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Chair

Mr. Gerald Keddy

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•(1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), I'd like to proceed to the main estimates 2007-2008, votes 1, 5, and 10 under Fisheries and Oceans, referred to the committee on February 27, 2007.

I welcome Deputy Minister Larry Murray and officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Deputy Minister Murray has to leave early, so if we could start early, that would be a benefit to everyone.

Mr. Murray.

Mr. Larry Murray (Deputy Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'll introduce the officials who are with me today: Michaela Huard, ADM, policy; Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright, assistant deputy minister, science; Kevin Stringer, director general, fisheries resource management directorate; George Da Pont, Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard; Cal Hegge, ADM, human resources and corporate services; and Sue Kirby, ADM, oceans and habitat.

I have no opening statement. We're ready to take questions when you wish, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Do we have a first questioner?

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): I want to start with the issue of enforcement in the inland rivers. I know in my particular province we have enforcement issues all around, and it seems that where a federal government presence is needed for enforcement on the inland rivers, it is not there any more. And that spans now the last two to three years.

To what extent does this particular budget in the estimates address enforcement?

Mr. Larry Murray: Thank you for the question.

In terms of the specific numbers around enforcement, I'll ask Mr. Hegge in a minute to respond to that. In terms of the enforcement on the inland waters and so on of Newfoundland and Labrador, we actually still do a fair amount of enforcement. We have a very close working relationship with the provincial authorities in that regard and do a number of joint operations.

I'm not sure whether Mr. Stringer could give more details, but certainly we could give quite specific details. This is an area of concern to the minister and to the province, and we have been working, I think, quite closely with Newfoundland and Labrador in that context.

Kevin.

•(1105)

Mr. Kevin Stringer (Director General, Resource Management Directorate, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Yes.

In the Newfoundland region we have 155 FTEs in our conservation and protection unit in terms of enforcement officers. They are largely on the coasts, but we do have arrangements with the Province of Newfoundland on inland fisheries.

Jurisdiction for inland fisheries is provincial, but with respect to salmon it's us, so we work with the province. We also have arrangements in Newfoundland, and in particular in Labrador, with aboriginal groups. The Labrador Inuit and the Labrador Métis and the Innu all have fisheries guardians. We have a guardian program in Newfoundland that write large as well.

That's sort of the state of play. We can get specific details if you wish.

Mr. Larry Murray: Mr. Chair, I would like to provide a written response, if we could, because it's a really good question. It is an area of some concern and controversy, and in fact we do put a fair amount of effort into this. And we work closely with the province as well. But it is an area that is of concern, and I would like to come back with a written response to put the details on paper of what we do and what the province does in this area.

The Chair: The committee would appreciate that.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you, Mr. Murray. I appreciate that.

I also want to touch upon—and this is what I'm noticing now, and not just in Newfoundland but across the country—that there are a lot of really good groups out there that do river management, watershed management, and a lot of the hours they put into it are volunteer.

To what extent does this budget provide some relief for them in providing expertise in river management? Where are we for them? Because they do a great service across this country. A lot of these inland river groups are basically strapped for volunteers. They're finding it very hard to cope, and they do provide a lot in regard to conservation and enforcement.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Especially with salmon, there are literally tens of thousands of individuals who do work. There are a number of ways we engage them. In terms of budget, in last year's budget there was the Atlantic salmon endowment fund of \$30 million. That has now been established and there's a group working on it.

Second, we have a broad stakeholder engagement process on the management of fisheries. Next Friday in Halifax we'll have a gathering of about 100 or 150 people who will show up to talk about the Atlantic salmon fishery writ large. They come from all five provinces on the east coast. We will talk about the plans and the state of play. It's also an opportunity for those stakeholders to talk to us about some of the work they're doing.

The Atlantic salmon endowment fund was specifically set up to help these groups, engage with these groups, and provide them with some support. There's no question that those groups do a huge amount of work.

There are two other things I'd point to. I mentioned the wild Atlantic salmon policy last week when I was here. That's one we've been working on for some time. It will be on the agenda next week. We will be engaging in a stakeholder process on that. That's largely a stakeholder-driven process about how we manage salmon and include those groups in the management of salmon. We have five provinces, four regions, different sectors of our department, and all of these groups. That's an attempt to pull that stuff together.

The Pacific wild salmon policy has been in place for three years, I think. It has worked very well. On the other thing we do on the west coast that we don't do as much on the east coast, we have the SEF facilities, the salmon enhancement facilities, where we work with stakeholder groups on enhancement and other elements of salmon management.

On the final thing we do with these groups—and it's in the budget every year—we have an awards ceremony. We don't have an awards ceremony for commercial fisheries, but for the recreational fisheries we have an award ceremony every year. The minister presents awards. There's a bunch of stakeholders who are involved in the decision. It's not DFO that makes a decision about who gets that award; it's stakeholder groups, and each province has one. It's an opportunity for the minister and the department to recognize those people and continue to work with them.

• (1110)

Mr. Larry Murray: The whole issue of volunteers and how important they are to this department is huge. We don't do enough, but we try. It is appropriate to mention the National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee volunteers, who this committee saw—about 5,000 of them do great work. We try to support them as best we can. There's the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, with 5,000 people who bring 1,500 vessels to the table for search and rescue. So the volunteer input to what we try to do as a department—both DFO and coast guard—is a huge contribution.

As you heard from the harbour authorities, we've increased their insurance coverage recently. We've done the same thing with the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and it's now \$4.9 million. We could probably have a more fulsome look across the estimates and try to give you some kind of handle. But I'd like to underline how essential the volunteers are in our department's mandate.

Mr. Scott Simms: When it comes to enforcement, when you fine poachers in inland rivers maybe some of that money could be circulated back to the local community or the voluntary organizations. I always thought that would be a good way to go, but that doesn't exist. Is that correct?

Mr. Larry Murray: That's correct. We share your view on how to move money out of some of these things. It's a bit of a challenge, and as part of our various review processes we'll be trying to work on some of that.

The recreational licence scenario on the west coast around stamps for the Pacific Salmon Foundation achieves that. It's very popular and a good way to go, because volunteers see that the money they're investing goes back into what they're out there supporting. To the extent we can do that kind of thing, it's a good idea.

Mr. Scott Simms: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have a minute and twenty seconds, and we're going to keep you on time.

Mr. Scott Simms: In that case I'd like to switch gears for just a moment. We have a potentially drastic situation in Europe, when it comes to seal products. We haven't had any word from the Department of Foreign Affairs as to how they're going to handle the banning of seal imports. It's all based on morality, let's face it. We have five or six countries lining up to ban them, Belgium being the latest. Despite the fact the EU said they would not look into banning seal imports, if all these member countries of the EU decide to ban them individually, wouldn't they be compelled to do much the same and harmonize that law?

I just don't think that Foreign Affairs is really taking this issue with the WTO seriously. I think this is in contradiction of the WTO. Is our conservation ambassador working on this issue? Where is DFO in relation to Foreign Affairs?

Mr. Larry Murray: There is indeed a great deal of energy going into this issue. I'd be remiss if I didn't pass on the minister's thanks to this committee for the focus you've put on it and the personal time and attention you've paid to it. That has made a difference with the European parliamentarians, among others. He's very grateful for that.

On the specific issue you raise, there have been meetings as recently as this week. In fairness to Foreign Affairs, I think they are fully engaged. Certainly Ambassador Sullivan has been very heavily engaged. The Premier of Nunavut has been engaged and met with the minister. Adding that presence to some of the recent trips to Europe was extremely useful. But the minister shares your concerns that we need to keep working on this, because it's not an easy issue. We're not necessarily up against scientific facts; we're up against perceptions, or whatever.

Kevin, you might want to say something.

• (1115)

The Chair: Maybe you can pick that up on the next question that's asked on this, because it's Mr. Blais' time right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Thank you very much.

First of all, I would like to say that the lovely voice I hear in my ear would seem to be one year older than it was yesterday. Yesterday was Claudia's birthday. So, happy birthday, Claudia.

