



THE MUNICIPALITY OF
CHESTER

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March 13, 2020

The Honorable Keith Colwell
Minister of Fisheries & Aquaculture
6th floor, Suite 607 WTCC
1800 Argyle Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3N8

Dear Minister Colwell:

RE: Open Net Pen Fishing in Nova Scotia Waters

The Municipality of the District of Chester recently approved a new and comprehensive Municipal Planning Strategy and land-use by-law. The new plan's vision is that the Municipality of the District of Chester will be a self-sufficient and resilient, built on the foundation of the character of each of our unique communities. Our communities will work together to provide economic opportunities and a balanced lifestyle for all. The plan anticipates and permits a wide array of land uses in the Municipality including conservation, recreation, residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial development and activity. Council is of the view that this vision and approach should work for the marine area surrounding the Municipality.

For this reason, Council has been engaged in the potential for the expansion of open pen salmon farming in Mahone Bay and St. Margaret's Bay. Since the summer of 2019 the Municipality has been engaged in a number of ways including, but not limited to:

- Two Council members were sponsored to attend the trip to Norway to learn about the aquaculture industry development there including a number of site visits both on shore and on the ocean.
- Two Council members and a staff member attended the Minister's Fisheries and Aquaculture Conference in February 2020.
- The Executive Director for Nova Scotia's Aquaculture division, Bruce Hancock, attended Council and made a presentation on the industry including both current activity and future potential.
- CERMAQ staff members attended a Council meeting and presented a summary of their current and planned activity in Nova Scotia.
- Council and staff members attended CERMAQ's open house/public meetings in Chester, Blandford, and Hubbards.
- Council members spoke with members of the local lobster fishing industry.

NOVA SCOTIA'S TREASURE

- Representatives from the Twin Bays Coalition and citizens from our municipality (and other communities in Nova Scotia) attended several Council meetings and presented concerns and opposition to open pen salmon farming and CERMAQ's proposal to expand operations to Nova Scotia.
- Met with local student government and representatives of the student environment council.

Council understands that the regulation and approval process for open pen salmon farming in CERMAQ's proposed expansion areas is the responsibility of the Province of Nova Scotia. Council also understands that the process has three phases; and, that CERMAQ is currently in the Proponent Scoping Phase and that they are actively gathering biophysical, environmental, economic, social and other information before considering whether or not they will submit an application for a license and lease.

Council has received, collectively and individually, many representations from groups and individuals opposed to open net pen fishing in St. Margaret's and Mahone Bay based on number of concerns, including:

- Conflict with and negative impact on existing commercial activity including tourism and the fishery.
- Conflict with residential uses related to noise and light from operations.
- Environmental impacts including deposition of feces, and the use of chemicals and antibiotics in the marine environment, equipment and debris released to the environment, significant fish mortality events, etc.
- Impact on native atlantic salmon from sea lice, disease, fish escapes, etc.
- Lack of confidence in industry commitments; and, government oversight of industry.

CERMAQ has been very transparent and open with respect to the size and scope of activities it is considering in Nova Scotia.

Council has been committed to listening to industry and community members during the stakeholder and community engagement process advanced by CERMAQ. Council members attended the three open houses/public meetings held in the Municipality. However, there is still a significant amount of detail that is not available for either the Council or community members to consider, including:

- Precise location and size of lease site marine facilities in Mahone Bay or St. Margaret's Bay.
- Locations in Mahone Bay and St. Margaret's Bay that have been eliminated from consideration due to conflict with recreational activity, commercial fishing activity, sensitive or productive marine habitat, etc.
- Marine site characteristics including current, exposure to wind and waves, ocean bottom (benthic zone) characteristics, etc.
- Proximity of proposed sites to land and structures on land including residential uses and potential for noise, light and other activity to conflict with existing land uses.

- Location of shore-based facilities including wharves, yards, buildings for hatcheries, processing, etc.
- Local economic benefits including direct and indirect operational and administrative employment contemplated in the Municipality and the region.
- Property tax implications associated with facilities that would be present in the Municipality.
- Community benefit agreement terms for groups and individuals in the municipality and the region.

At this point in the process for a marine aquaculture license and lease for open pen salmon farming by CERMAQ; and, based on the information provided to Council to date, and the consistent and substantial public concern expressed Council believes the potential risks outweigh the potential benefits to our community's long term interests.

Therefore, Council wishes to express our opposition to the expansion of open pen salmon farming in the coastal waters surrounding our community.

Sincerely,



Allen Webber
Warden

c The Honorable Stephen McNeil, Premier
M.L.A., Hugh MacKay
Council

