



Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore Submission to
Law Amendments Committee for
Bill 24

Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act

October 24, 2021

I am writing on behalf of the residents, businesses and fishers of the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia who since 2012 have spoken up and organized against Open Net Pen FINFISH Farms. Our organization, the Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore (hereafter known as APES) is a founding member of the Healthy Bays Network (HBN) which is a provincial organization that advocates for healthy marine and coastal ecosystems and communities.

We were hopeful that this new government would be different from past provincial governments and would consult with coastal communities when it came to economic development and use of our harbours. It is stated in the mandate letter from the Premier to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture that this government is "committed to listen to and respect all Nova Scotians."

It was also stated in the mandate letter that the Minister should "engage with key stakeholders regarding the open pen aquaculture licensing process. As coastal communities, we consider ourselves to be key stakeholders. This bill is being pushed through without the government ever having spoken to any of our organizations. This, despite both the APES and HBN asking for a meeting with the Minister as soon as possible after the election. Two days notice to present before the Law Amendments committee is not consultation.

It is stated in the mandate letter to the Minister of the Environment that in the "first legislative sitting to introduce new environmental legislation which will guide Nova Scotians towards a cleaner, healthier environment in the coming decade and will further encourage growth of the sustainable and green economy and the sustainability of traditional industries." We want to be part of that discussion. We know first hand that it is the sustainable wild catch fishery and tourism that sustain our communities. Clean harbours are vital to the survival of these traditional industries. We want to discuss alternatives to dirty, polluting, industries.

Our organizations have been clear about our opposition to open net pen Finfish farms. Hundreds of Nova Scotians all around the province came out to community meetings to tell Cermaq that we did not support their license proposals for our harbours. Cermaq finally came to understand that they would not be welcome in our communities. Why has the provincial government not understood this? We see a future where Nova Scotia can be a leader in a sustainable seafood and tourism industry and a greener economy.

It is stated in the mandate letters to both the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Minister of the Environment that "this government supports low impact, sustainable aquaculture by implementing a proper licensing process that places much weight on environmental considerations..." Our organizations support the development of this type of aquaculture which includes shellfish aquaculture. Finfish farming, however, is NOT low impact.

We believe that this amendment to Bill 24 should not be accepted as:

1. coastal communities have not been consulted.
2. piecemeal changes should not be made to the Act when an overall review of the regulations is overdue.
3. this proposal could lead to a very inconsistent and unbalanced approach to licensing decisions.
4. there could be multiple hearings taking place giving coastal communities less time and ability to fully participate in the process

Wendy Watson Smith, President
Association for the Preservation of the Eastern Shore and member of
Healthy Bays Network

