

December 2, 2007

News Release - Petitcodiac Riverkeeper

Hook but no release for Riverkeeper

Legal action continues despite recent progress

Petitcodiac Riverkeeper announced today that it is going ahead with the legal action filed in Federal Court despite recent progress in the Petitcodiac River restoration file.

In early November, Transport Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans issued their respective approvals and authorizations for the replacement of the causeway with a 280-meter bridge. Then, last week, the provincial government announced in the Throne Speech that it would set up a trust fund and begin planning and designing the Petitcodiac River restoration project.

While pieces of the puzzle are coming together, Riverkeeper believes more is required for the provisions of the Fisheries Act to be fully enforced. "It is premature to drop our legal action, simply because we still haven't achieved our legal objective, which is to restore fish passage in the Petitcodiac River," said Michel Desjardins, Chairman of the organization. "In particular, we still have not heard from Fisheries and Oceans Minister Loyola Hearn. He has been conspicuously absent from the discussions in the last few weeks," added Desjardins. The Fisheries and Oceans Minister is responsible for compliance with the Fisheries Act. Now that both levels of government have admitted in affidavits that the causeway is illegal because it does not meet the requirements of the Act, Riverkeeper wants the Minister to meet his full statutory obligations under the Fisheries Act by **compelling** the restoration project to take place. According to the organization, the Minister hasn't taken all the necessary measures to correct the situation and restore fish passage, as is required by the legislation. "His department has merely **allowed** the restoration project to go ahead. We want him **to order** the restoration of fish passage in the Petitcodiac River. By law, it is his responsibility to order that this be done," said Desjardins.

Petitcodiac Riverkeeper reminded that Minister Loyola Hearn declared during his visit in Moncton last July that he was ready "to do what needs to be done" to resolve the issue. "So far he hasn't done much," said Desjardins.

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