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Tuesday, December 4, 2012

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Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): I call this meeting to order. I want to thank our officials for being here with us this morning as the committee takes into consideration supplementary estimates (B).

Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move a motion that we ask the minister to come on Thursday instead of today, because we know we will not be able to question her today due to the bells, which will ring shortly after 10 o'clock.

The Chair: It has been moved by Mr. MacAulay that the minister appear before this committee on Thursday of this week.

You don't have a written motion?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: No.

The Chair: Mr. MacAulay submitted his motion verbally.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Could you repeat it for us?

The Chair: He's asking that the minister appear on Thursday of this week in light of the fact that the proceedings could be interrupted today.

Is that correct, Mr. MacAulay?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: That is correct, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Well, I think the committee could make the request, but I do know the minister has some travel plans on Thursday and will be unavailable.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kamp.

Is there anything further on the motion?

Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: It's obvious, then, Mr. Chair, that this committee cannot talk to the minister.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Is there anything further on the motion?

Are we ready for the question?

Those in favour of Mr. MacAulay's motion that the minister appear on Thursday in light of the fact that the proceedings could be interrupted today?

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

As I was saying, I want to welcome you to our committee this morning. I know you have some opening comments, Mr. Grégoire. I'll ask you to proceed with your opening comments at this time. If possible, could you introduce your colleagues with you here this morning as well?

The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Marc Grégoire (Commissioner, Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Good morning, and thank you very much for the invitation to appear in front of you today to discuss our department's supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year 2012-13.

We'll be joined shortly by our acting minister, the Honourable Gail Shea, but before she arrives, we will give you some detail about the estimates.

I have asked our chief financial officer, Roch Huppé, to provide you with an overview of our spending plans and to describe changes to the estimated expenditures for our department.

My name is Marc Grégoire, and I am the commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard. I'm also appearing today on behalf of our acting deputy minister, David Bevan, who is ill and unable to attend today.

With us today are three assistant deputy ministers from Fisheries and Oceans. They are: David Balfour, ecosystems and fisheries management sector, whom you see on a regular basis; Kevin Stringer, ecosystems and oceans science sector, whom you also see on a regular basis; and Trevor Swerdfager, transformation and program policy sector.

[Translation]

The budgetary figures Mr. Huppé will present were, of course, part of the supplementary estimates (B) tabled in Parliament last month.

Mr. Chair, our departmental focus continues to be on three strategic outcomes—economically prosperous maritime sectors and fisheries, sustainable aquatic ecosystems, and safe and secure waters.

Our targeted spending on key programs will support these strategic outcomes and ensure that we continue to create the conditions for our fishing and other maritime industries to generate value for Canadians.

The department, including the coast guard, is implementing modernization initiatives, as defined in recent budgetary review processes, while streamlining and increasing our efficiency in all areas.

●(0855)

[English]

Mr. Chair, our department has made important contributions to Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We will continue to build on achievements of the past as we look into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and now let me turn the microphone over to our chief financial officer, after whose presentation we'll be able and pleased to take your questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Roch Huppé (Chief Financial Officer, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to be able to give the committee an overview of the department's supplementary estimates (B) for 2012-13.

[English]

I have prepared a small deck presentation, which you received a copy of, so I will take you to page 2. Today's goal is to provide you with details of the key changes to our spending authorities for the year 2012-13.

Page 3 gives you an overall picture of where the funding authorities for the department would stand following supplementary estimates (B) approval. As you can see, under the main estimates, the department was allocated just below \$1.7 billion. Then we have carry-forward amounts for funding we were entitled to bring from one year to the following year. So within our authorities we've moved \$123 million from the previous year to the year 2012-13.

Under supplementary estimates (A), the department was allocated an additional amount of close to \$6 million.

Under supplementary estimates (B), we're seeking approval for an increase to our budget of over \$82.6 million.

The total spending authorities of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans will be brought to slightly under \$1.9 billion for year 2012-13.

I'll move to page 4. The gross increase to the appropriations we are seeking through this estimates exercise is just under \$88 million, and I'll cover the key items of that amount a little later. That amount is offset with a decrease to our appropriations of \$3.6 million. This \$3.6 million that appears in supplementary estimates is in relation to the strategic and operating review reductions as announced in Budget 2012. In Budget 2012 it was announced that the department would sustain a reduction of \$79.3 million in three years. The \$3.6 million that you see in these estimates is actually the first-year reduction, so the reduction for the year 2012-13.

In addition, in the supplementary estimates you have a section called "Transfers", which covers two types of transfers. One is transfers within the department, so between our votes. As you know, when we obtain our funding, it is in what I will call different "buckets" of money. We have our vote 1, which represents our operating expenditures, including salary expenditures; our vote 5, which is our capital expenditures; and our vote 10, which is our grants and contributions. The department and the minister, by the same token, do not have the authority to move funding from one bucket to the other, from one vote to the other, so as we need to move funding, we need to get the parliamentary authority through the estimates process. That's what's included in the transfers.

Transfers also include transfers between government departments. As we join forces to deliver on certain activities, we may need to transfer funding from Department A to Department B, or we may receive funding from another department. The net amount of these transfers equals a decrease to our funding of just over \$1.6 million.

I'll go through the key items on page 5 of the document.

