, Gary Ritz. Both Ministers stated emphatically “There is no ISA virus in the waters of British Columbia.” (Both letters are posted at [www.temagamistewardship.ca](http://www.temagamistewardship.ca) under TSC News).

I would be a lot less cynical of the Minister’s responses if basic biological science didn’t tell me that when you introduce any alien species into an ecosystem you create the possibility for an ecological disaster. Growing Atlantic salmon (known carriers of ISA) in open water cage nets on the Pacific Coast of Canada is simply a disaster ready to happen. The Royal Society of Canada in their just released report, *Sustaining Canadian Marine Biodiversity* confirms open water aquaculture as a threat to the biodiversity of all marine ecosystems.

As for the ISA virus it has appeared everywhere that industrial Atlantic salmon farming has moved. In 2007 ISA killed 70% of the farmed salmon in Chile (important to note here that Chile has no native wild salmon). ISA was found in Norway in 1984 and is now in Scotland, Ireland, the Faroe Islands, Chile and Eastern Canada.

The validity of Positive tests for ISA found in wild salmon smolts by Dr. Kilbenge’s lab at the Atlantic Veterinary College of Prince Edward Island was questioned because, “*They had not followed protocol.*” The lab went to the media before going to their bosses. Dr. Kilbenge’s lab was chosen by the World Organization of Animal Health in Paris (OIE) as the best lab on this side of the planet. His lab is beyond reproach. Why did the samples have to be sent to a lab in Norway to disprove the presence of ISA virus? Norway is a major investor in the fish farm industry on the Pacific coast.

Unlike the United States where scientists may speak freely with the media and the public about scientific and technical matters based on their official work without approval from the public affairs office or their supervisors, In Canada, the federal government must approve all media and speaking requests for its scientists. Clearance is often not given, or is delayed so much that experts can't speak in a timely and meaningful way. For example, while conducting scientific research into salmon genetics at the Pacific Biological Station on Vancouver Island DFO scientist Kristi Miller discovered that a virus might be killing large numbers of Fraser River sockeye salmon before they reach their spawning ground. To avoid influencing the ongoing Federal Cohen Commission the Privy Council did not allow Ms. Miller to speak to the media about her findings. How much scientific evidence has been suppressed?

Both the Ministers and the DFO letters supporting them state that Canada has regulation in place to make sure our wild salmon are protected. Information from the Cohen Commission revealed however, that legislation was ignored. In 2004 The DFO Director General of Science waived the Fish Health Protection Regulation and allowed Atlantic salmon eggs to be imported from a hatchery that did not meet Canadian regulations. The regulation requiring hatcheries to surface disinfect eggs was found to be a guideline not legislation and DFO is not sure fish farms are doing the procedure.

It is worrisome that the mandate of the DFO seems to be to ensure the greatest economic benefit from the BC fishery rather than a mandate that uses words like **preserve, protect, restore and improve**. We have seen the collapse of the cod fishery on the Canada’s Atlantic coast. Is it your intent to allow the collapse of the wild Pacific salmon fishery on Canada’s Pacific Coast? DFO needs to reconsider its role in respect to Canada’s natural resources and legislation needs to be put in place to allow transparency in scientific research. As politicians you need to ensure that funding is available to provide for the research. Shame on all of you, if you allow another great Canadian fishery to collapse.