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New Initiative Same Old Song And Dance

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By Troy Watts

A federal government announcement of “new” initiatives for the B.C. Pacific fisheries are the same old ideas from a different spokesperson says a local fisheries expert.

“The ‘new’ government of Canada is doing what the old government of Canada was doing and is trying to get credit for it,” said Julie Edwards, owner of the Call of the Wild Market and a veteran in the B.C. fishing industry.

Edwards said all of the initiatives stated in the release are issues the Pacific commercial fisheries have been dealing with for a long time.

“They want to take credit for processes that have been ongoing for years.

“For people who have been in the industry for a length of time this really isn’t anything new.”

The federal government announced July 16 it is fulfilling its promise to create a unified Pacific commercial fishery in B.C. with an emphasis toward economic and environmental sustainability. The announcement included a \$175 million commitment toward achieving their stated goals.

Edwards said the \$175 million dollar figure attached to the release does not say how or what the money will be used for.

Also the supposedly new initiatives toward creating a sustainable fishery in B.C. is also something fisheries have been aware of and working toward.

“We know that the way we fish today will mean no fish tomorrow, so sustainability is very important for us.”

Edwards said although the release states there will be new rules that will govern the Pacific commercial fisheries, it does not state any specifics of what those new rules and regulations will be.

Edwards said she believes the intention of the release is to generate good PR for the government.

“A lot of people want to look good with what they are saying and the federal government is no exception.”

Dr. Daniel Pauly, of the Fisheries Centre at UBC, said they do not pay attention to these kinds of releases from the federal government.

“It sounds like a piece of propaganda,” he said. “With these types of policy initiatives, we are usually very weary of them.”

Ron Kadowaki, director of Fisheries Reform for the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans, said although many parts of the initiative are old there are some important new ideas they are working on.

Kadowaki said the key idea of the report is to integrate all of the fisheries under one cohesive set of rules and goals.

He said some of the newer initiatives include creating a clear set of rules and guidelines for the industry, creating a tracking system for fish caught in B.C. waters and getting more First

Nations involved in the commercial fisheries.

He said the reason why a more comprehensive budget is not included in the release is because they have not yet decided how the \$175 million will be divided among the various initiatives mentioned in the release.

“We are starting talks that will get all the players around the table to develop a more detailed design to the program,” said Kadowaki.

Kadowaki said the responses to the release are endemic of prevailing attitudes within the Pacific commercial fisheries.

“We are facing some huge challenges in the industry, there is an underlying mistrust among fisheries in this province that we have to overcome.”

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