The first item is just over \$21.6 million, relating to the Pacific integrated commercial fisheries initiative. In the main estimates...we had a considerable decrease from the main estimates of the previous year. When I was at this committee earlier on, in late May or early June, I indicated that one of the main reasons for these reductions was that a lot of our programs were sunseting in March 2012. Budget 2012 actually gave us some renewed funding for a considerable number of these sunseting programs. The Pacific integrated commercial fisheries initiative is one of them, so the funding was sunseting in March 2012, but Budget 2012 gave us a one-year funding renewal of \$21.7 million.

●(0900)

The next item is close to \$18 million for the acquisition of offshore science vessels: three science vessels and one offshore oceanographic science vessel. Basically, \$13.2 million of that close to \$18 million is dedicated to the procurement of these ships. Also included in that amount is \$4.8 million that was given to us through Budget 2012 for the effective management and oversight of the fleet procurement in relation to the fleet renewal.

The \$11.8 million you see next is in relation to Budget 2012 and the fleet renewal we received, so that's the \$5.2 billion announced in Budget 2012. That \$11.8 million is particularly related to the vessel life extension and mid-life modernization of certain of our ships.

There is \$10.8 million for the renewal of the Atlantic integrated commercial fisheries initiative. Again, this is the same as for the Pacific integrated commercial fisheries initiative. This program was sunseting in March 2012, and Budget 2012 gave us a one-year renewal of \$10.8 million for this program.

The following \$10 million is to support science and sustainable fisheries—what we refer to as the Larocque program. This is a program with a portion that sunsetted in March 2012 and for which Budget 2012 gave us a one-year renewal.

The following item is the \$7.5 million related to the implementation of the Species at Risk Act. Again, part of that funding was sunsetting in March 2012. In this case, Budget 2012 gave us a three-year funding renewal for just over \$21 million.

The next item relates to the health of the oceans. We received close to \$4 million relating to that. Again, this program was sunsetting in March 2012, and Budget 2012 provided us with a one-year renewal on that item.

On the following item, Budget 2012 provided the department with \$7.4 million as it relates to the Digby Harbour repairs. The \$2.4 million is the funding the department requires for this fiscal year. The remaining \$5 million has been brought over to years 2013 and 2014.

The last three items are recurring items in our estimates. Basically, the next one represents royalties we receive from intellectual property, mainly through publication items such as navigational charts and so on. The department is receiving \$1.5 million from these revenues, which it can re-spend. The \$66,000 relating to oil pollution, where the CCG is sometimes called in to deal with oil pollution, is a recovery of the costs they incur, which we are entitled to recover and re-spend. The \$32,000 is related to real property. The department actually disposes of certain property over the year, and we have access to these revenues.

I'll close with the items on page 6. As you can see, we've just covered the voted appropriations section at the top of the page. We have the decrease of \$3.6 million, which represents our first year of the strategic and operating review. In the last section, as I mentioned before, are transfers, either within the department to move money, in this case mainly from vote 1 to vote 10, grants and contributions, or money we either receive or send to other government departments. As an example, the first item is \$902,000, which we receive from Environment Canada to access our scientific expertise and facilities in connection with the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes water quality agreement.

I'll leave it at that for now. If you have any questions on any of these transfers, obviously we're ready to take your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

We'll go into the question period at this point.

Mr. Kamp

• (0905)

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

Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing to answer our questions. We appreciate that.

I'd like to go back to the comments you made about the funds for PICFI, the Pacific integrated commercial fisheries initiative, and I

guess for the Atlantic version as well. I think your explanation was that the program was sunsetting, but there was an additional year.

Do you have any way of telling us whether you think this is the last year of this program or whether there could be an additional program or additional years on this? And on a more technical question, could you tell me why the appropriations for PICFI, for example, show up in both vote 1 and vote 10?

Mr. David Balfour (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Fisheries Management Sector, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): The PICFI and the AICFI programs were initially conceived as five-year programs. As Mr. Huppé has laid out, they sunset at the end of the previous fiscal year. The government decided to extend those programs for one additional year to continue the work that is provided by those programs. It remains for us to see if there is any decision about further continuance of those programs into the future. That would be a decision of the government as to whether or not to extend those programs further into the future as a budget item. If that were the case, those decisions would be reflected in estimates for next year.

Both programs involve vote 1, operating costs for the department for the delivery of the programs and to carry out—by the department—projects under the programs. They also involve a grants and contribution, or vote 10, component. For example, under the AICFI, there are contribution arrangements that are set in place with participating Mi'kmaq and Maliseet first nations in order for them to strengthen their capacity to operate their business enterprises within the fishery, to strengthen their governance of their fishery enterprises within their communities, and to also participate in the decision-making governance processes with other commercial fish harvesters for the management of the fishery.

It's a somewhat similar situation with regard to PICFI, although PICFI also has a component for the acquisition of commercial fishing licences from commercial harvesters and the transfer of those licences to fishing enterprises that are established by aggregates of first nations—that's through a process of a willing buyer and a willing seller to do that—in order that first nations can increase their level of participation in specific fisheries. It also involves contributions for first nations to be more effective in the overall governance and management of the fisheries.

As well, this supports efforts by the department, working with all three sectors of the fishery in B.C.—aboriginal, recreational, and commercial—to strengthen governance in the fishery and to improve accountability measures, such as improvements to catch reporting and things of that nature. Also, there are investments to move to the possibility of new management approaches for the management of Pacific salmon through a more share-based fishery and things of that sort.

The vote structure of votes 1 and 10 reflects the design of the program and the activities that would be carried out by the department under vote 1 and contributions for others to carry out activities under vote 10.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you very much. That's helpful.

