

Ringwood hatchery salmon survived OPSEU turmoil

The recent Ontario Public Service Employees Union labour disruption played havoc in a number of areas and inconvenienced a lot of people.

In the rearing of chinook salmon at the Ringwood Fish Culture Station, the labour unrest came at a bad time.

But sources from the Whitchurch-Stouffville hatchery insisted it didn't play havoc as seriously as was reported by some media outlets.

During the recent OPSEU strike, it was reported that an emergency situation was declared when additional staff were required to rectify deteriorating water quality and fish overcrowding at the hatchery, which rears all of the pacific salmon for Lake Ontario.

As a result of this situation, it was reported the reared chinook salmon were dumped into various designated seeding locations in

Lake Ontario feeder streams.

Lisa Miller-Dodd, Ringwood Fish Culture Station operations co-ordinator, acknowledged that water quality at their facility was deteriorating. But it was due to a reduction of dissolved oxygen levels, which is created when the fish begin to grow in stature in the tanks. When the fish reach this size, she insisted it's a normal occurrence.

The only unfortunate situation was the timing, as it took place during the labour disruption.

The only unfortunate situation was the timing, as it took place during the labour disruption. This, she said, was the only unusual incident.

"This always happens at this



Mike Hayakawa

time of the year," she said of the dissolved oxygen levels dropping in the water. "Our production is to maximize the number of fish to the amount of water that we have."

When water quality begins to deteriorate, it signals the time when the fish have to be transported out of the facility and into Lake Ontario. However, Ms Miller-Dodd was quick to point out that during the labour strife, no fish acquired any diseases or died.

When the fish reached the crit-

ical stage prior to being stocked, Ms Miller-Dodd said as part of the essential agreement pact, one person was on site to do various essential duties during the week-days such as feeding the fish, cleaning the tanks and monitoring oxygen levels. On weekends, an automatic timing feeding device, was used to feed the fish.

When the fish were ready to be transported, an emergency individual was brought in to assist the essential person in the loading of the fish onto the trucks.

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The ministry revealed that 408,845 chinook salmon were stocked at 10 different sites rang-

ing from the Credit River in the west to Oshawa harbour in the east during the OPSEU strike.

As for the term dumping, Ms Miller-Dodd felt the word used by media reports was a little strong.

"It sounds like we weren't taking care of the fish," she said in response to the media reports. "Maybe stocked could have been the word to use instead of dumping of fish. The term dumping seems a little misleading."

Ms Miller-Dodd noted the chinook salmon were the only species being reared at Ringwood during the time of the labour disruption. Coho salmon, she said, were reared and planted in February. Just recently, Atlantic salmon were reared and stocked after the labour disruption.

The Ringwood Fish Culture station is the only site in Ontario where pacific and atlantic salmon are reared for stocking into the waters of Lake Ontario.



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