
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

March 21, 2006

The Editor
The Province

I agree with Province columnist Michael Smyth that the Cheakamus River took a big hit last August and people have a right to be angry. I am angry.

What Smyth forgot to mention in his column is that the river is already recovering, and started to recover within 12 hours of the derailment on Aug. 5, 2005. Fish entering the river from the ocean after that time do not appear to have been affected by the spill, including adult steelhead.

This does not diminish the seriousness of the spill, but to continue to portray the river as sterile is inaccurate and does a disservice to fishing guides and tourism operators.

The B.C. Government has already sent CN Rail two interim bills: \$60,000 last fall for the cost of responding last August with staff and equipment plus another bill for \$78,000 this month. I intend to hold CN accountable for all costs and more bills will be sent to CN as we work to improve side channels and spawning grounds.

In addition, there is an active and ongoing investigation by DFO and provincial authorities, which could result in charges being laid.

We are working with the Cheakamus Steering Committee and the Technical Committee to find the best science-based solutions to restore this valuable river.

Barry Penner
Minister of Environment