

Coho salmon hatchery receives provincial reprieve

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Rumours of the Ringwood Fish Hatchery's demise have been exaggerated greatly — at least for the next year.

Entering the final year of a five-year agreement between the Natural Resources Ministry and Ontario Federation of Anglers, the fish culture station has received a reprieve.

It was scheduled to close Sept. 28.

The reprieve came thanks to some due diligence by the Metro East Anglers Association, which volunteered to operate Ringwood during the five-year agreement.

BEGAN IN LATE FEBRUARY

Bruce Burt, an association spokesperson, noted attempts to save Ringwood from closing began in late February when its conservation group assembled a proposal for the ministry.

About three weeks later, it got the green light to continue.

One of the stipulations was the association had to register as a non-profit organization, Burt said.

With the paperwork finalized near the Sept. 28 deadline, Burt said there was a two-week period during which members who work at Ringwood could not enter the facility.

With close to 70,000 coho salmon yearlings being raised in the facility, the ministry sent its personnel in once a day to feed them before the deal became official, he added.

"I thought it would have been a great waste to close Ringwood," Burt said, adding Ringwood is a great asset for the whole community. It operates without the use of water pumps. There's natural artesian wells on the site in which the water is tapped to flow through the hatchery and flows in at eight degrees Celsius.

With the deal good for one year, Burt was quick to praise the ministry in supporting the association's efforts.

"The ministry has been great to get us

going and in accommodating us," Burt said. "My hats off to them to making it possible."

In the meantime, though, Burt said the association has been active seeking financial assistance through sponsors to keep the facility going for years down the road.

Burt is confident they will get the help it needs.

So far, the association received assistance from the Toronto Sportsmen's Shows and Normark, a well-known fishing tackle manufacturer.

It also hopes to receive some assistance through the Aviva Community Fund as it has reached the top 30 finalists in its online contest that is offering \$1 million in donations to lead, empower and support community initiatives.

\$18K TO \$20K SHY OF GOAL

The group is about \$18,000 to \$20,000 shy of running Ringwood for a full year, Burt said.

"I'm confident we can extend it for another five years," he said.

Ringwood spearheaded the chinook salmon stocking program for Lake Ontario for the past 30 years.

That has been transferred to the Normandale Fish Culture Station near Simcoe.

Under Ringwood's arrangement, it raises coho salmon.

In addition, it will release 40,000 brown trout in the Rouge River and along the Lake Ontario waterfront area near Pickering as well as 17,000 rainbow trout are to be released into the Rouge River.

The brown trout eggs, which should arrive in the next couple of weeks, are brood stock from another ministry hatchery, Burt said.

The rainbow trout eggs will be collected during late March to early April when these fish begin their spring spawning migration run up the various Lake Ontario feeder streams.

Spirit take 3 of 4 weekend road points

LAST WEEK: Friday: Stouffville Spirit 5, Huntsville Otters 3. Saturday: Georgetown Raiders 4, Stouffville Spirit 3 (shootout). Spirit record: 14 wins, two overtime wins, one shootout win, two shootout losses, seven losses, four overtime losses, 40 points, third place in North Division.

COMING UP: Today: Spirit at Newmarket Hurricanes, 7:30 p.m. Sunday: Burlington Cougars vs. Spirit at Stouffville Arena, 2:30 p.m.

GAME NOTES: To play back-to-back road games in a 48-hour span can present a challenge. It was one the Stouffville Spirit endured when they travelled to Huntsville for a Friday Ontario Junior Hockey League game against the Otters and then ventured west the following night to play the Georgetown Raiders. Based on how the Spirit performed in each of those contests, they passed the gruelling test with flying colours after recording three out of a possible four points when they defeated the host Otters 5-3 before suffering a 4-3 shootout loss to the Raiders. In Friday's contest, the Spirit spotted the Otters a 1-0 lead before battling back with goals from Vince Cerone and team captain Andrew Doyle on a power play to end the first period with a 2-1 lead. The Otters took advantage of a defensive lapse by the Spirit in the early moments of the second period to score a pair of goals to take a 3-2 lead, but that would be short-lived as the Spirit tied the game 15 seconds later on a goal by rookie forward Robert Rawlins. The Spirit regained the upper hand on a goal by defenceman Paul Geiger just past the midway point. With the outcome remaining in doubt during the final 20 minutes, the Otters pulled their goalie in favour of an extra attacker. The Spirit iced the game on a goal by Christian Finch with 21 seconds left. The Spirit outshot the Otters 29-26. With little time to dwell on their success, the Spirit went back to work the following night and battled the Raiders to a 0-0 draw through the first period. After the Raiders scored the game's first goal in the second period, the Spirit responded with goals from Robert Acton and Chris Porter on a power play just past the midway point to take a 2-1 lead entering the third period. The Spirit

gained some breathing room early in the third when Porter scored his second power-play goal, but the Raiders countered with a pair of goals before regulation time concluded to tie the game and force overtime. After a scoreless five minutes of overtime, the outcome was decided in a shootout where the Raiders' fourth shooter, Patrick Megannety, scored the lone goal during that session to give Georgetown the extra point in the standings. The Spirit directed 51 shots on Raiders netminder Steven Racine, while Georgetown had 42 on the Spirit net. The Spirit have earned at least one point in eight straight games.