Mr. Grégoire, it's good to have you here as the acting deputy, but also as the commissioner of the coast guard.

On the appropriation for vessel life extensions and mid-life modernizations, as I think it was called, can you tell us why they show up in the supplementary (B)s? Is it not part of a more well-planned program that you have?

Can you just tell us a bit about the program to do vessel life extensions? Is this a normal thing that you do? Is this instead of purchasing new ships? Do all vessels come to a place where they do their mid-life extension or modernization? Could you just tell us a little more about this?

• (0910)

Mr. Marc Grégoire: First of all, the reason it's there is that this was part of the last budget, Budget 2012. We get the money once the specific announcement has gone through the approval process through a Treasury Board submission. Once the Treasury Board ministers have approved a component of the budget, then the money is released through one of the supplementary estimates.

In this case the money shown for VLE is specifically for the life extension of the *Amundsen*. *Amundsen* is a medium icebreaker used in the central and Arctic region. It's based in Quebec. We had to replace five of its engines.

In our regular capital program we don't have funds for major investments of that size. We have a limited capital program. For huge investments, like the acquisition of a new ship, or for major work on ships, like a vessel life extension, we seek money at the government level.

In its last budget the government was extremely generous in committing \$5.2 billion to the coast guard over the next 11 years. A portion of that is designated to vessel life extension.

Vessel life extension is a good investment in that we can extend the theoretical life of a vessel. Whereas in some cases we had said the life of a vessel might be 30 or 40 years, in fact when we get to that stage, and given the good maintenance we do on our ships, we're able to extend its life by 10 or 15 more years of good service for the coast guard.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Chisholm.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I'm pleased that you were able to come and speak with us today. What you do with the services your department provides for Canadians and for Canada is very important. I think we could all benefit from having more opportunities to sit and ask you questions and have a dialogue.

Let me start with a couple of questions. What I'll do, because our time is somewhat constrained, is ask you probably three questions together, and then maybe the appropriate person will provide me with the answer.

In your initial presentation, you talked about streamlining of services. You talked about modernization. It's all around the cuts of \$79 million over three years to the department. A number of us are very concerned about the impact of those cuts and the impact of the changes.

There's a lot going on right now. We heard from Justice Cohen, of course, on matters as they affect the Fraser River sockeye. Of course the issues he raised relate to fisheries on all coasts and in the interior.

I want to ask you about aquaculture. In Nova Scotia in particular, as you know, the Government of Nova Scotia is introducing a strategy, and a number of communities are extremely concerned about the impact of open pen fish farms on the traditional fishery, in particular lobsters. Your department has a very important role in ensuring that proper assessment and monitoring enforcement are done.

I raise that also in connection with what Justice Cohen said about aquaculture on the west coast, in his recommendation 3, when he said:

The Government of Canada should remove from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' mandate the promotion of salmon farming as an industry and farmed salmon as a product.

He also said there was a conflict between the mandate to protect fish and fish habitat and the promotion of salmon farming as an industry and farmed salmon as a product.

In that context, I'd like you to provide for me some answer on how it is your department will provide any comfort to the people who are concerned about the impact of farming salmon in Nova Scotia.

The second question I want to ask you about is with respect to lobster trap tags. There have been ongoing negotiations with the industry in the maritime and Atlantic regions and in Quebec around tags and the responsibility for them. It's an important conservation method, I think we all agree.

The government has proposed to no longer issue tags themselves, which had provided a certain level of control, but to turn that over to the private sector. The industry is extraordinarily concerned about that for fear of losing control over the ability to conserve and to control effort.

The industry has asked the department to allow for a year's transition into who will issue them—in other words, for the department to continue to issue them this year. They have even reluctantly said that during that year they will pay the costs, but they want the DFO to continue to have responsibility for issuing the tags; give them a year to figure out how it is they can best do it, and in a way that controls the whole question of effort.

So I'd like you to answer for me why it is, given the problems facing the lobster fleet right now, you are continuing to try to impose this change against the overwhelming will of the fishermen.

•(0915)

My last question at this point is on the issue of controlling agreements. Controlling agreements, as you know, have an impact on the policy of preserving the independence of the inshore fleet in Atlantic Canada, known commonly as the owner-operator fleet separation policy. Those controlling agreements are to end in 2014. I understand that a couple of Nova Scotia Conservative MPs have appealed to your department and to the minister to allow for this time limit to go by and for the particular processes to not have those agreements ended.

As somebody within DFO has said to the minister, these controlling agreements compromise the integrity of the owner-operator fleet separation policy. If they're not ended in 2014, as they said they were going to be ended seven years ago, then that may very well jeopardize the integrity of preserving the owner-operator fleet separation policy, flying in the face of Minister Ashfield's commitment to that policy as declared in September.

I wonder if you would please take a moment and respond to those questions.

The Chair: Mr. Chisholm, you used up pretty nearly your whole seven minutes in asking those three questions. You have 12 seconds left, sir.

I would ask, in all fairness to others and to the timeframe, if you could answer one of the questions—the first question if you want.

We have some further time here, and then we can get back to it.

•(0920)

Mr. Marc Grégoire: Which one do you want?

The Chair: It's up to Mr. Chisholm.

Which one? The first one, Mr. Chisholm?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Sure.

Mr. Marc Grégoire: I will ask Trevor to answer that.

Mr. Trevor Swerdfager (Assistant Deputy Minister, Transformation and Program Policy Sector, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thanks very much.