I would also like to expand on the seal issue, but first of all I have a short question on the small craft harbours divestiture program. Are there any funds left in it? If so, how much?

Mr. Cal Hegge (Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Corporate Services, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): There is no specific divestiture program, but as you know, we spend approximately \$1.5 million per year to that end. We would need \$80 million to dispose of all the harbours we would like to divest ourselves of.

Mr. Raynald Blais: From my understanding, until we have a massive investment in the maintenance of small craft harbours, it would be hard to imagine that a divestiture program exists at the same time. I have the impression that this money is intended, in the end, to rid ourselves of the wharfs in question. Was the \$1.5 million-annual investment spent in 2006-07? Was the cost higher or lower?

Mr. Cal Hegge: The amount I mentioned is about right. We spend \$1.5 million annually, but we obviously need more than that.

Mr. Raynald Blais: In any case, you know that we will have the opportunity to come back to this issue over the next weeks and months.

As far as seals are concerned, I am going to follow along the same lines as Scott, because there is something that concerns me. Our recommendations are superb and very interesting, our study was a very good one, but I have the impression that the government's response in the next few months will be relatively vague. What interests me is the reality, what is happening right now, and in a pinch, almost yesterday. In a tangible way, have you budgeted for this issue in particular in your 2007-08 estimates?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Stringer: We've actually done some reallocation within the department in the last year and we'll continue with that in terms of having some people in the department specifically on this issue. We've had managers who work on this.

[Translation]

It is a very difficult issue. A communications group is working on seal issues in Europe and in the United States. There are also issues in the United States. We are also working, as the deputy minister said, with Foreign Affairs Canada and the various missions.

The ambassador, Mr. Sullivan, led a delegation in Europe approximately two months ago. We were accompanied by the Premier of Nunavut, a minister from Newfoundland, fishermen, sealers and representatives of other interested groups. They visited the parliaments and met with journalists from France, Belgium, Germany and other countries. We are doing a lot now. Foreign Affairs Canada is doing a lot of work with us now as well. We shall carry on, because it is a very important issue for us.

Moreover, our markets for seal products are no longer really in Europe, but rather in Asia, in China, in Russia and in Korea.

• (1120)

Mr. Raynald Blais: Unless I am mistaken, there is also the Italian market.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Yes, there is also Italy. There is in reality a very small quantity that is sent to Europe, but for us, it is not really a market issue. We believe in fact that they are wrong, and we are trying to deal with that. But it is difficult.

Mr. Raynald Blais: For me, it is a matter of truth. I tell myself that the truth will always win out.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: That is correct.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Except that in this case, it is demagoguery that has won out.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Yes.

Mr. Raynald Blais: I would like you to share with me more specific details regarding the efforts that must be made. Is there a plan for all of this? Is there a strategy in the making? Do we intend to set up a group that would have resources allocated to it?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Yes, we have a lot of plans and we can share them with you. I myself went to Germany and Belgium. I met with a group of German parliamentarians to answer their questions. We do this quite often.

This year, we spent a lot of time preparing communications material for our missions. We met with parliamentarians and with journalists. We also invited journalists to come here, to go to the Magdalen Islands and to Newfoundland in order to meet with sealers. We are therefore doing many things.

We will be able to be more specific on the subject of what we have done and what we can do in the future when we respond to your report and to your recommendations.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Stringer.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for coming today.

I have a couple of things, one of them for our researcher. Regarding the announcement of the opening of the crab season for areas 12, 18, 25, and 26 the other day, our researcher found it just a little difficult to find the information about it. In fact we got the initial information from a gentleman who was presenting on that area.

I ask this out of ignorance. Is there a way that plans announced for various fishing seasons can be in a central repository that's easy to access, not only for our researcher but for our own staff to be able to get that information fairly quickly, if possible, without having to hunt it down?

Concerning the estimates, various funds come from the Pacific Salmon Treaty that help in conservation efforts on the west coast. I realize that the exact figures can't be in the estimates, because they're not approved by Treasury Board but come from another area. Is it not possible to have a reference in the estimates to where we can find that information and ascertain where those funds actually went, so that in case people from the west coast ask us questions, we can have the information fairly readily available?

I have a question to ask on behalf of my colleague Catherine Bell, who represents Vancouver Island North. She works with various salmon conservation groups, and one of the concerns they have is the seal predation on their stocks in some of these rivers. They fear that they're spending all this time just growing seal food, because the seals are getting quite abundant on the west coast. They're having a bit of a challenge working with DFO, ascertaining what to do with the seals on the west coast.

I understand there's a lot of political sensitivity in B.C. with the environmental groups on this issue, but I'm wondering what the department can do to assist these conservation groups to enhance their salmon stocks in the various rivers—and to prevent, in other words, the seals' eating up all their work.

Mr. Larry Murray: Thanks very much for those questions. Mr. Stringer may want to say something about the first and third ones, but we'll work with the clerk to ensure that you get.... There's no reason why the committee can't have timely information available on the release of fish plans. I would say that's a requirement for the committee. We'll work with the clerk to come up with something that's satisfactory.

I might ask Mr. Hegge to respond on the funding issue and how we capture things in the main estimates. Making main estimates useful to Parliament is certainly of great interest to the government. Some dialogue around that is probably a good idea, given the dance we've gone around on the various documents. Some dialogue and feedback on what works for you would probably be quite helpful to the whole system.

•(1125)

Mr. Cal Hegge: The only thing I would add is I think it's a reasonable request, and I'd like to look into it and come back with an answer.

Mr. Larry Murray: On the seal question, is there anything you want to say?

Mr. Kevin Stringer: For area 12 crab, the opening was released by a "notice to fisher". Some of the plans are released by a big announcement and some are done by notice to fisher. What we need to do, obviously, is make sure that when there's a notice to fisher the committee members are aware—or at least that there's a central repository, an obvious location you can go to in order to find it. We can certainly do that. But this is why it would happen.

On the west coast, you're right that the issue with respect to seals is controversial. That said, we've had seal culls on the west coast in the past. Not many people are aware of that. It's been some years—I think it was 1998 or something like that—since we had the last one. It was a grand total of 30 seals, I think. So it has happened.

On the issue of the interaction between seals and salmon, obviously in each interaction the seals win. But it's not absolutely certain what the actual relationship is in terms of seals eating certain species that eat certain species that eat certain species, or seals eating herring and herring eat salmon larvae—or cod larvae, in the east. In any case, it's not absolutely clear what the relationship is.

That said, there is a seal predation workshop coming up, a significant one that we're planning for the fall and for next year, to look at this both for the east coast and the west coast, so that we get a better understanding of it. In the meantime, we are hearing, from salmon fishermen in particular but also from others, that they think there's a growing concern about it, and we are working with them and monitoring.

Mr. Larry Murray: If I might just add to that, it's definitely environmental groups as well. Rick Hansen himself, in terms of the concerns about the Fraser River, has expressed a real concern about the impact of seals on salmon in the river and all that. So it is something that does require some attention. There's a growing consensus, I think, around that reality.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

My very last question, Mr. Da Pont—

The Chair: Actually, there is no very last question, Mr. Stoffer. You've had your very last question—well, not the very last one today, I'm certain.

Before we go to our next questioner, perhaps we could just have a point of clarification for the benefit of Mr. Simms' question, and Mr. Blais' question as well.

On the ban by Belgium of seal products, which is against the WTO rules and all rules of international trade—and I appreciate Foreign Affairs' involvement—wouldn't the issue be here for the Department of International Trade to actually engage? I've spoken with International Trade, and I want to know specifically, in the consultative phase of the appeal, are we still within that window? There's a point here where you come into a more elaborate phase to challenge Belgium's position. At this phase, I thought we had until May 15, that we could still consult and be consulted on it. Can I have some clarification on that?

Mr. Larry Murray: We can certainly talk to the WTO, and International Trade is involved for sure in the dialogue that's happening as we speak. But in terms of that specific question, I'm not sure.