INSIDER: Finch is the league's top scorer with 21 goals and 36 assists in 29 games this year. Porter was in a tie for sixth place with 21 goals and 23 assists in 44 games. The Spirit welcomed back defenceman Sean Power Friday, however, they lost Cerone, who suffered an upper body injury partway through the Huntsville game and will be sidelined for up to two weeks, Spirit head coach Craig Donovan reported. Filling Cerone's spot up front Saturday was defenceman Marko Brelih.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "To play on the road is definitely harder than if you are at home," Donovan said. "Especially the second game of a back to back and in our case, our guys didn't get to bed until around 2 a.m. after Friday's game. It provided a good test for our guys and I thought we responded well."

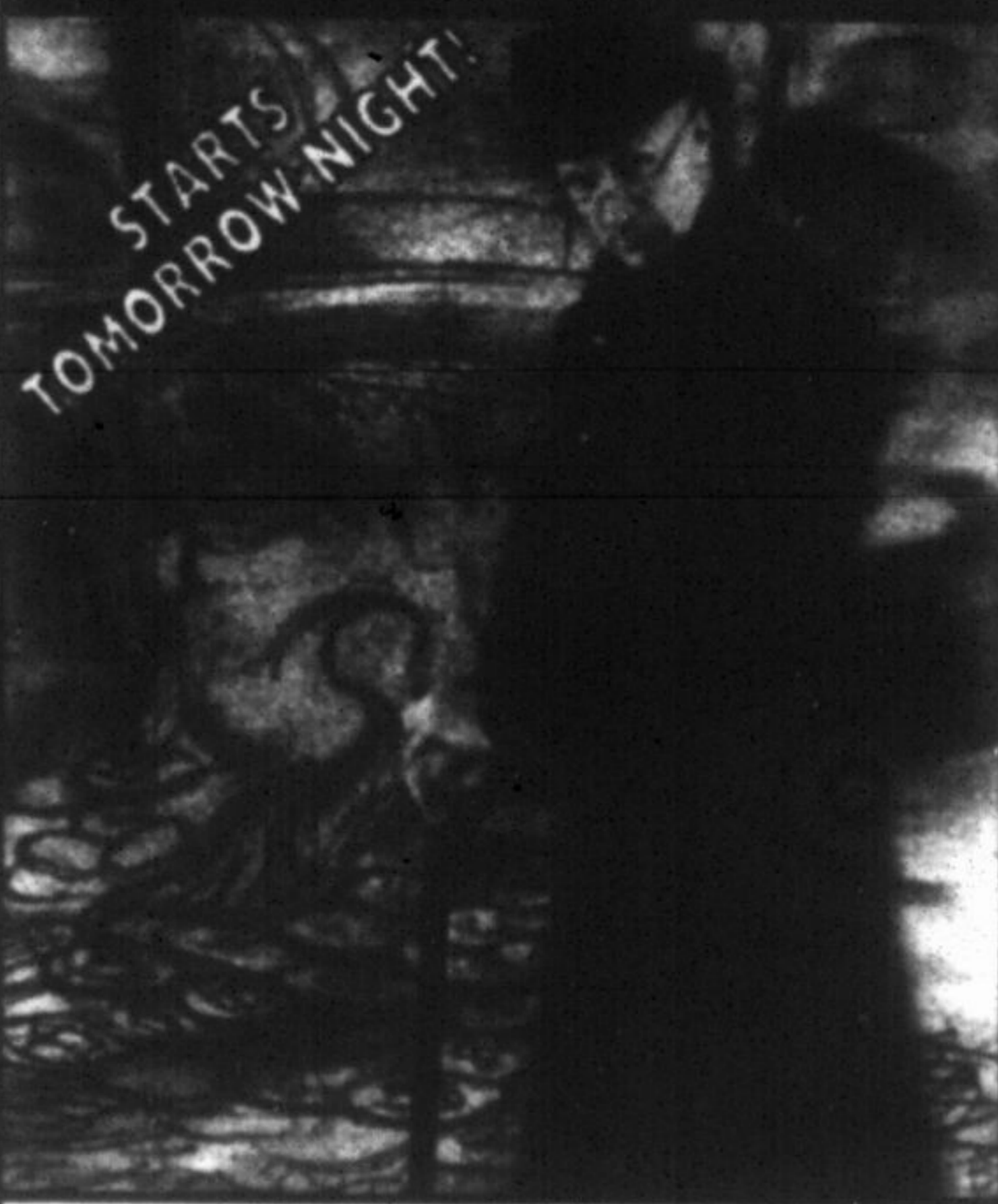
"To get three out of four points on the road, if you can do that every weekend over the course of the season any team would be happy. You can't be disappointed and I wasn't with our effort overall."

Things won't get any easier for the Spirit as they take on the North Division-leading Newmarket Hurricanes tonight, Donovan said.

"Newmarket is one of our biggest rivals and, seeing (as) we defeated them the last time (we played), I'm certain they'll want to re-establish themselves. When we play them it's always a good game," Donovan said.

— Michael Hayakawa

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