

To minister \_\_\_\_\_,

As a person who loves the exquisite coastline of “Beautiful British Columbia”, I am genuinely concerned about the impacts open net pen farms are having on our ecosystem. Wild salmon stocks have declined at an alarming level since the introduction of open net pen farms to British Columbia. Several marine biologists have found Piscine Reovirus (PRV), Infectious Salmon Anemia Virus (ISA), and Salmon Alphavirus in wild and farmed salmon in British Columbia. These viruses have affected the wild stocks which are unable to fight or tolerate them. As a result of these viruses, wild salmon are dying before they reach their spawning grounds, so it is nearly impossible for them to reproduce. A comparable example of a foreign virus thriving in an unexposed body is the smallpox epidemic when Europeans first reached North America.

First Nations with allies from many different backgrounds have been fighting to ban or remove open net pens from our waters, however, we will not be the only ones affected if wild salmon were to become extinct. Coastal gray wolves, grizzly bears, and killer whales rely on wild salmon as an essential part of their diet with up to 137 other species depending on the marine rich nutrients that wild salmon provide. Wild salmon receive most of the focus from those opposed to open net pen farms but this industry causes severe impacts to other species in the natural food chain and the environment. Clam beaches that have sustained First Nations for thousands of years, are often

covered with sludge consisting of decomposing fish feces, food waste, chemicals, and antibiotics, making it difficult to find edible clams. Wild salmon also help fertilize British Columbia's rainforest providing an estimated 80% of the nitrogen in our trees.

It is true that open net pen farms provide jobs and the economy benefits for now, however, they are putting way more jobs on the line. It is important for British Columbians to ask, 'what happens when demand for farmed salmon goes down? or word gets out that these viruses are here (the rest of the world wants nothing to do with these viruses)?' British Columbia will be left with a struggling ecosystem that cannot support a variety of industries including the many branches of tourism, commercial and sport fishing, marine sales and repair shops, etc. This will be devastating to small coastal communities that are already struggling. Putting all our economic eggs(open net pen farms) in one basket while ignoring the effects on other industries is negligent!

I sincerely hope that British Columbia can follow the lead from our neighbours in Alaska and Washington State, banning open net pen farms so that our beautiful coast can start to recover.

From a concerned British Columbian,

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