Michaela, do you want to take that one on?

I suspect we'll have to get back to you in relation to that specific date.

Mrs. Michaela Huard (Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Yes, I'm not actually specifically sure of the time period around the appeal. I'm not aware that there's any limitation that we have. We have been discussing it with International Trade Canada. I have a meeting this afternoon with the ambassador. There's an interdepartmental meeting tomorrow to look specifically at some of the options. I'm not aware of there being any limitation in time.

There are a number of options that you can take with respect to launching an action under the WTO. It isn't just the action that we think of as in softwood lumber. There are other options. But we are looking at it very vigorously to see what is the best position. It's a little awkward, because Belgium doesn't import. But we are concerned about the issue. We are concerned about its being a potential thin edge of a wedge.

• (1130)

The Chair: I appreciate that. I think Mr. Simms' comment and Monsieur Blais' comment was that the issue shouldn't be whether Belgium imports or not. The issue is that this is the first domino in a string of dominoes, and we're very cognizant of that.

Mrs. Michaela Huard: Absolutely, and that's why we're concerned about it being the thin edge of the wedge, and we have to deal with this one.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to start off with the issue of seals that was just discussed there. I'm glad it was raised, because it is a concern: seal predation on our salmon stocks.

Fishermen in my riding have a tough competition trying to get their salmon in—I'm talking about the sport fishermen now, on the east side of the island. If they do hook one, sometimes those seals follow that salmon right up there and he's lucky to pull in the head. I know one man, at least, who ran his boat up on the rocks on an island trying to get his salmon back from a seal that was headed that

way. So it is an issue. I'm laughing about it, but it is becoming a serious issue.

Taking it beyond seals, in regard to one of their cousins, the California sea lion, the increase in populations on the west coast is becoming a real concern. You'd probably be aware that a new problem has developed with the sea lions going after the aquaculture nets here. We have one company in particular, out of Tofino, Creative Salmon Company, which is renowned, in spite of the negative connotation for salmon aquaculture, for doing local Pacific species. They're doing chinook, and they don't use chemicals. They do it naturally. But with the predation from these animals now, with the double nets.... There have been a number of incidents where they will charge the nets and get the salmon to one side and will actually bite through the net and catch the salmon on one side. So they've double-walled the nets. Recently, they've managed to get between the nets and get trapped in there. But these animals are so hungry, they are going after the aquaculture salmon and are quite determined. It is becoming quite a serious problem. So I just put that on the radar.

In our discussions about science, I know it's a good question to ask: We don't seem to have a lot of money going to aquaculture, but are there any attempts being made to help the aquaculture industry in developing better technology to deal with these kinds of predatory problems? Maybe that's a place to start.

Mr. Larry Murray: I'll ask Wendy to start, and we actually have an aquaculture person in the room as well. I don't know whether Mark has more information. We are working with the industry on other elements of development, but I'm not aware that we're engaged in that one. In fact, I wasn't aware of the sea lion issue until that tragedy in which a number of them got trapped.

Mr. James Lunney: Maybe we don't need to dwell too long on that. I just wanted to raise the issue.

I would also say there was an issue with this company with regard to malachite green not long ago, which the department and the CFIA got involved in. This company does not use malachite green, and we talked briefly after the last meeting with Wendy Watson-Wright about this issue on the way out.

There are very big concerns that some of the very ideologically driven extremists in the environmental movement had actually been seen diving in the vicinity of the net. The problem we had in that period was that we had zero tolerance for malachite green, which is found in the environment in small amounts, and we had no idea what these people might have released in trace amounts into the environment prior to those samples being taken. I'm glad, with that particular man, that there was a lawsuit, and it was settled in favour of the company.

I just want it put on the record that there are some very serious challenges in trying to manage this. I'm glad the department was able to work out with CFIA and with Health Canada involvement a reasonable level of tolerance to avoid these problems in the future.

Having said that, I'll go in another direction, and it's about science. I'd like to ask a few specific questions about the main estimates.

On the science budget I'm trying to reconcile the two different presentations we have here. There seems to be a difference in the amounts. This particular panel here is an overview of the 2007-2008 main estimates, and then we have another series of decks, the overview; this one says April 2007.

The numbers aren't quite the same. The overall budget for the department, I think, is \$1.5386 billion, or \$1,500 million; the other one says \$1,596 million, so obviously there's a change in the budget there somehow, and it reflects in the science numbers as well.

Maybe we can just start with explaining on the science portions we see broken down there. I see "Science—SFA" at \$191 million on page 7 of this second set of tiles that were provided to us, dated April 2007. Could you explain what "Science—SFA" is, what "Science—HAPAE" is, and what "Science—SAW" is, just briefly? I think the two departments.... The only ones worse than DFO for acronyms are DND and—what's the other one for acronyms? There's another one that's really bad too. Could you help us out?

• (1135)

The Chair: The office of the PMO.

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright (Assistant Deputy Minister, Science Sector, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): The three acronyms refer to the three strategic outcomes of the department, so SFA is "sustainable fisheries and aquaculture", HAPAE is "healthy and productive aquatic ecosystems", and SAW is "safe and accessible waterways". Science is broken out that way because science contributes to each of the strategic outcomes. It's not a neat contribution; each of our activities contributes in varying amounts to all of the strategic outcomes, but we have separated them for the sake of simplicity, one might say, although it's not that simple.

Mr. James Lunney: Okay.

With the budget item on the pie graph that we see here, we have \$191 million, or 12%, under SFA; when we look at the breakdown there on page 11, it comes out to \$134.3 million. Could you explain the discrepancy to us?

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: The difference is that the \$134.3 million is the actual amount that comes to science. The \$191 million has in addition what we call the program enablers. That would include corporate, policy, and all those sorts of things that are prorated across the department, but the \$134.3 is what actually comes to science.

Mr. James Lunney: Okay.

Would that then be true of the other ones? For SAW, which is safe and accessible waterways, I think you have \$48 million, and I see \$36.5 later.

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: That's correct.

Mr. James Lunney: So the enablers would be communications, human resources, legal, strategic policy, corporate services, etc.

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: Correct.

Mr. James Lunney: Okay.

I see mention of investments the minister announced. For example, the Bedford Institute of Oceanography and St. Andrews Biological Station are at \$17 and \$44.8 million respectively. In Nanaimo we have the Pacific Biological Station. Where would the

budget for the biological station on the west coast be found? Which department would that be found under, and is that under science?

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: It would be under real property, within Mr. Hegge's shop.

Mr. James Lunney: I see. So that would be running the physical plant and so on. Can anybody inform me as to what has happened with the budget in the ensuing years with respect to the station there? Is it status quo, or are there increases planned for the biological station in Nanaimo?

Mr. Larry Murray: In terms of the numbers that were mentioned, those are for infrastructure improvements to those facilities. That's why they stand out. In terms of where we're at in that process in Nanaimo, I'll ask Wendy to answer that question and then ask Cal to talk about numbers.

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: In terms of the Pacific Biological Station, we do have a long-term capital plan within the department, which Mr. Hegge may wish to speak to. We have been investing in the Pacific Biological Station over the last couple of years. I don't have the actual numbers. I actually haven't looked recently at the long-term capital plan, but we have been doing ongoing infrastructure improvements to PBS.

Mr. James Lunney: I'm glad to hear that, because it was one of the world's premier biological research stations and it had that reputation for many years. And we certainly hope to see that maintained. We appreciate the good work that's come out of the institute, and indeed from all our scientific institutes. I think we're going to have a need for a lot more information on what's going on in the oceans and ocean ecosystems.

Does Mr. Hegge have something to contribute?

Mr. Cal Hegge: I just want to say a few words about the long-term capital plan. As you've seen in the documents you've alluded to, we have a fairly significant capital budget, which we manage through several centres of expertise—it's basically for major modifications or additions or new facilities, for example—of over \$1 million. In addition, we have an ongoing maintenance budget that is part of real property. I don't have the detailed figures for any specific facility, but if you're interested in the one you mentioned, or in any others, we could pull that together for you.