There are a number of questions within your question, so I will talk briefly about how the department approaches the management of aquaculture generally and in Nova Scotia in particular.

I think the first and the most overriding principle of our approach is that we're fundamentally committed to the protection of marine ecosystems and all the species within them. Certainly that's our abiding concern, whether it's in Nova Scotia or British Columbia or anywhere else in the country. We're very confident that aquaculture can be conducted in open net pen structures in a manner that is consistent with that objective.

That's not to say that it's a non-impact-oriented industry. It clearly needs to be regulated. It needs to be managed very closely and effectively. As you probably know, jurisdiction for aquaculture is shared in our country, particularly in Nova Scotia. There's a different regime in place in British Columbia, which we can talk about if one wishes. But in Nova Scotia the jurisdiction for the management of aquaculture is shared between the federal and provincial govern-

ments. The predominant element or the preponderance of the regulatory regime is provincial in Nova Scotia.

The province issues leases to individual farm operators that allow them to secure a particular plot, if you will, of the ocean. The first component of the regulatory regime is to determine where in the province aquaculture will be authorized. In addition to a lease, an operator requires a licence from the province, which is extremely detailed in nature. A whole series of environmental provisions and requirements must be obeyed by the operator.

We have worked with all provinces, including Nova Scotia, with respect to the content of some of those licence provisions: how they're structured, what the regulatory tools are, what the standards to be met are, etc.

At the same time, the federal government does have a role, both in terms of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, but more broadly within the Department of Transport and the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Other departments are involved as well; to some degree, Environment Canada is a player in the regulation of the aquaculture industry. Certainly from our perspective, we participate in the environmental assessments of all sites, in the sense of contributing science to the decision-making in both the provincial context and federally, and we work quite closely with the province to make sure that all sites that are considered are, at least from our vantage point, put in places that don't cause significant threat, not just to wild salmon, but to any wild species.

Obviously this is a topic that would require further discussion if we wanted to get into it in huge detail, but from our perspective, the strategy that the Government of Nova Scotia is advancing for that province for aquaculture is one that is prudent and is moving forward in due course. But it's not a rapid development approach; it's one that we're quite comfortable with and that we have worked with them on. We're confident that the regulatory regimes that both the province and ourselves manage are more than sufficient to effectively protect the ecosystems involved and to go forward with this sustainable industry.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Swerdfager.

Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Thank you.

I have a comment on something Mr. Chisholm said. The Cohen report ended in 2009; that was its mandate. In 2010, outside the mandate of the Cohen report in terms of time, a record 29 million sockeye salmon returned to the Fraser River, and net pen aquaculture had been going on since 1985 off the coast of B.C. That's something that needs to be put on the record.

I have a question. What is the value of commercial fishing in Canada? I just want a rough number.

Mr. David Balfour: Its value is in the order of \$2 billion.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Two billion dollars? That's what I had heard.

What's the value of recreational fishing in Canada?

Mr. David Balfour: According to surveys, it's above \$7 billion.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Above \$7 billion? Okay.

Given that you are a fisheries agency, is there a balance between what you spend on commercial fishing versus recreational fishing, or are most of your expenditures on the commercial fishery?

Mr. David Balfour: Our expenditures are very much a function of the mandate and responsibilities of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Our main focus, of course, is on the management of coastal fisheries. For inland fisheries, the management responsibility has been delegated to inland provinces. For example, in the case of British Columbia, we do dedicate effort commensurate with the requirements of the fishery to the recreational title sport-fish fishery, which we license.

In the integrated planning approaches for, say, salmon or groundfish or shellfish, the recreational interests participate in the integrated governance decision-making with other users of the resources. Their interests are provided for in terms of resource allocation, the setting of TACs, management approaches, and so on. In terms of absolute financial expenditure, it is relatively less than it is for commercial or aboriginal fisheries, but it is commensurate with the responsibilities we have.

• (0925)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Except that DFO is more than able to conduct science in the freshwater fish areas, as well as fish enhancement, right? You could do that.

Mr. David Balfour: We do science in the freshwater area to some extent. My colleague is going to speak to that. But we are not doing enhancement work on inland species.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: But in cooperation with provincial jurisdictions and in cooperation with the hundreds of angling groups across the country, you could conceivably do partnership projects related to fish enhancement. I presume that's possible.

Mr. David Balfour: Yes, that's possible, and it certainly would be the direction that we would be headed in with respect to the implementation of the new fisheries protection program, which provides for our ability to enter into partnership arrangements for the development of fisheries resources, their enhancement, and their protection. It's certainly an area that we will be giving focus to in the future.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay. That's good, because I think the partnerships you have with the Atlantic Salmon Federation are quite significant, and, again, for the Restigouche, for example, I have been told that the fishery supports 300 full-time jobs. It has been described to me as like having another mill in the area there.

I would just recommend that the department... I know you have a commercial fishing focus, but again, when you have the value of the recreational fishery and where it's at now, about 4 million participants in the recreational fishery across the country, and hundreds of communities and jobs that are supported by the recreational fishery, I would respectfully recommend that maybe you'd want to start looking at some of these expenditures.

In terms of the \$10 million that you have listed to "support science and sustainable fisheries", what's the breakdown between freshwater and saltwater work?

Mr. Kevin Stringer (Assistant Deputy Minister, Ecosystems and Oceans Science Sector, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): That is in fact saltwater fisheries. Basically, that is what was called Larocque funding. It was funding that was provided to the department starting in 2007, following a court decision in 2006 that said we couldn't continue to do the agreements we had with the commercial fishermen themselves.

