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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, December 9, 2004
(Part A)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 9, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

It proposes to give senior immigration officers the authority to deport refugees who obviously do not meet the definition of the Geneva Convention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

MARINE LIABILITY ACT

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-314, an act to amend the Marine Liability Act (adventure tourism).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Marine Liability Act. The purpose of the bill is to correct the deficiencies in the Marine Liability Act that occurred as a result of amendments that were made to this legislation by the government during the first session of the 37th Parliament. The changes made to the Marine Liability Act benefited large shipping companies like Canada Steamship Lines. However, the unforeseen consequences of legislated compulsory insurance onto adventure tourism operators threatens their entire industry.

Specifically, the legislation would amend section 37 of the Marine Liability Act to exempt adventure tourism activities such as whitewater rafting and sea kayaking as well as any other recreational marine activity from the compulsory insurance requirements of the Marine Liability Act as it relates to the carriage of passengers.

When the changes to the Marine Liability Act were made by the government, no consideration was given to the adventure tourism industry. Adventure tourism is certainly a Canadian success story. I call upon the members of the House, particularly those whose ridings depend on this type of small business to create jobs, to support the bill to save the adventure tourism industry before it is too late.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1005)

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-315, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (deportation of refugee claimants).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce my private member's bill to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Canada is well regarded for its reputation as a compassionate country that supports people fleeing oppressive regimes. Nothing in the bill would change that. The bill would empower senior immigration staff to deport those cases which are obviously false, based on very narrowly defined criteria. Obviously refugees have to meet a prima facie case. That would include those who admit they are coming to this country as economic refugees, who are identified members of a criminal or terrorist organization, or who are arriving from a safe haven country which is not a recognized source of refugees.

The bill would free up the resources wasted on those trying to queue jump the regular immigration system. Those resources could then be used to clear out our backlog and help bona fide refugees who actually should be coming to this country.

Today we have someone from the United States who is claiming refugee status and who admits in his own words that his own case is preposterous, but it will take 30 months to put him through the system and he can drain our resources in the process.

Therefore, I would encourage all members to support this great initiative to clean up our immigration and refugee process.

Routine Proceedings

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

●(1010)

TAX CONVENTIONS IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2004

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill S-17, an act to implement an agreement, conventions and protocols concluded between Canada and Gabon, Ireland, Armenia, Oman and Azerbaijan for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS, PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all the parties and I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness be the committee for the purposes of section 145 of the Anti-terrorism Act, 2001.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

AUTISM

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of over 40 of my constituents who are concerned about the disorder of autism in Canada. They are asking that IBI and ABA be covered under the Canada Health Act and that a chair be set up at a post-secondary institution to teach in this discipline. I support this petition myself.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The Speaker must say that it is not normal procedure for an hon. member to indicate his support for a petition.

[English]

I hope the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie the next time he presents a petition will refrain from an indication of his support for it, because members are not supposed to indicate that they support or oppose the petitions they present. I know this may be the first time the hon. member has done that, but I hope he is watching the good example set by other hon. members who refrain from such comments.

[Translation]

TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Alain Boire (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to present, in both official languages, a petition on the textile industry. It has been signed by 2,845 workers in my

riding. The purpose of this petition is to make the federal government aware of the growing problems in our industries.

The textile industry is in peril in Canada, and I am sad to say this is the case in my riding. As the result of protectionist measures by our American neighbours, our factories are closing their doors and whole families that have been working in this industry for generations will lose their jobs. Entire towns and villages are threatened by closure, because in some regions these factories are their only hope.

The textile sector has always been profitable in Canada and has created thousands of jobs, but, currently, a number of duty remission orders affect the Canadian clothing industry and most of them expire on December 31, 2004.

The government must listen to this cri de coeur from an industry important to the Canadian economy and take the necessary action to correct the situation.

●(1015)

[English]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this petition is from 230 people in my Saskatchewan riding of Saskatoon—Wanuskewin.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to support the traditional, historic and sacred definition of marriage.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my petitioners from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke state that marriage is the lasting union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of others and cannot and should not be modified by a legislative act or a court of law.