• (1140)

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you. Yes, I'd appreciate an update on that if you are able to provide that.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Larry Murray: It might be worthwhile to the committee, Mr. Chair, if we actually gave an overview of all the science facilities, which would then give you the ability to see what's happening nationwide in the various facilities, as opposed to a snapshot of PBS. I think that would give the whole committee a better understanding of the 13 or whatever number of institutes we have from coast to coast. We could easily do that.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you, Mr. Murray. I think that would be very helpful and appropriate.

I have one last little question.

The Chair: And thank you, Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney: That's very helpful and appropriate too.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Cuzner.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here again today. After we finish with the estimates, I'm going to sort of miss you guys. You seem to be here as often as many committee members.

If I could, I'll look at a specific situation in my riding first, and then I'll get on with it.

I hold in the highest respect the ability and the integrity of the small craft harbours guys I deal with, both in the gulf and in eastern Nova Scotia. They are very professional, very capable people.

We've been battling a problem since 2005 in West Arichat Harbour, with two derelict vessels that are tied to the end of the wharf. There's a warrant on the part of DFO to get these gone. I would really appreciate, wherever it's getting jammed up, wherever it's getting bottled up.... They're a safety risk to the community. They're unsightly, and West Arichat is very much part of a tourist destination. I know the guys on the ground want to get it done, but it's getting bottlenecked, and we'd really appreciate whatever the senior officials could do to help us with that.

Commissioner George Da Pont (Commissioner, Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you.

Maybe I can speak a bit to the issue of derelict vessels, because you've certainly identified an issue we're aware of.

The overall framework or responsibility for how to deal with derelict vessels rests with Transport Canada. We in the coast guard are working with them to try to find and improve, I guess, the legal framework for dealing with those types of issues.

Right now, from our perspective, we're limited in terms of what we can and can't do in some of these situations. Generally, for example, from the coast guard perspective, we remove fuel or oils that could be contaminants, given our environmental response capabilities. But in dealing with them beyond that, there are issues, and Transport Canada is in the process of putting together a clear framework for dealing with these types of issues.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: So then the framework is ongoing? It's been terribly frustrating for the community, and I'm sure you can appreciate that.

Commr George Da Pont: I understand that. It's actually a little frustrating for us as well, because it causes environmental response issues for us. We are working with Transport Canada on that. I know

they're working on it, but I don't have the exact timeframe of when they anticipate having a framework to deal with it.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Could we get some kind of brief note back on that?

Mr. Larry Murray: In terms of the specific West Arichat issue that's been raised, we will come back with a response to where it's at.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I'd appreciate that.

The second thing is—and I'm going to try to get three in here, Mr. Chairman—that the committee had passed a motion put forward by Mr. Stoffer to not apply the marine service fees to Canadian commercial vessels shipping north of 60 degrees, and that was supposed to be done immediately because of the socio-economic impacts of those fees. I know you're proceeding with a framework, but are you not compelled to drop those fees as a requirement under the decision of Parliament?

Commr George Da Pont: We will be discussing this again with the minister. His staff has also met with some of the Arctic shippers and have indicated that they would look at it again before the start of the shipping season in June.

What I would say is that we have done an awful lot of work in this area. We prepared a detailed discussion paper on this issue, which has been shared with all concerned and which, I believe, was tabled with this committee as well.

We do collect about \$100,000 in fees a season. That's the extent of the actual fees that we collect. We have a process under way to try to deal with this issue across the country. We do have some concerns about proceeding in a piecemeal fashion, dealing with one aspect and not the other. We have committed, and the minister will reconsider whether anything is done before the Arctic shipping season this year.

• (1145)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Thank you.

Finally, Mr. Stringer, could you comment again on what's being done for salmon enhancement in the Atlantic? What I know is that one of the few very active and healthy rivers is the Margaree. Acid rain has really had a terrible impact on some of the other rivers in Atlantic Canada.

You say that you're active. I know that the adopt-a-stream program was funded under ACOA. ACOA came in to play that role, seeing that the recreational fishery—

The Chair: Relevance, Mr. Cuzner.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: It's just that the people in the Margaree River believe they're benefiting from SFA. It was a different SFA, I think.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I figured he'd do that.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: And that was for Stoffer's benefit.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: There are two things in particular that I'd point to—

The Chair: Very quickly, Mr. Stringer. I know this is an important question, and we need an answer, but—

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I spoke on some of the framework, the policy we're working on, and all those types of things.

The Atlantic Salmon Endowment Fund, which we established—there are now cheques being cut and provided to the group—should provide funds specifically for groups like that to be able to access. They've got a board and volunteers on that board from each of the five provinces, and they are going to be involved in dividing these moneys up. They expect to be able to ask for proposals this fall and start delivering programming next year. It should be in the range of \$1.5 million to \$2 million a year, because they're going to keep the capital of \$30 million.

The second one is SALSEA. I've forgotten exactly what that stands for, but in any case, it's an international research program that the Atlantic Salmon Federation is involved in. We are contributing as well to NASCO, the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization, which looks at mortality at sea. We have a number of programs, including the gene bank.

The Chair: We're going to have to finish the programs at another time. I'm sure Mr. Cuzner will want to ask that question again.

Monsieur Gaudet.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My question is for Mr. Da Pont, of the Canadian Coast Guard. Are you an independent organization? When you talk about boats, you resort to the Department of Transport. The Canadian Coast Guard has in the past intercepted fishing boats that were in our fishing zone. As the coast guard, what are your powers?

Commr George Da Pont: I am not sure I understood your question correctly, because I never appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I agree with you, but earlier on, Mr. Cuzner asked a question about boats, and you answered that that concerned the Department of Transport. Do you always operate in silo or do you have an agreement?

Commr George Da Pont: I am sorry, I misunderstood the question.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: No problem.

Commr George Da Pont: As I stated, we have certain powers and responsibilities in order to deal with pollution. In a case like that of abandoned ships, we have the power to take steps in order to ensure that there is no pollution. That would be the limit of the powers of the Canadian Coast Guard in that kind of situation. We cannot take any other steps to dispose of the boats.

• (1150)

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I would like to come back to the deputy minister. A little earlier on, we were discussing the seal issue, and the fact that we went on an European visit this year. I do not understand why there are not ongoing talks. When the sealing season begins, there are ads on television and Europeans come to meet with us.

How is it we are unable to get some reaction? We must be proactive, and not wait for the opening of the sealing season. You seem to be unable to get along with Foreign Affairs Canada. I will ask the same question here. It seems as though everyone is working in silo, that no one is cooperating. How is it possible that all the departments—like Foreign Affairs Canada and yourselves—are not working together on a comprehensive plan? Currently, everyone is working in isolation and when the seal hunt begins, everyone mounts the barricades.

Mr. Larry Murray: I believe you are right as far as this worry is concerned, but I think that over the last two years, we truly have worked as a team with Foreign Affairs Canada and the other departments, as well as with the missions abroad, and the provincial and territorial representatives. I think that the participation of the Premier of Nunavut, this year, was very valuable. I believe that your idea of bringing pressure to bear year-round, and not just at the beginning of the seal hunt, is an excellent one. In fact, we are trying to do that currently. The support of this committee has been very significant. The minister agrees with the opinions you have expressed. That is largely why, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the position of Canadian ambassador for fisheries conservation was created, and that includes the very important issue of the seal hunt.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I think that the silo issue is ours as well. Everyone has worked, but have we worked together? We thought about working more as a team last year probably. We created a task force bringing together three or four departments, that is to say the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade as well as two or three others. We held meetings with representatives from the province of Quebec, from Newfoundland and from Nunavut last fall. There were also meetings with sealers and with the Inuit on this issue. We asked what we should do about what is going on in Europe and in the United States. There was a meeting with this delegation two months ago—I think it was in March—and it was probably the first time that everyone was there. The embassy organized it all, and there were representatives from the provinces, from Nunavut, the hunters and the Inuit. Everyone worked together, and our friends at Foreign Affairs did foot the bill for it all. It was good news for us. Everyone participated.

