



December 8, 2010

## **DFO the Puppeteer Inquiry Has Brian Riddell's Fingerprints All Over It**

**OTTAWA**—“The Cohen Inquiry has Brian Riddell’s fingerprints all over,” said Delta-Richmond M.P. John Cummins, M.P. “DFO insiders are controlling the Inquiry’s agenda and are the agenda.”

Perhaps nothing speaks to DFO’s power over the Cohen Commission of Inquiry than the role played by Brian Riddell.

- First Riddell advised the Commission on their staffing and recommended they focus their time and money on science rather than DFO management.
- Then he was appointed a scientific advisor to the Inquiry advising on scientific research to be conducted by the Commission.
- Once the Inquiry moved to hold public hearings, Riddell appears one day as a DFO panelist, the next on an expert panel of stakeholders, then back to being a DFO panelist and then as an independent expert.
  - *Riddell was a witness before the Inquiry on November 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> as a former manager of salmon assessment at DFO.*
  - *On December 9<sup>th</sup> he is scheduled to return this time on an expert stakeholder panel in his role as President and CEO of the Pacific Salmon Foundation, an organization reliant on DFO funding.*
  - *In late January Riddell is again scheduled to reappear this time as part of a DFO panel on stocks assessment.*
  - *In February he returns as a witness on an expert panel on over-escapement*

Riddell’s role in the public hearings is symptomatic of what has become a DFO dog and pony show. He and his cohorts as DFO have helped structure the Inquiry with carefully selected panels of DFO staff that preclude any opportunity for critics of DFO to have any meaningful input. These are expert panels of insiders all moving in lock-step with no one to seriously challenge the DFO position.

As a result DFO has been allowed to hold court at the Inquiry into their management of the Fraser River sockeye fishery. The Department has been allowed to turn a judicial inquiry into a private talk shop on their organization, policies and management rather than accountability sessions on their failures to effectively manage the fishery.

A long list of DFO and former DFO officials have appeared before the Inquiry. All have assured the Commission that the Department has managed the fishery well given difficult circumstances.

Listening to them, one could scarcely believe that we even have a problem at all. The schedule for January and February continue the one-sided conversation by DFO insiders.

Now over a year since the Inquiry was established, there has been no evidence of any attempt to hold DFO to account. Cohen has not made even a token effort to bring forward a few knowledgeable critics of DFO.

“Cohen and his staff have bought into DFO’s agenda right from the beginning; they drank the cool-aid. They have been in awe of DFO officials – the very people who have made clear time and again their inability to manage the fishery,” said Cummins.

“Cohen’s gift to DFO of sitting in judgment on their own track record is about as good as it gets.”

“The Cohen Inquiry has provided DFO a great opportunity to preen and strut and is a windfall for high paid lawyers,” concluded Cummins, “but it is not so great for the salmon.”

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