The petitioners request that Parliament take whatever action necessary to maintain the current definition of marriage in law in perpetuity and prevent any court from overturning or amending that definition.

CANADIAN FORCES HOUSING AGENCY

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise, as I have done on almost a daily basis since Parliament convened in October, to present yet another petition on the issue of our military families and their on base housing.

It is well known that the Canadian Forces Housing Agency provides some of our military families with on base housing, although many of them are below acceptable living standards and they are subject to annual rent increases.

Therefore these petitioners from Cardinal, Spanish and Williamsburg, Ontario, call upon Parliament to immediately suspend any future rent increases for accommodation provided by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency until such time as the Government of Canada makes substantive improvements to the living conditions of housing provided for our military families.

I will refrain from indicating whether I support this.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have just been quick discussions among representatives of the parties and I hope you will find unanimous consent to allow us to revert back to tabling of documents.

My colleague, the deputy government House leader, was waiting for the signature of Her Excellency on a document which he would like to table.

If you ask for consent I hope the member will be allowed to table this document.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to revert to tabling of documents?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the final report of the Miramichi and the Acadie—Bathurst Electoral Boundaries Commissions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SOCKEYE SALMON STOCKS

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC) moved:

That the House recognize that the maintenance of the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River is crucial for conservation and for commercial, recreational and aboriginal users; that the Government's investigation into the collapse of this resource cannot be considered independent; that this resource has been mismanaged; that past decisions have been made without the proper science; and that, as a consequence, the

Supply

House call on the Government to establish an independent judicial enquiry to determine the cause of the collapse of the sockeye salmon stocks on the Fraser River.

The Speaker: Since today is the final allotted day for the supply period ending December 10, 2004, the House will go through the usual procedures to consider and dispose of the supply bills. In view of recent practices, do hon. members agree that the bills be distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague who seconded the motion, the member for Vancouver Island North.

While it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and it is a privilege to move the motion, I wish it were under better circumstances. We are here today because of the case of the missing fish.

Let me put the facts of the case as simply as possible. The sockeye salmon runs on the Fraser River this year were estimated to be about 4.4 million fish. Some were caught before reaching the mouth of the river as they came down the coast. Others were caught as they made their up the river to Mission where they were counted.

According to that count, about 2.6 million fish had made it to Mission. Others were caught in the river above Mission. In fact there was a recorded catch of close to 500,000. That should have left about 2.1 million fish to make their way toward the spawning grounds but the early escapement figures show that only about 250,000 made it.

What happened to the other 1.85 million fish, give or take? Certainly some would have died on the way due to environmental or other causes, but there is no expert opinion that I have seen that suggests that the figure would be anywhere close to that. What happened to the missing fish? Or, does it even matter whether we know? They are just fish, after all, weighing about five or six pounds.

However to us in B.C. they are more than just fish. They help provide a livelihood for commercial fishers and their families who have a huge investment in licences and equipment.

The sockeye fishery is an essential part of the aboriginal culture and for many it is the key source of food upon which they depend. So, for example, imagine the impact when those at the headwaters of the Fraser were only able to catch about one fish per person this summer.

The fish are an important source of enjoyment for thousands of recreational fishers. In 2002, for example, salt water sport fishers purchased 333,000 fishing licences and in that same year sport fishing generated an estimated \$1 billion in related sales and provided close to 8,000 jobs. The fact is that relatively speaking they do not catch many fish. Some, like me, do not catch any.

Make no mistake about whether the salmon fishery is important to B.C. I do not know what will happen next year and the year after that, and even the year after that. I wish I could say that I am optimistic that those years will be fine. Maybe they will be but that is what DFO said about the fishery this year.

Supply

I think I can tell members what will happen in 2008. Nothing will happen in 2008 because that is when the salmon that are the offspring of those which spawned this year will be returning. They will likely be so few that the river will be closed. The commercial boats will be tied up as the fishery continues its decline toward insolvency. The aboriginals will go without and sport fishers will stay home. Fishing stores will struggle to stay afloat.