We had a number of arrangements to do science, in addition to our basic core foundational science, through a number of agreements. When the court said we didn't have the authority to do those, we had funds voted for it.

In our previous discussions at this committee, we've talked about section 10 of the new Fisheries Act, with the proposed amendments and the actual amendments to the Fisheries Act that will enable us to have those agreements going forward. This is the final year of that funding to replace those agreements that were in place before. So there were agreements—with fisheries organizations—to do additional science where some fish resource is set aside for the purpose of partnering with the department on additional science.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: In terms of the \$7.5 million to protect wildlife species at risk—and I assume wildlife in this case means fish and aquatic species at risk—what activities are you undertaking there?

Mr. David Balfour: Under the Species at Risk Act, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for the recovery of aquatic species. Under the program we have, we would be focusing on the recovery of species that have been recommended by COSEWIC as being threatened or at risk, make the determination of whether we would agree with that, and then have recovery programs.

• (0930)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I have one final, quick question. In those recovery programs, do you do economic impact analysis to see what impacts your recommendations might have on communities and local economies?

Mr. David Balfour: Yes. As part of the recovery assessment process, the department looks at the socio-economic considerations that bear on the resource as a factor in determining what would be its ultimate listing status and what recovery measures would be put in place to support the recovery of the species.

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

Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, gentlemen.

I'd like your evaluation—not your opinion, but the evaluation, and without any doubt you have it—on the trap tags and how valuable it was to the fishery. I understand the government will not be handling the tags issue from this year on. Will it be handled differently in each province? Who will do the management? How much will it cost the fishermen?

Also, there's a great concern from fishermen in my area, and it was understood that the carapace size, as was set, would be left as is. Is there a plan to move it, which I very much hope not?

Mr. David Balfour: We are moving to see that fish harvesters would be responsible for the acquisition of equipment gear tags starting April 1. We have established a protocol with industry. It's on our website. We've been having a number of meetings with industry to explain the requirements of that protocol. A number of organizations are coming forward to submit gear supplier plans to the department for us to approve, in order that they'd then be able to provide tags to fish harvesters for fisheries commencing after April 1. That process is under way.

As a department, we will have internal control audit protocols in place for us to be able to verify that the supplier regimes that will be in place are such that we can rely on them and the integrity of them. That will be something we'll be doing. There will be a requirement that the submission of lists of tags that are issued would be considered a submission under section 61 of the Fisheries Act so that it would be enforceable by us.

The regime will be consistent on an Atlantic-wide basis. In terms of our requirements, they're the same throughout Atlantic Canada. The price that fisher harvesters will pay for tags will be determined through the marketplace, in terms of determining the most efficient price for the supply of the tags.

With regard to carapace size, my presumption is that you're referring to lobster fishing area 25—

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: And 24.

Mr. David Balfour: There are discussions that are under way among fish harvester organizations around measures they may or may not want to come together on and propose to the department, in terms of changes to the management of the fishery, to avoid the kinds of situations that occurred last year in terms of poor quality and volumes of landings and so on. That will all come to the department as part of the advisory committee process over the winter period. On the basis of that, the department would then be making recommendations to the minister, as appropriate, for any changes that might occur in terms of any of the conservation requirements for lobster fisheries for next year.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Balfour, but most people involved in the fishery indicate to me that the tags were one of the best conservation measures in the fishery. Is that the evaluation—not the opinion, but the evaluation—of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, that the tags were one of the best, if not the best, conservation methods in fisheries in the lobster industry? Was this change made just to save money?

• (0935)

Mr. David Balfour: This change, more fundamentally, is about seeing that harvesters who participate in fisheries should be taking on responsibility, and cost responsibility, for those measures for their

compliance with conservation stipulations, tags being one of those types of requirements, and that they should be providing that kind of a marking of their gear at their cost. This change is to facilitate doing that.

The department also, as part of moving forward with changes such as with gear tags, has said yes, we recognize the importance of tags in terms of a conservation measure and securing an orderly fishery, and we would be open to considering alternatives to tags if industry wanted to come forward with alternatives that would achieve the same outcomes as are being provided for tags.

When it comes to the lobster fishery, it's pretty clear that the industry is of the view that the tags are the way to continue to proceed.

That is what we're facilitating with the protocol I've described, which we have out, and the arrangements that are now coming forward in terms of the supply of tags to the fishing industry.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Balfour, but it's not your decision; these changes are a government decision. Most people involved in the fishery also understand that it was one of the best conservation methods in the fishery, and they certainly were not consulted and they feel it's a step backward.

What was the total number of jobs lost in the coast guard? Where will the losses be located? What effect do you, as a department, feel this will have on search and rescue times?

Mr. Marc Grégoire: In the reorganization that we're doing in the coast guard, we're looking at a total of just about 300 jobs. The coast guard has about 4,500 employees. The way we have looked at the reductions we are doing...we have basically looked at the whole coast guard and we have found ways to effect the reductions that would not impact on service to citizens.

I can assure you that the level of service for SAR will be in line with all of the countries on an international basis. There is no reduction. If you're referring to the reduction in the secondary search and rescue centres, or to the MCTS, that will not impact on the search and rescue times.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

Mr. Donnelly.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here in front of the committee.

