

# POSITIVE AQUACULTURE AWARENESS

## NEWS RELEASE

### **In an open letter to Jack Layton, PAA criticizes an NDP election promise that would put BC aquaculture out of business**

**May 31, 2004, Campbell River** – In an open letter to federal NDP leader Jack Layton who arrives in Vancouver tomorrow, the head of a Campbell River-based grassroots-group criticized an NDP election promise that would put BC’s aquaculture sector and its thousands of workers out of business.

“This plank in the NDP election platform could have been devised by the anti-aquaculture activists at the David Suzuki Foundation – it’s that bad,” said Positive Aquaculture Awareness President Laurie Jensen. “For the NDP to adopt such a platform without even so much as a consultation with hardworking BC coastal communities and First Nations is completely outrageous and unacceptable,” Jensen said.

“As a responsible leader, the first thing Jack Layton needs to do when he steps off the plane in Vancouver tomorrow is admit mistakes have been made and agree to change his anti-aquaculture approach because British Columbian Coastal residents deserve no less” said Jensen.

The federal NDP’s election platform promises to “phase out current (salmon-farming) operations and replace them with ‘closed containment fish farms.’”

In an open letter to Layton, Jensen wrote, “the so-called ‘closed containment’ idea has been proven impractical, uneconomic and environmentally preposterous. It will do nothing to protect BC’s environment, wild salmon habitat or aquaculture employees.”

“Layton’s platform will stifle innovation in BC’s sustainable aquaculture industry and bury the sector in red-tape,” said Jensen. “The NDP platform is based purely on erroneous assumptions provided by an activist movement bent on destroying the sector,” Jensen added.

“If implemented, the NDP’s anti-aquaculture platform will result in the shutdown of BC’s most promising and largest agricultural export, accounting for 15 per cent of BC’s total agricultural production and contributing over \$600 million to the BC economy,” Jensen said.

## OPEN LETTER

May 31, 2004

Open Letter to NDP Leader Jack Layton

Dear Sir:

### **Re. NDP Releases its 2004 Election Platform**

Can British Columbians believe their ears?

BC's coastal communities are suffering real economic hardship while salmon aquaculture tries to retain its position as one of the few bright spots in an otherwise tough economic picture.

Now along comes an NDP election platform that promises to "phase out current (salmon-farming) operations and replace them with 'closed containment fish farms.'"

Mr. Layton, your close affiliation with Greenpeace (Greenpeace Canada's most recent Executive Director Peter Tabuns is one of your party's supposed 'star' candidates) has blinded you from seeing that the salmon farming industry has been responsible for creating new, long-term and well-paying jobs in hatcheries, on farms, and in fish processing plants along our coast.

In fact, salmon farming is the single largest employer in the northern Vancouver Island community of Port Hardy and in the Central Coast First Nations community of Klemtu. Over 4000 jobs have been created. Farmed salmon has become BC's largest agricultural export item, accounting for 15 per cent of BC's total agricultural production and contributing over \$600 million to the BC economy.

Instead of lending support to this highly sustainable industry and fostering long-term economic growth on the BC coast, you and your BC colleagues seem to have been doing everything in your power to destroy the industry and the jobs of working people.

Your party's recently announced platform would bury the industry in counter-productive red tape and would stifle innovation. Based on erroneous assumptions provided by an activist movement bent on shutting the sector down, the so-called "closed containment" idea has been proven impractical, uneconomic and environmentally preposterous. It will do nothing to protect BC's environment, wild salmon habitat or aquaculture employees.

You need to realize that BC salmon farming, despite activist rhetoric, is already a highly sustainable industry that takes pressure off wild salmon stocks and provides consumers with a healthy, nutritious product rich in heart-friendly Omega-3 fatty acids.

Is there room for improvement? Always. After all, sustainability is best considered a work in progress, but your party's platform will take us in the opposite direction.

This province's aquaculture industry is built on the hard work and innovation of proud British Columbians, including First Nations. Mr. Layton, your platform is an insult to these hard working people, their families, and their communities.

Yours very truly,  
Laurie Jensen, President, PAA