The reality is that it is not just the fish that are missing, because with them has gone so much more. The government tells us to relax, that it has it all under control. It has set up a post-season review led by former B.C. chief justice Brian Williams that will figure out what went wrong. Any day now, maybe even today, we will to start hearing that Liberal mantra, let Justice Williams do his work.

We have yet another post-season review in a long line of post-season reviews. There were problems with the fishery in 1992 and Doctors Pearse and Larkin conducted a thorough investigation and released a very fine report. There were problems in 1994 and the hon. John Fraser, conducted another thorough review with another good report. There were problems in 2001 and the standing committee conducted a study and issued a unanimous report with 10 helpful recommendations. In 1997, 1999 and 2000, the Commissioner of the Environment and the Office of the Auditor General conducted reviews and provided clear recommendations. She recently told the standing committee, "that the implementation gap is significant and the track record of progress is unimpressive". Therein lies the heart of the problem.

Madam Speaker, I was raised by good parents, as I am sure you were, and they tried to teach me the values upon which to build a successful productive life. Among those important principles was a simple, yet profound one: admit it when you are wrong. I have discovered that they were right. The truth will set us free. It might hurt at first but it will set us free.

Over and over I was reminded of that principle as I followed the case of the missing fish. I was reminded of it when the first news releases were issued about the shortfall, as it was called, when the minister offered a briefing to B.C. MPs, when he and his departmental officials appeared before the standing committee, and when the dozen or so Pacific region executives testified at the recently conducted hearings in Vancouver.

We heard a lot of explanations about what might have gone wrong. Maybe warm water was to blame or low water. Maybe the Americans took more than their share, or some other group. Maybe the sonar fish counter at Mission was wrong. By the end it was a good thing that I am a pretty reserved kind of guy because I was ready to shout, enough with what might have gone wrong. What was done wrong? Did nobody do anything wrong?

• (1020)

When the head of the salmon team in the Pacific region said that according to the calculations in their fisheries management plan there should have been plenty of fish for conservation, I waited in vain for him to add, "But we were wrong".

If I had heard that or if I had heard the minister admit that this has happened too many times and the stakes are too high, and as the manager of this resource he was prepared to take responsibility for

not doing good enough for British Columbians, then I might have been confident that the right changes would be made to ensure that this does not happen again. However I did not hear that and I am not confident.

Therefore, on behalf of all those who value this resource, I bring this motion.

As I was growing up I did not always follow the principle that when one is wrong one admits it. When I did not, as a last resort we had our own little judicial inquiry to get to the truth. To do so, they exercised what constitutional legal experts might call their coercive powers. Some of those inquiries were fairly memorable, by the way.

It appears that in the case of the Pacific salmon fishery, the apparent lack of a commitment by the minister to get to the truth requires a judicial inquiry with such coercive powers. An inquiry will be both thorough and independent because it will have the authority to compel testimony and the production of documents, even from those with the most to hide. A judicial inquiry will have the power to make forceful and compelling recommendations based on the facts.

Is there anyone here who denies that we need a credible fact finding process leading to well-informed recommendations? No investigation can deliver that more effectively than a judicial inquiry.

Do I want to spend the money? No, frankly I do not. I am first and foremost a fiscal Conservative and I would rather not spend the money, but clearly there is a systemic problem here and the department appears unwilling or unable to fix it.

Desperate times call for desperate measures, and for Pacific salmon the time is getting desperate.

Here is the question: Are we willing to let the Pacific salmon go the way of the Atlantic cod? I am not, my constituents are not and all British Columbians are not. Surely the House is not. I look forward to the support of all members.

• (1025)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his speech on this issue. I know he is committed to this issue that is of concern to him and his constituents.

In actual fact, the hon. member, myself and a number of other members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans held hearings in Vancouver on Thursday, Friday and Saturday of last week, and heard from a number of witnesses on this issue. There are issues, there is no question about that. Although I share the hon. member's concern, I question the merits of this motion.