Mr. Grégoire, you mentioned that the department is engaged in streamlining services. It was also mentioned that there will be a reduction of just over \$80 million over the next three years. In the short time I have, I'd like to focus on two things: one, the Pacific fishery, specifically the wild sockeye salmon; and two, the Canadian Coast Guard, specifically the closure of the Kitsilano coast guard station.

In terms of the Pacific fishery, Justice Cohen recently published his report, along with 75 recommendations, and he was very critical that the government gutted the Fisheries Act before publishing these recommendations. I'm wondering if you have allotted appropriate funding to carry out Justice Cohen's recommendations.

I'll ask my second question, on the Canadian Coast Guard. The department has announced it will be consolidating five MCTS stations in the Pacific region into two centres for the entire coast, and you also intend to close the Kitsilano coast guard station in Vancouver, the third largest city in the country and the busiest port in the country.

Could you tell us how much this closure will cost and how much it will save in terms of operating the station? It's my understanding that the annual operation of the Kits coast guard station is as little as \$900,000 per year. You can correct me if this is not the case.

● (0940)

Mr. Trevor Swerdfager: With respect to the first part of the question, dealing with Cohen, the government—and the department, first and foremost—is in the process of analyzing all of the recommendations. We are working on developing our advice to government with respect to them. Clearly not just the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is implicated. There are implications for many departments.

Part of what will happen is that the advice will go forward; we will offer views on the various recommendations and the possible position of the government on them. The government will make a decision at that point, and associated with that will be some decision on what, if any, funds it may wish to allocate specifically to the implementation of Cohen's recommendations. There is currently nothing earmarked as “Cohen implementation” in the budget of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Work is under way to analyze the recommendations and what the government's response to them might be.

Mr. Marc Grégoire: On the greater Vancouver area, I have to say, first of all, that our top priority is the safety of mariners in Vancouver, as well as elsewhere in Canada. We wouldn't put on the table any proposal that would affect the safety of mariners. When we develop proposals throughout the coast guard, we look at the level of service offered in every port and every major city in Canada. Obviously we thought we could achieve efficiencies in Vancouver. We have two lifeboat stations located in the port of Vancouver. One is Kitsilano and the other is Sea Island. We felt that by reorganizing the various services in the area, we could be more efficient by reducing the number of stations by one.

We have proposed closing Kitsilano station, and we are now in the process of doing so, but it is not a pure closure.

We have looked at the port of Vancouver and the services it offers and have compared the port with those in all of the other big cities and the services with the kinds of services offered elsewhere. For the busy season, for instance, we have decided to add an in-shore rescue boat that will operate from May or maybe late April to September. We're just finalizing the analysis for that now. We have added money to the contribution that we give to the coast guard auxiliary, also known as the RCMSAR, in B.C. They are moving around some of their stations, providing additional capacity.

There are a lot of vehicles of opportunity in the port of Vancouver.

We have 12 FTEs in total in Kitsilano. Closing it will not incur a lot of cost per se, but we will save about \$900,000 per year, and we have already announced that we will provide the RCMSAR with \$100,000 per year. The minister announced that in June. We will fund the inshore rescue boat station, which is operated by trained students at minimal cost. The net savings are in the order of \$700,000.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Monsieur Grégoire.

I see the minister has joined us at this time. We'll suspend for a couple of moments to give the minister a chance to set up at the table here.

● (0940)

(Pause)

● (0945)

The Chair: I'll call this meeting back to order.

Minister Shea, welcome to the fisheries committee. It's been a while since we've seen you here before this committee. We do appreciate you taking the time this morning to come and meet with members of this committee and to share with us your thoughts on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and supplementary estimates (B).

Minister, I know you have some opening comments, so I'll turn the floor over to you at this point in time. Please proceed whenever you're ready.

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. It's been a while since I've been here, but I'm now here as the acting minister. We certainly wish Minister Ashfield all the best and a speedy recovery.

I'm going to talk today about some of the great things our government is achieving for Canadians through Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Before beginning, I want to thank Roch Huppé, who is our chief financial officer for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, for his initial presentation on the supplementary estimates.

I want to extend a special word of welcome as well to two of the new Conservative members on the committee, Stephen Woodworth and John Weston, and other members of the committee I haven't had the chance to speak to before.

Our government remains committed to the long-term sustainability and the prosperity of our fisheries. This commitment is being realized in a number of ways, including investments in science and the Canadian Coast Guard, and focusing resources on protecting fisheries from real threats to their long-term productivity. Our government understands that science is crucial to the sustainability of Canada's fisheries and oceans. The science activities of Fisheries and Oceans involve upwards of 1,500 science staff, working on a variety of relevant topics.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is mandated to protect Canada's fisheries. Much of our scientific work is related to fisheries management, such as stock assessments, along with conservation. Our scientists also do a lot of work on researching Canada's oceans. With the world's longest coastline, stretching over 243,000 kilometres along three oceans, our oceans support an astonishing diversity and abundance of marine life and human activities.

Canada's three oceans contribute an estimated \$28 billion, and over 315,000 jobs, to the Canadian economy. Currently we have established eight marine protected areas under the Oceans Act, and the designation of an additional eight areas is currently in varying stages of completion. Designation of one of these areas is anticipated for 2013. In fact, federal, provincial, and territorial governments have collectively established 810 marine conservation and marine protected areas.

Scientists at DFO also provide science support for fisheries protection provisions and for species at risk. They do work in Canada's Arctic, an important priority for our government and for the country. We have class-leading hydrographers, who are providing charting services to the marine and transport industry. We have an excellent team working on ways to protect Canada's fisheries from aquatic invasive species like Asian carp. In fact, our government recently invested \$17.5 million towards the Canadian and American efforts to keep Asian carp from entering our important and valuable Great Lakes system.