[English]

The Chair: Very quickly, please, Mr. Murray.

[Translation]

Mr. Larry Murray: I also believe that the pressures brought to bear by this committee and its impatience are very important and very encouraging for us.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I think we cannot be content to start one month before the seal hunt and finish a month after. It must be ongoing, in order to make it understood—

• (1155)

Mr. Kevin Stringer: That is right.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Gaudet.

Mr. Stoffer, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank my colleague, Mr. Cuzner, for the question of the marine fees for the far north.

As you know, Mr. Da Pont, they used to have an exemption a couple of years ago and they were tacked on, so anything that you can do with the government and the minister to remove those fees before this season I know the folks of Grise Fiord would greatly appreciate.

My other question for you, sir, is on lighthouses. As you know, Bill S-220 from the Senate is before us now, and I know my colleague is working on it as well. Obviously, there's no way you're going to divest every lighthouse to every group that's out there. Some of them are going to have to go by the wayside, but there are a fair number of them that are considered by a lot of people of national heritage importance to our country.

I'm wondering, sir, are there processes involved with DFO and the coast guard to these groups and to provinces or municipalities in terms of divestiture, not just for the cleanup of the old mercury sites and that, but to assist these groups with some basic funding in order to hand them over in a proper manner so that they can be turned over by these not-for-profit groups for historical value in the future?

Commr George Da Pont: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to ask my colleague Mr. Hegge to respond to that, because his area deals with that as part of the real property responsibilities.

Mr. Cal Hegge: We have a process or policy in place that allows us to divest of the lighthouses. There's a certain order of priority that we consider in terms of interest, including provincial government, municipal government, first nations and municipalities, for example, which I think is your point.

I don't have the figures at my fingertips, but we have spent money to bring these up to a certain condition before we will transfer them to a local municipality. We have a number of successful examples of where we have done that, and we will continue to look at that, of course, in the context of Bill S-220 if it becomes law.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

The other question is in regard to the FFMC in Manitoba. I know there are a lot of rumours going around about the future of the FFMC, and with the government's decision on the Canadian Wheat Board it only stands to reason that for those who are skeptical they would apply the same approach to the FFMC: that if farmers can market their own wheat then why can't fishermen sell their own fish or market their own fish.

I know the Government of Manitoba is concerned about that. I know in Saskatchewan there's a difference of opinion with the FFMC, and I'm just wondering if you could tell me what the current status is of the FFMC. Are there any discussions ongoing regarding changing the structure of it or just maintaining the status quo?

Mr. Larry Murray: Thank you very much for that question.

Although it is at arm's length from the department, the FFMC is certainly an organization the minister is very interested in. In fact he visited provinces and some of the stakeholders, and I think the debate that comes up every so often, and it came up when I was last

in the department in 1997, is the debate about whether the single marketing approach is the best approach. And it's not surprising that the debate would arise now, because the same pressures are on that fishery as are on both coasts and everywhere else, rising fuels prices and so on and so forth, the high Canadian dollar.

In the context of the discussions the minister had, there was a request that in fact the FFMC have a look at dual marketing. I think in the context of some of the controversies that have been alluded to that somehow have become mixed into this. It's not the case at all. What the minister's interest is, what the president and the board of FFMC's interest is, and the stakeholders' interest is, is obviously to run the most effective organization possible. So the minister has no intention whatsoever of doing anything to eliminate or to change FFMC in any way that the president and the board of FFMC aren't interested in doing. But there is an interest out there in ensuring that it is operating to its maximum effectiveness, and there is this question about whether a dual marketing approach is feasible, viable, or whatever. It happens to coincide with the Treasury Board review of all crown corporations as well, in which we have to look at this sort of thing.

But it's a good question. The bottom line is the minister has no intention of doing anything dramatic outside the wishes of the existing board and organization there, which is running quite effectively.

• (1200)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to thank everyone for coming again today.

I'd like to talk a little bit about sport fishing, and I'll preface my comments. As I went through the estimates, I used my computer to do that and I'm going to make a brief point. I think my point is going to become fairly clear. In terms of doing a search on the word "aquaculture", it appears 134 times in the estimates; when we look at the phrase "commercial fishery", it appears 15 times; when you look at the phrase "recreational fishery", it appears four times; and when you look for "sport fishing", it appears once.

If you look on page 34, where sport fishing does appear once, it's under "Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture", and we have quite a bit of detail there saying commercial and recreational fishing are important sources of revenue in parts of Canada, so that's one of the times that recreational fishing appears. The Atlantic fishing industry employs more than 84,000 people. Is that just in the commercial fishery, or is that in recreational fishing? That's where I'm going with this.

What I'm getting at here is we seem to have a lot of numbers talking about how many people are employed, how much value is placed in the commercial fishery, and in aquaculture, yet we talk and the last word in that first paragraph says, "Canadian sport fishing", which is the only time it appears, "continues to inject billions of dollars into local economies each year", but we don't seem to have any firm grasp of how many people work in fishing lodges, as fishing guides directly, not to mention the indirect value of all of this.

So when we look on page 36, which is I think what my friend Mr. Lunney was talking about earlier, we have some information there on science and support of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and we go from \$134.3 million to \$130.3 million and \$128.9 million over the next three years. Of course, the program enablers and human resource FTEs go down correspondingly. If that's the part in the budget that looks into the science and everything behind the sport fishing industry or any science that's done on behalf of the sport fishing industry or any FTEs that are being spent on behalf of the sport fishing and recreational fishing industry, I would like some clarification on that, because it's not taken out of there. I'm hopeful there's a lot more being done than what appears in the estimates. So could I get some clarification on that, please?

Mr. Larry Murray: I'll start that one and then I'll ask Mr. Stringer to wade in.

I think this is an excellent question and it is an ongoing concern in the context of the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture ministers, which includes inland and coastal provinces and all the territories. It is an ongoing debate about whether we have the right structure for the recreational fishery and so on.

One of the challenges for us in that context is that the science, the habitat work, and all that stuff is for all the fisheries. In other words, I think the provinces, particularly the inland provinces, would like to see a recreational fishery office within DFO. We probably need to figure out how to do that in a more visible way, but the real problem for us is that we think that would be a false approach, because in many ways it all comes together. I think in B.C. in particular, it really stands out, or in the west, where the value for the recreational fishing industry is huge economically. I think it's larger, and we do have some numbers we can provide the committee. Certainly we have moved chinook priority to coho. I think on the west coast there is a recognition of that. Do we have the balance right? Do we need to do more work on it? I would say probably yes.

I think on the east coast it's something with a huge, huge potential, and I think people, charter fishermen with cod, for example, are discovering they can make a lot more money with a very much smaller amount of cod by charter fishing than through a commercial fishery. So we're now working with the eastern provinces. That's one of the reasons the minister launched a recreational marine licence fee study out there. It was less to do with money and more to do with how we move the recreational fishery forward, given its tourist opportunities, which are huge. Within the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture ministers, there has been the creation of a body to ensure we work together and share resources for funding tourism and that kind of thing.

In terms of the actual numbers, I'll ask Kevin and Michaela to say a word or two on the specifics.

●(1205)

The Chair: Very quickly, Mr. Stringer. I know everyone has a lot of information to divulge, but we don't have much time.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Very quickly, the numbers within the department are indeed rolled up in the fisheries management numbers and much of the science work. The science work on salmon is for all the different groups. In terms of the numbers, first of all, one of the reasons you may see it the way it is, as you've outlined it, is it is largely a provincial jurisdiction, and you have fish and wildlife folks in different provinces. We do work closely with them. In fact, we're engaged every five years. And we're just about finished the recreational fisheries survey, which will tell us how many fishermen there are out there in each province, what types of things, and that's public. We take the lead, but we work with the ten provinces and three territories on that.

