

**Statement by the Government of Canada on Bill LD 800
before the Marine Resources Committee of the State Legislature of Maine
April 27, 2015**

*Delivered by Frank Ruddock, Acting Consul General
Consulate General of Canada in Boston*

Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, Members of the Committee:

The Government of Canada is grateful for the opportunity to address this Committee as you consider Bill LD 800, which would prevent the passage of alewives through the Grand Falls Dam on the St. Croix River.

As you are well aware, there is a long history to this issue, and one in which Canada has been engaged for a number of years.

Two years ago, Canada appeared before this Committee to express support for Bill LD 72, which re-opened the River to alewife passage. We believe the St. Croix River should remain open to alewife passage, consistent with Bill LD 72 and the scientific evidence behind that legislation.

For Canada, the alewife serves as an important source of food for seabirds and many fish species which helps sustain commercial and recreational fisheries. The alewife is a host in the life stage of freshwater mussels which, in turn, contribute to the water quality of the watershed. Alewives also provide economic benefits as there are some directed fisheries in New Brunswick and they act as a source of bait for the lobster industry.

Canada is concerned that Bill LD 800 seeks a change that would affect a shared resource on the St. Croix, an international boundary river.

It is important to recall the basis for Bill LD 72, which received unanimous support in this Committee, passed in the House by a 124-23 margin, and received unanimous support in the Senate.

In Canada's view, the level of support for LD 72 was based on a collaborative, comprehensive and objective review. Canada worked with the State of Maine, various US federal agencies, as well as with the International Joint Commission and its International St. Croix Watershed Board, to find a mutually agreeable solution to enable full re-introduction of alewives into the St. Croix River basin.

The decision was based on sound science, including clear evidence that shows alewives can co-exist with smallmouth bass in lakes and waterways throughout Maine.

The re-opening of the Grand Falls Dam fish ladder was welcomed not only by Canadians, but by all implicated US federal agencies, the Passamaquoddy, the commercial fishing industry, and numerous Environmental Non-Government Organizations including the Atlantic Salmon Federation.

From Canada's perspective, nothing substantive has changed.

The science that supported LD 72 has not changed. The benefits of restoring alewives to this ecosystem have not changed. The widespread support for LD 72 has not changed.

Further, the passage of Bill LD 72 led to a number of conservation organizations and Aboriginal people investing significant time and money towards monitoring and assessment activities of alewives.

With the tabling of Bill LD 800, there are concerns regarding the continuation of these initiatives should consideration be given to closing the river once again. The groups and individuals investing in these activities, along with the Government of Canada, are seeking stability and assurances that the river will remain open now and into the future.

Finally, Canada would like to reiterate its desire to work with the State of Maine in pursuing any decisions that affect our shared, transboundary river.

Thank you for your time and consideration.