This is a small list of examples of the great things our scientists at Fisheries and Oceans are doing for Canadians. Through Canada's economic action plan, our government has invested in facilities across Canada to enhance their operations—facilities, such as, the Institute of Ocean Sciences, the Pacific Biological Station, and the Centre for Aquaculture and Environmental Research, in British Columbia; the Freshwater Institute, in Winnipeg, Manitoba; the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, in Mont-Joli, Quebec; the St. Andrews Biological Station, Mactaquac Biodiversity Facility, and the national aquatic animal health program lab, in New Brunswick; the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Centre, in Newfoundland; and scientific field camps across the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As ecosystems and Canadians' priorities evolve, so will our investments in science. For the fiscal year 2012-13, departmental spending on science was in excess of \$200 million. This level of spending has been consistent since 2006.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is also proud to be responsible for the Canadian Coast Guard. This year, the Canadian Coast Guard is celebrating 50 years of dedicated service to Canadians. The coast guard plays a key role in supporting the safety of Canadians, promoting uninterrupted shipping to Canadian port gateways, and facilitating trade flows. It delivers search and rescue programs, provides marine pollution responses, and supports science and other government maritime activities. The Canadian Coast Guard is Canada's main maritime presence, especially in the high Arctic.

● (0950)

Most recently, economic action plan 2012 proposed \$5.2 billion over the next 11 years on a cash basis to renew the Canadian Coast

Guard fleet to make it more adaptable, capable, and more cost-efficient. The procurement of new vessels and helicopters for the Canadian Coast Guard, as well as work related to repairing and refitting existing vessels, will support jobs and generate significant economic benefits.

We also continue to make significant strategic investments in the Canadian Coast Guard. Since 2006 we have invested in new mid-shore patrol vessels, scientific research vessels, new hovercraft, and our first ever polar icebreaker. We have also committed funds for smaller vessels and barges through our budget. By the time all is said and done, the government will have invested more than \$6.7 billion in the Canadian Coast Guard. These investments include new vessels and facilities across Canada.

In the Atlantic region, for example, the coast guard has invested more than \$30 million for two new near-shore fishery research vessels, the CCGS *M. Perley* and the CCGS *Vladykov*. Another \$12 million was invested in a mid-life extension and modernization for the coast guard ship *Cape Roger*, which is used for fishery patrol on the Grand Banks.

Earlier this year the coast guard took formal possession of its new operational centre in Dartmouth. The Atlantic region is served by 42 coast guard vessels, including 11 search and rescue lifeboats and nine helicopters. In Quebec the coast guard has recently invested \$4.2 million to upgrade the Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre at Les Escoumins.

We invest roughly \$10 million annually to refit vessels along the St. Lawrence River and estuary, which is in addition to the coast guard's investment of \$10 million in extended refit to change the diesel engines of the coast guard ship *Pierre Radisson*, or \$6 million to change the diesel engines on the coast guard ship *Amundsen*.

Three new patrol vessels have also been built for operation in the area, including a mid-shore patrol vessel, the coast guard ship *Caporal Kaeble*, a near-shore fishery research vessel, the coast guard ship *Leim*, and a search and rescue lifeboat, the *Cap Aupaluk*.

Quebec will continue to be served by 19 coast guard vessels, including seven search and rescue lifeboats, two hovercraft, and six helicopters.

In British Columbia we have announced the addition of three new 47-foot motor lifeboats, vessel life extensions of the *Bartlett* and the *Tanu*, and vessel refits of six additional vessels on the west coast. The Canadian Coast Guard western region will continue to be served by 12 lifeboats, two hovercraft, six helicopters, and 15 other vessels.

We will continue to ensure that the coast guard has the tools and training it needs to save lives and keep our waterways open and safe.

One of the important policy measures recently taken by our government is changes to the Fisheries Act that will focus their resources on protecting habitat for fisheries, not protecting habitat for habitat's sake. The Fisheries Act is about managing fisheries.

We're moving away from reviewing all projects on all waters to focusing on the list that may significantly impact Canada's fisheries. We will strengthen our focus on the management of real threats to Canada's recreational, commercial, and aboriginal fisheries to ensure their long-term productivity and sustainability. These threats include habitat destruction, incidental killing of fish, and aquatic invasive species. Concretely, this means moving Fisheries and Oceans away from reviewing every activity that landowners or project proponents may undertake, to focus on activities that may have a significant impact on the sustainability and productivity of Canada's fisheries.

Clear regulations, standards, and guidelines are being established to make sure that Canadians understand what is expected of them when working around water. We will also be able to enter into agreements with third parties, such as conservation groups, to enable them to undertake measures to enhance fisheries protection. This could improve innovative approaches to protect habitat, support for aquatic invasive species outreach and engagement, developing standards for fish protection, and other matters.

In addition, there are a number of provisions that provide and enable enhanced protection. These include establishing ecologically sensitive areas, such as critical spawning habitat for salmon and other species. If any activities are proposed within these areas, proponents would then be required to submit plans for review. We may then require higher levels of protection for such areas.

• (0955)

With respect to enforcement specifically, the recent change to the Fisheries Act creates more enforceable conditions, increases inspector powers to provide them with additional authorities, and establishes a duty to notify provision, which states that every person shall report an occurrence that results in harm to these important fisheries.

