



The Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance – PRESS RELEASE
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BC Sustainable Aquaculture Committee Recommendation Not Sustainable

The upcoming recommendations of the BC Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture will apparently include a directive for the entire BC salmon aquaculture industry to move to closed containment production systems within the next three years – despite the fact that viable closed containment systems have not yet been developed.

“It is stunning that a committee supposedly dedicated to furthering the sustainability of BC’s aquaculture industry would propose a recommendation that is neither environmentally – nor economically – sustainable”, said Ruth Salmon, Executive Director of the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance.

Closed containment refers to fish production systems that allow no direct contact between the farmed fish and the marine environment.

“Superficially, closed containment may appear as a viable alternative to current production systems,” says Salmon, “however, in practice this is not yet the case. Closed containment operations in BC and New Brunswick have already proven to be economically impractical. Closed containment has also been attempted in Norway, Scotland, Iceland, Portugal and Spain. All of these operations closed within 3-4 years of opening.”

Not only were these closed containment systems found to be economically impractical, they also proved to be environmentally unjustifiable. To ensure fish health, closed systems require that fresh seawater be continually pumped into the fish tanks. To produce BC’s annual salmon aquaculture production in closed systems, the power used to pump the seawater would represent a massive increase in fossil fuel consumption and harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

“For the committee to suggest that such systems could be developed, proven to be sustainable - and then fully implemented on BC farms - within 3 years is completely unrealistic,” said Salmon.

The provincial and federal regulatory requirements already enforced in the BC aquaculture industry have established the most stringent environmental standards of all aquaculture producing countries. The production systems currently in use in the industry meet or exceed these environmental standards.

The Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance fully supports the ongoing research and development of technologies capable of supporting sustainable closed containment systems, as well as ongoing ocean science and research to support the sustainable farming of fish in their natural environment. However - given the current absence of closed containment technologies - the provincial government’s acceptance of the committee’s recommendations would undermine investor confidence and result in further job losses in BC’s salmon aquaculture industry, as

evidenced by the recent closure of the Englewood processing plant. With a total value of \$700 million, restricting the sustained growth of this industry would eliminate one of the few beacons of hope for the long-term survival of many BC coastal communities – including several First Nations communities.

The Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance (CAIA) is a national industry association, headquartered in Ottawa. It represents the interests of Canadian aquaculture operators, feed companies and suppliers as well as provincial finfish and shellfish aquaculture associations. CAIA is dedicated to promoting a responsible and healthy Canadian aquaculture industry that follows sound environmental practices and showcasing the health benefits of a wide variety of nutritious seafood products.

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