It is a big issue on the west coast in particular, the recreational fishery, and we do have people in the department who specifically are involved in recreational fisheries management. I believe the number they use in the industry is about \$600 million a year. That's what the recreational fishery on the west coast generates. And there are some 350,000 licences provided each year to recreational fishers in B.C.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Kevin Stringer: That's correct.

The Chair: We'll have to pick this up on another round, Mr. Stringer. I apologize.

Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I represent the riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, which of course deals with Lake Superior. My questions will relate to, first of all, sea lamprey control, not only in Lake Superior but also for really the entire Great Lakes system. It seems that sea lamprey are increasing. I would suspect that has a lot to do with the huge amounts of stocking for salmon of various species so that there's an adequate food supply.

Is more being done to address this federally? Question one.

Mr. Larry Murray: We have increased the funding in the last few years, working with the Americans, but Wendy actually sits on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, so I'll ask Wendy to answer the question.

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: Yes, thank you, Deputy.

Mr. Chair, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is aware of the increasing numbers of sea lamprey. For a time the treatments had actually been cut back. They have been increased, and we would expect that we would see the results of the increase. But at the same time, Canada and the U.S., through the commission, are working on alternative methods of sea lamprey control, and we're very hopeful that those will bear fruit.

The annual meeting of the commission is actually in three weeks in Sault Ste. Marie, and we'll be discussing this very issue.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: So you will raise the question of the adequacy of funding on both sides?

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: In terms of the funding, as the deputy mentioned, Canada did increase the amount of funding by \$2 million per year, so the amount that goes into sea lamprey control is \$8 million from Canada. The U.S. allocations vary a bit, but certainly that comes up at every commission meeting.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Thank you. There are also several active conservation groups interested in restocking or helping with various species, particularly walleye, or pickerel, as it's known. It seems in Lake Superior there are a great number of barriers, like dams, that are essentially controlled by hydro or provincial domains.

What can the federal government do for organizations that want to get access or fish ladders or increase the walleye population? It seems to be becoming quite an issue in the north shore of Lake Superior.

Mr. Larry Murray: We do meet regularly with the province. In fact, I have meetings next Thursday afternoon, I think, with the deputy minister from Ontario, and these are the kinds of issues that come up. In specific response to your question, we do work with hydro authorities as well, but in terms of what we might do in relation to the specific question, I don't know whether Sue has any specifics, but if we don't, then we'll come back with an answer.

• (1210)

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: I would very much appreciate if you could address that question, because it seems that they can make a significant contribution to increasing the populations.

Mr. Larry Murray: Does anybody have a specific answer to that? I think we'll come back.

Ms. Sue Kirby (Assistant Deputy Minister, Oceans and Habitat Sector, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): We can compel fish passage at dams, but beyond that I don't have any specifics with me, so we will come back.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Thank you very much.

With regard to invasive species and international vessels, as you know, the Great Lakes is now having its own issues. What are we doing in terms of enforcement before ballast is discharged into the system? Are there enough officers? Is the enforcement adequate? Can we actually make the charges work so that they act as a disincentive?

Mr. Larry Murray: I think that's an excellent question. I'll ask some of my colleagues to leap in with maybe some specifics.

It is an area the government has put more money into in the last two budgets. The aerial surveillance has been increased. That's led

by Environment Canada, but we actually make available our provincial airways. We have significant coastal patrol capability that we exercise off the east coast primarily for fishery enforcement reasons, but they also keep an eye open for this. There have been successful prosecutions. The last budget, I think under the oceans action plan, further increased the ability to do surveillance. But the whole area of invasives has got quite a positive injection of funding in the last few budgets.

Wendy, do you want to talk to some of the specifics?

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: Certainly. This really falls under Transport Canada predominantly, and they are responsible for regulating ballast water in Canadian waters. New ballast water regulations did come into force in June 2006, and these regulations meet the standards set out in the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments.

In terms of the Great Lakes themselves, I know there is a great amount of angst at this particular time. Again, I believe that will come up at the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. In particular now, especially in the United States, there is concern that the ships coming from salt water are permitted to come into the fresh water of the Great Lakes and what this is doing. I know we will be discussing that.

The role of DFO science in this is really to provide scientific advice to Transport Canada in this regard. For example, we have looked at alternative exchange zones for exchange of ballast water off Nova Scotia and in and around the Laurentian Channel. We will also be, in the coming year, looking at an alternative zone around Newfoundland. We are looking to a demonstration of real-time risk assessment system for ballast water exchange and evaluating other vectors. There's a lot of interest in this, and we are working closely with Transport Canada, closely with the Province of Ontario, and certainly closely with our U.S. colleagues, through the commission.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Watson-Wright.

Thank you, Mr. Boshcoff. I know that was an important answer, so we got it all.

Monsieur Gaudet.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Thank you.

This will not be long: I only have a short question to ask.

In 2003, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans tabled its report on the role of the federal government within aquaculture in Canada, in which it supports the industry responsible development. The first of its 26 recommendations involves the passing of federal legislation on aquaculture that would provide a legal framework for developing environmental regulations appropriate to this industry.

Has this already been done?

Mr. Larry Murray: No, it has not yet been done. However, we are working on an agreement between the provinces and the federal government in order to ensure more effective regulations. The new Bill C-45 contains aquaculture provisions, but we do not intend to have a specific piece of legislation solely dedicated to that.

• (1215)

Mr. Roger Gaudet: This is only my personal opinion, but parliamentarians come and go and officials stay. I was elected in 2003. Since then, there have been three ministers of Fisheries and Oceans. I imagine that the same situation exists in the provinces, except that elections are less frequent.

I find that it takes a long time to establish something tangible. We want to make progress, but it takes decades to get bills passed or to do anything. That may suit some people but will not suit others at the same time.

That was my reaction. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to follow up Mr. Boshcoff's line of questioning, I know he'll be pleased to read part 3 of Bill C-45, the renewed fisheries act, which has to do with—

Mr. Scott Simms: Excuse me, but Mr. Lunney said that Bill C-45 was a red herring in this issue, that it was irrelevant. So I don't know if you want to pursue....

The Chair: Mr. Kamp, go ahead, please.

An hon. member: The direction of questioning was a red herring.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: Bill C-45 was red herring.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

It will provide some new tools to the minister with respect to invasive species, which I think we all agree are important to deal with, however we arrive at this.

The report on plans and priorities lists seven program priorities— all of which are at some level of progress, I would assume— including fisheries renewal, international governance, aquaculture governance, the oceans action plan, science renewal, Canadian Coast Guard rejuvenation, and environmental process modernization. We've heard of some of those along the way in the last several days here, when we've had a chance to discuss these things.

Are there any of these priorities on which you would say we're making excellent progress? It's reasonable to assume, I would think, that we aren't making equal progress on all of these. Are we making exceptional progress on any of these, and are there any of them where we're making what you would say is poor progress, where we need to do better? If we're making poor progress on any of these, is it related to funding issues? That's my question.

A related question is that it doesn't appear that the issue of small craft harbours fits into any of these program priorities. Perhaps you can correct me if I'm wrong, and explain where small craft harbours fit in the priorities of the department.

I may have another question, if I have time after that.

Mr. Larry Murray: I might quickly run through the seven, if I've got them right.

In terms of fisheries renewal, it's challenging. I think we are making good headway. We won't arrive at Nirvana overnight. I think the recent announcements by the minister on April 12, some of the funding we got on science and so on, will help. But that will be a work in progress for some time, and I'm not sure it's one, in my view, where a whole bunch more money.... It's a question of new legislation; it's a range of things that are in play.

On international governance, at least in the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, a NAFO area, thanks to the minister's effort on NAFO reform, the presence out there is one where I think there's been huge progress. I'd say we're working with other nations more globally. It would be hard to say that high seas governance on the high seas everywhere is making as rapid progress as we would like, but I think Canada is playing a significant role. Again, my view is that the funding that we have to maintain the presence and funding the new ambassador and so on has made a huge difference in NAFO and we're contributing broadly.