The department has been reviewing and adjusting our regulations and policies in order to support the changes to the Fisheries Act. We are actively discussing the regulatory and policy framework that will support these changes with provinces and territories, with first nations, industry, and user groups like conservation organizations. It's important that these discussions take place, especially with technical experts, as we develop the policy and regulations that will support the new act. These discussions are ongoing, and we encourage those who would like to bring forward information to the department to please do so.

It's an understatement to say that there's a lot going on at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. I have just only touched on a few items of importance to our government. We'll continue to work hard for Canadians to ensure there's a bright future for our fisheries and for fishermen across the country.

Now I'll be pleased to take some questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Shea.

We'll start off with Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, welcome. Thank you for joining us this morning.

And thanks also to the officials. We've certainly had an informative morning thus far.

I do have a couple of questions that I will ask. I don't know, Minister, whether you want to answer them or refer them to the officials. I'm interested in vote 1, where we're talking about the transfer of almost a million dollars from Environment Canada. I understand it's for restoration work under the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes water quality agreement. I'm wondering what type of work will be done. Of course, we know that agreement was just amended this year. Is the transfer related to that amendment? I know also that Environment Canada has the lead on this issue. So what are the amendments, and how do they affect DFO?

Hon. Gail Shea: I will ask Kevin Stringer to respond to that question.

Mr. Kevin Stringer: Thanks very much.

Actually, I'll start with the resources and the transfer that is requested here. It's just under a million dollars. It is work that has been ongoing for a long time, and it dates back to a couple of decades ago when areas of concern in the Great Lakes were identified to be, in short form, cleaned up. There were four areas in particular where DFO was asked to provide its expertise and support. There are the Detroit and St. Marys rivers. There's the Bay of Quinte. There's Hamilton Harbour and there's Toronto Harbour.

Work has been under way on that over a number of years. It's work to assess fisheries, to see how we're doing in terms of the objectives that were set in that process and work to see if the habitat is coming back the way we had hoped it would come back with the measures we had taken. So it's habitat work, it's fisheries work, and it's assessment work going forward.

The changes to the agreements—and I do see that I probably have to speed up here—really take us forward very much on a trajectory that we've been on. There are new pieces around aquatic invasive species, which continue to be a significant issue in the Great Lakes, and as the minister said, we just announced funds for Asian carp. There are 180 aquatic invasive species that we know of in the Great Lakes, so there's work around that and specific work around habitat and some other measures going forward, but it does relate to.... It's sort of the next version of an ongoing arrangement with the U.S.

• (1000)

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

Also, I'm not sure what vote number it is, but it's the transfer to Shared Services Canada. Can anybody explain to me how this is a more efficient use of taxpayer money and what actually it entails?

Mr. Marc Grégoire: I'm looking at the CFO, but actually I can explain.

This is a transfer of money from all of the departments to consolidate in one area, Shared Services Canada, the funds previously used on IM/IT projects in support for the government. The idea is to have one organization to support the whole of government IM/IT infrastructure. That includes telecommunications, telephone services, BlackBerry services, and the network infrastructure. All of those services are provided in a far more efficient manner in one area rather than having it provided separately by all of the departments.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

Hon. Gail Shea: Can I just add to that? The whole point behind Shared Services Canada was to avoid any duplication within government departments. As you know, we've always been accused of operating in silos as government departments, so this is a good first step as a model. We're one government. There is one taxpayer, and we have a responsibility to them to provide services as efficiently as we can.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you, Minister. That leads into my next question.

We all know we'd like to see our government operate at a lower cost and a higher efficiency, and we also appreciate what you said about DFO promoting the long-term prosperity and sustainability of fisheries. Could you provide some other examples of how these supplementary estimates (B) find efficiencies and eliminate unnecessary spending?

Hon. Gail Shea: One of the things I can point to in our supplementary estimates (B) is that we have a decrease of \$2.6 million, which is directly linked to such things as the department's fleet of vehicles. Instead of purchasing vehicles, it may be more economical to rent a vehicle if we only need it for short periods of time. It's more economical to purchase vehicles that are more fuel-efficient. We don't all have to be driving around in huge, four-wheel-drive half-tonne trucks because we're Fisheries and Oceans.

The department has done a lot of work to find savings in that area, for example.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: That's great.

This question is probably for the officials, but I notice that we have revenue coming in of \$66,851 from polluters or the ship-source oil pollution fund. I understand this is to reimburse DFO or the Canadian Coast Guard for costs incurred. Is the department completely reimbursed for its cost by the polluter, or does the government have to absorb some of those costs?

Mr. Marc Grégoire: Alfred Popp is the administrator of that fund on behalf of the government, and he examines claims one by one, very carefully. We have arguments with him as to the level of payback we should receive, but he is the one who ultimately decides how much money we will get.

We believe we are receiving a fair share of the costs we have incurred, but it's not always 100%. It is 100% in some cases; in other cases, it is less. In some other cases, we actually get zero. It all depends upon his opinion of whether or not our work was used to prevent pollution.

● (1005)

The Chair: Thank you.

The bells are ringing. A vote has been called, so we will have to move that this committee meeting be adjourned.

Mr. Chisholm.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Chair, can we seek unanimous consent to extend our discussion—the minister has been good enough to come—for another 15 minutes? That will give us plenty of time to walk down the hall and vote.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to extend the sitting for another 15 minutes?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: There is no consent.

The meeting is adjourned.

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