



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

April 1, 2019

Hon. Sandy Silver
Premier
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Dear Premier Silver,

RE: Government's failure to properly consult about Mandanna Lake regulation change

My constituent Bernard Stehelin, owner and operator of Wilderness Fishing, wrote a letter to you on February 21, 2019 expressing his concern with a fishing regulation change being pushed forward by the Minister of Environment.

Your reply to him dated March 14, 2019 ignored most of the questions he asked in his letter, and failed to properly explain why this regulation is being considered. His letter also expressed concern with how the Minister of Environment has handled this file, including her dismissive responses to his previous correspondence. That your government has chosen to brush aside his concerns is not acceptable.

Mr. Stehelin was born and raised in the Yukon, and is raising his children here. As a Yukon small business owner, his livelihood and ability to feed his family depend on income from Wilderness Fishing Yukon. He has been quite clear in his correspondence with Minister Frost and you about how serious his concerns are with the impact of this proposed change on his wilderness tourism business, and your responses to date have been dismissive.

From a government that ran on the campaign slogan "Be Heard," it is disappointing to see the concerns and questions outlined in my constituent's letters to you being dismissed so casually. I believe Mr. Stehelin deserves the decency of a proper reply from you to the issues and questions outlined in his letter.

In this matter, your government has also not lived up to its commitments about being open and transparent. My constituent had to ATIPP the Department of Environment's study on the health of fish populations in Mandanna Lake. Scientific information directly relating to his livelihood should have been willingly offered to him, not hidden. From that ATIPP, we see that one of the key findings in the Department of Environment's own scientific assessment states that the "lake trout population in Mandanna Lake appears to have increased over the last 15 years."

Another key finding was that “density of lake trout in Mandanna Lake matches what we would expect from a lake with its productivity, suggesting a healthy population.”

Other notable excerpts from the Department of Environment’s scientific assessment include: “Mandanna Lake has the second highest density of large-bodied lake trout of the 14 lakes we have surveyed to date (second only to Dezadeash Lake).” And: “Mandanna has a higher density of lake trout and higher productivity than Kluane, Tetl’aman, and Sekulmun lakes.”

Your government committed to evidence-based decision making. To date, the only scientific evidence made public shows that the fish population in Mandanna Lake is getting healthier, and have grown while my constituent has been operating his camp there. So we are left wondering what scientific evidence this decision was based on.

We were also surprised by the revelation that this the regulation change was proposed at the direction of the Minister of Environment to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board on May 1, 2017, and that my constituent was not advised of this proposal by government until October 24, 2017 – almost six months afterwards. I fail to see how this is consistent with your government’s commitments to consult and work with all Yukoners.

In closing, it is important to note that when Mr. Stehelin purchased the leases and business from the previous owner, he did so with the knowledge that his interests on Mandanna Lake are recognized in the land claim agreement with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation as an existing third-party right. Accordingly, he is entitled to the protection provided by that agreement.

As a lifelong Yukoner and contributing member of our community, he has the right to expect the Premier of the Yukon to treat his livelihood and his family’s well-being in a more respectful manner.

Sincerely,



Geraldine Van Bibber
MLA for Porter Creek North