On aquaculture governance, I understand the frustration recently expressed around aquaculture. I think we have to move forward with the aquaculture framework agreement, and unless and until we do that, I would be concerned about real progress around sorting out the regulation in a manner that reassures Canadians and makes it more effective and timely for the industry. I think also the additional R and D that would be part of that proposition, some kind of shared responsibility for the risk that the industry bears, needs to be looked at.

So in terms of aquaculture, I think progress has been made, but I would share the frustration that it's not moving as quickly as it should. And I would say the framework agreement is there and there is a monetary or a fiscal aspect to that.

On the oceans action plan, I think phase one we did well. I think there was support in the last budget. Again, it's an area where we have a number of things under way on all coasts. Could we go faster with more funding? Yes. Has it got headway, is it moving forward? Yes. It's critical to some of the other ones too, in my view. Until we change our mindset to integrated oceans management and an ecosystem approach, we'll not actually solve the fisheries renewal one; it's part of the whole thing.

On the science renewal, I think we're making reasonably good headway and we did get funding.

On coast guard rejuvenation, it's hard to be upset about a program that got \$750 million in the last two budgets. I think that one is moving forward and internally I think we're doing some work. The Auditor General's report pointed out some things. We're working on those things under Mr. Da Pont's leadership and a lot of interest from the minister, obviously.

The environmental process modernization was talked to here. Again, I think we're making good headway working with other departments. Breaking down of these rice bowls is really important.

I think the small craft harbours one is an excellent question, because where does it fit in all of this? Maybe that's part of the issue. Where it fits is actually related to a number of them. It certainly fits under fisheries renewal. It's hard to have fisheries renewal if fishermen don't have adequate facilities. It fits into aquaculture as part of the infrastructure thing. But maybe the issue is that we haven't identified it as a stand-alone in this stuff and it's kind of like our other enablers. So maybe how we factored it is part of the problem, but I would say it fits clearly under fisheries renewal, aquaculture renewal, and one or two of the others. It is an issue that needs more attention.

• (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kamp.

Thank you, Mr. Murray.

We do need to vote the estimates today, but I would offer one more round to the members, if there's someone else who has a question or wants their five minutes.

Mr. Matthews.

Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): I wasn't going to wade into this at all. As a matter of fact, I was sort of interested in going home.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bill Matthews: However, the aquaculture piece interested me.

As I said last day, I represent an area on the south coast of Newfoundland where we're getting into a pretty significant piece of aquaculture activity. I expect it's going to be quite substantial if it goes the way we all hope it goes, or all want it to go.

There's actually a tremendous requirement for infrastructure around the industry due to the activity of feeding the fish in the water and so on. Many of our wharves now do not have the capability for all the activity. What we're finding is that wharves

originally established for commercial fishermen are now starting to be occupied with aquaculture activity—loading feed to take out to the sites, and on and on it goes—and in some cases provincial ferries may use the same wharves. So we're getting into a fair bit of user conflict.

I know that ACOA has been down to the region in the past few years and talked to the stakeholders. I'm just wondering how we're ever going to cross that bridge, although the deputy minister alluded to, I think, where it might fit. In addition to the existing wharves we have for, say, the traditional fishery, if we're going to be able to accommodate this increased aquaculture activity, we're either going to have to expand the existing infrastructure or build new, strictly for aquaculture activity.

I don't know what your thoughts are on that. I'm concerned about it because I don't know how we're going to cross that bridge. I think this area I'm speaking about will become in the next five years, as a result of what's happening, probably one of the most prosperous areas of the province. I wouldn't want to see the infrastructure requirements not being met and then the industry pushed back.

What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Larry Murray: We have done some work estimating that. Depending on how an aquaculture framework agreement shakes out between the federal government, the provinces, the territories, and industry, infrastructure could be part of one element.

There's no question that the answer is one of the two answers that have been alluded to—namely, it's either new infrastructure or the expansion of existing infrastructure. We have done some initial work on that. I think the estimate of \$60 million or so is the amount that we think is probably what would be required to meet whatever snapshot in time we did this. I think it was about a year or so ago, so that number is a little bit dated.

So our estimate, in addition to those other numbers we've used on small craft harbours, is probably about \$60 million for what might be required to ensure that the infrastructure is in place for the aquaculture industry as well.

• (1225)

Mr. Bill Matthews: So right now, outside of your small craft harbours allocation, which you may marry, say, in a wharf that's now overused, you don't have any financial provisions to help an industry like that. Outside of that allocation, you don't have anything to support aquaculture infrastructure?

Mr. Larry Murray: We don't have anything specific to support aquaculture infrastructure beyond the scientific research programs and that kind of stuff. Our contribution to the Cooke piece was \$4.5 million in terms of scientific work, and ACOA brought some money, which I guess the industry could use for infrastructure.

But the infrastructure question you raise on aquaculture is one that does need to be looked at and answered.

Mr. Bill Matthews: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.

A question each, Mr. Lunney and Mr. Calkins; five minutes between you.

Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It was mentioned earlier by one of our colleagues, about streamkeepers and auxiliary, and the influence of volunteers. Particularly in our area, with habitat, we have a lot of people involved in the streamkeeper program and in stewardship programs. I hope we'll see everything done to support and maintain those budgets for these groups. They are concerned about cutbacks, or at least they're all worried about it, anyway.

The question I have picks up on what my colleague talked about, and I'm sure he wants to go there again. That was about sport fishing. Certainly in my riding it's a big, big industry, and I think they often feel under-represented.

The highest value, the Alberni Valley sockeye run, for example, had a huge sport fishery because of the proximity to a large urban area and access to marinas, and so on. But they often feel that they're low on the totem pole, if I can use that analogy. They're in competition with other fisheries in getting access to that resource.

Since they are high value, I would hope that we've recognized this. So I wonder, if we're going to have competition on the resource and we have a small number of seiners who come in and pretty well clean out the resource in a few days in a fishery like the Somass River fishery in the Alberni Inlet, why we wouldn't tip the scales. If you're going to buy people out to get them off the water, why wouldn't we get rid of the seiners, who scoop the entire resource, and allow the trollers and the sport industry, which really is the public access?

Most people access through the sport recreational fishery. That's the way the public accesses the fishery. Why wouldn't we tip the scales in that favour, that if we're going to buy somebody out, get rid of the seiners and allow the sports fishermen and the trollers, which support families and sustain communities, to get a greater emphasis in the fishery?

Mr. Larry Murray: I think that is a question that we in the department wrestled with when I was last here in 1998, and we did come out with a priority for chinook and coho. It is an ongoing discussion, and obviously it's a very sensitive area that requires everybody at the table to figure out where we go. I think that kind of dialogue does have to unfold, but the point you're making is valid,

and as I say, I think on the east coast we really do underutilize the good living for people through that approach.

As the way ahead unfolds, on the Pacific salmon, and so on, those kinds of considerations are going to have to be brought to the table. But it always is, as you're well aware, that there are a whole bunch of interests, and the minister has to try to balance those interests as best he can.

In relation to the volunteer point—and I was going to make this point when we got the question the first time—we've done some anecdotal work, if you can call it that, in Newfoundland and Labrador. But the reality is that where we spend not very much money and we don't spend enough money is in support of streamkeepers and education and all that kind of stuff.

But in Newfoundland we recently spent some money, I think last year, supporting that. The impact of that investment on reducing poaching in particular rivers where we did that was much more significant than having enforcement. When people understand it, when they're engaged in it and take ownership of it, they don't poach, because they understand what the significance of it is. So it actually has an enforcement ramification.

In terms of our investments in this, though, you mentioned one example, that the minister did direct a \$10-million investment over the next three years in the Fraser basin initiative, which is a coming together of all stakeholders and volunteers. It's led by Rick Hansen. It has the Fraser Basin Council involved in that. So we are trying, wherever opportunities arise within the art of the possible, to work with some of these really excellent groups.

• (1230)

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you, Mr. Murray.

I received some comfort and consolation from that sentiment, and I'm glad to hear it being expressed.

The last question I have is on ocean trawling. I think we're at a stage where we're starting to understand a little better the concerns about what happens to the seabed and ocean ecology. It's like plowing the seabed.

There was a recent documentary on television, with some of the new technology, showing these trawlers basically going like a grid pattern, plowing the entire ocean floor. Where are we at in dealing with this? Can we at least control this and say there would be designated areas? I know in our area some people are very concerned about unique species of glass sponges, for example.

If we are allowed to trawl just anywhere, we're going to wipe out an unknown quantity of habitat. Maybe there's a way we could restrict it to certain corridors, at least.

Mr. Larry Murray: This is an area of significant importance. In terms of the sponge reef, we already do have a no-fishing zone, and we expanded it recently. We probably need to do more. We're looking at marine protected areas or other vehicles on that.

There was a lot of controversy this spring at the UN and a sense that Canada wasn't leading the charge on a total ban. The reality was that a total ban was simply not going to happen. What was going to happen if we stayed in that is the UN resolution wouldn't have gone anywhere because there wouldn't have been a consensus. So Canada played a very constructive role at the minister's direction in moving this forward in a meaningful way.

We've also had the industry in the NAFO area work within NAFO to put certain areas out of bounds. We are working hard at rolling out a domestic policy that would bring reality to this. We've put a fair amount of science effort into this, and the reality is that the first impact does the damage, so we need to make sure that we're not starting to do damage in pristine areas. We're trying to focus on areas where we avoid that.

I would say the minister would be in a position in the next several months to roll out a domestic policy that's in line with what we've been trying to do internationally. We think the issue is destructive fishing gear, not just about bottom trawling, and certainly we don't think that total bans on bottom trawling that can't be enforced are necessarily the way to go. But we're absolutely seized of the issue. The minister's seized of the issue, and we're trying to make a difference.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Murray, for that answer.

Mr. Calkins, did you have a final question?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I believe Mr. Stringer was in the middle of answering when he—

The Chair: Yes, he was cut short.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I was just hoping he remembered the context of my question. I would appreciate providing him with an opportunity to continue with the answer.

Do you need a reminder of the question?

Mr. Larry Murray: I'll hand it off to Mr. Stringer, but in relation to that question I'd really like to make sure we give you the right numbers on this. We do have the numbers, and I just wouldn't want to be winging the numbers.

I'll ask Kevin to finish the answer, but I think this issue of the value of the sports fishery and all that.... We have those numbers, and I'd really like to send them to you, as opposed to winging it here.

Go ahead, Kevin.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: I'll finish winging it, and then we'll....

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Stringer: The number—industry will give you numbers, it depends on who you're talking to—they've generally landed on, and we'll get this to you, is about \$600 million for the value of the industry on the west coast in marine areas. There are about 350,000 licence holders on the west coast. And that's not just British Columbians; there's a huge tourism industry associated with this.

In salmon, it's largely individual fishers. In halibut, which is a growing area, about 85% of it is lodges and that sort of thing.

As I said, we have the recreational fisheries survey, which is nearing completion. And we do this every five years in conjunction with the provinces, so we will have specific numbers across the country on the number. We get more than just the numbers; we get information on how much they spend in communities, those types of things. So it is a useful exercise.

I may take the opportunity, then, to respond to your question about.... It seems to me the question that was raised on this is very similar to the other one on recreational fishers feeling they're on the low end of the totem pole and that sort of thing. As we move towards more co-management engagement with fishers, that's a bigger and bigger issue, and the issue is largely about the nature of the recreational fishery. With 350,000 fishers in B.C., it's pretty tough for them to get organized and say "here's how I vote" and have elected representatives. With the 650 halibut fishermen or whatever the number is, they have an association.

So the recreational fishery comes across as an industry, because it's largely a tourism and lodge, etc., industry. It is a fisheries sector, because they have a certain percentage of the fishery as well, compared to commercial and aboriginal fishers. And then there's a sense that it's a rights-based fishery: everybody gets to fish as they will, and there shouldn't be a number. In any case, it's largely about how they're represented.

We've done a number of vision exercises for the west coast fishery and the east coast fishery, and we've now engaged with recreational fisheries interests on a vision exercise for how they want to see—working with us—the fishery develop on the west coast and where the recreational fisheries fit in. We have representatives from the industry, we have representatives from people who want to see a fish sector, we have representatives from all the groups, and we're working on that exercise.

It is specifically an attempt to make sure that view is appropriately recognized along with commercial fishermen, aboriginal groups, and first nations at the integrated harvest planning table. That exercise has been under way for about a year.

• (1235)

The Chair: If I could—and I apologize to the committee, because I know we need to vote the estimates today—I have a very quick question on that point, Mr. Stringer. This will be the final question.

You mentioned the International Pacific Halibut Commission. That's actually an international body that establishes that TAC, if I'm correct. Canada's portion of that TAC is divided between the commercial fleet and the recreational fleet. This year, it is my understanding, the recreational fleet went over their TAC by 700,000 pounds. That's 350 tons. That's a lot of fish.

I realize that there's a big recreational sector, but somehow or other they're not being monitored closely enough. And for the Canadian TAC, next year that portion will come off everyone instead of just off the recreational sector. It comes off the commercial sector as well. It would seem to me that this is patently unfair.

Mr. Larry Murray: I'll have a quick go at this one.

There was a significant study done. The numbers were based on an assessment, kind of a norm, of what fish get caught.

It's my understanding that a detailed review of that assessment is under way to determine the most accurate number. I'm meeting with the halibut association this afternoon. I met with the recreational sector a few weeks ago. I don't have the results of that more detailed work to determine exactly the overage, the underage, or whatever. But certainly, as you're well aware, shares and whether it is everybody's right to throw a line in and catch a halibut is a very emotive issue.

However we square this, from our perspective, from the minister's perspective, there is 100% of fish, and we have to figure out how to manage that with everybody involved, including the recreational sector. At the moment, it's a challenge sorting that one out on all sides without taking sides.

The issue you raise of catch monitoring, for all the species on the west coast, is an issue we will be moving forward with this year much more dramatically than we have in the past.

The Chair: Mr. Murray, I appreciate that, but respectfully, if we put cameras on all our commercial boats, and we watch them very closely, and we don't have a monitoring system.... If the numbers are correct, and the recreational fishery went over by 350 tons, that's a lot. I mean, that's a huge amount of fish. It would only be correct, then, that the recreational sector should be the one to lose that from its quota, not the commercial sector, because the commercial sector didn't overfish. And I think that has to be taken into consideration somewhere.

I represent a lot of commercial fishermen in South Shore—St. Margaret's in southwest Nova Scotia. It's a different situation on the east coast from on the west coast. But if we're telling the commercial

fleet, and regulating the commercial fleet, then somehow or other we can't allow this other group simply to come in and ignore the rules.

● (1240)

Mr. Larry Murray: I would say that the minister would agree with what you just said. The challenge is managing our way there in a manner that makes sense. I guess what I wouldn't mind doing would be coming back to the committee with our perspective on the final result of that halibut thing.

The Chair: I would appreciate it.

Mr. Larry Murray: But I take the point, and it's a concern on all sides.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I appreciate Mr. Murray and DFO officials coming today. Thank you.

We'll move on to our estimates.

Mr. Lunney?

Mr. James Lunney: I'm staying.

The Chair: That's good. You need to be in your chair to vote, though.

Mr. James Lunney: This is exercise.

The Chair: Under Fisheries and Oceans, shall votes 1, 5, and 10, less the amounts voted in interim supply, carry?

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Fisheries and Oceans

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$1,129,800,000

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$232,054,000

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....\$55,130,000

(Votes 1, 5, and 10 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the main estimates to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Merci.

The meeting is adjourned.

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