Supply

We are dealing with an issue that involves allocation. It pits the established commercial salmon harvesters against 91 or 95 aboriginal bands on the Fraser River. My question to the hon. member is in regard to the fundamental difference that has to be resolved. How could a lengthy, expensive judicial inquiry in any way resolve the differences between these two groups? Does the hon. member not agree with me that all we are going to do is pit the commercial fishers against the aboriginal communities along the Fraser River and in actual fact stir the pot more and increase the problem rather than solve it?

•(1030)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Madam Speaker, as the hon. member mentioned, I was at the hearings as well. We heard a lot of witnesses. Frankly, I did not hear many of them say that a judicial inquiry was a bad idea. All of them feel that they need a forum that is credible. They need a forum that is something other than just the department trying to come up with information that will justify its cause or somehow explain its mismanagement. I do not see any other setting being as independent as a judicial inquiry. That will make it possible for the truth to come out.

All of the stakeholders involved have a vested interest in this resource and the sustainability of it. They want the truth to come out. In fact, I did not hear anybody say, other than the last panel made up of DFO employees, that they had any confidence in the ability of DFO to manage this fishery. If nothing else, we need to find a way to restore at least a shred of confidence in the ability of the department to manage this issue. I think this is the only way.

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am totally astounded at the response of the Liberal member opposite.

The Liberal government has been taken over by corruption, and all sorts of sleaze and allegations of wrongdoing. Most of which is now being proven as true. Among other things in our new budget, there is funding for an Ethics Commissioner, which unfortunately is necessary because of the lack of ethics on the other side. The Liberals are unfairly targeting rank and file members of Parliament instead of going after cabinet members, wherein lies the real power. That is where the investigations and accountability should be concentrated.

The government is using \$3 million a year to run the office of the Ethics Commissioner. Apparently, spending a bit of money on an inquiry to find out why the fisheries department is not doing the right thing for the fishers, not only in British Columbia but across the whole country, is of no great consequence to the Liberal member. He thinks it is a waste of money. I would like my colleague to comment on the misplaced priorities of the Liberal government.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Madam Speaker, I agree with that. It might not be a bad idea if, in addition to an Ethics Commissioner, we also had a competence commissioner. It is the incompetence that we are talking about here most of the time, whether it be in immigration or in fisheries. It is about time we started to get some of these things right.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government is doing everything it can to basically downplay the unmitigated disaster that we had on the Fraser River this year. The question that we just had from the Liberal member

opposite demonstrates that the government will go to any length to pre-empt any independent look at how DFO is managing this resource in British Columbia. It is crucial to so many user groups and has a value of tens of millions of dollars on an ongoing basis unless we have a catastrophe like the one in 2004. It was and is a catastrophe that will continue to affect us in 2008, in 2012, and in 2016.

It is going to take a major effort. We already have tens of thousands of volunteers in our salmon enhancement programs in the province that are treated shabbily by the government. There is a lack of priority. There should be priority spending for those kinds of publicly popular, and very essential and necessary programs.

There is an attempt by government members to deflect the issue away from what is really our concern. Our concern is that we had 1.8 million, plus or minus, sockeye disappear above the Mission counting fence. Those fish had no commercial fishery on them once they were past that fence. What eventually reached the spawning grounds was less than what was needed for conservation reasons.

The Liberal member opposite wants to just talk about pitting user groups against each other. That is not what this is all about. We did not even meet conservation goals. That is how bad it is. Yet, we have bumph coming from the minister who is setting up a post-season review and talking about the entire south coast fishery, and downplaying what is an unmitigated disaster.

It is a complete frustration because this was totally foreseeable by DFO management, right up to the minister. I do not want to implicate the employees here because the employees are quite often and usually dedicated people who are trying to do the very best for the resource and they have their hands tied behind their back.

We have had problems on the Fraser River with the way the fishery has been managed in the past. Certainly, through the nineties, we had people looking at this issue to the point where the all party standing committee in 2001 made this a major push. It was finally able to table an all party set of recommendations. If the minister and the department had pursued those recommendations, we would not be here today talking about this disaster. It is most unfortunate. We sent the committee to British Columbia again last week, but we now have the government in full cover-up mode.

This is such a sad state of affairs because the real victims here are the resource and all of the resource users. When we do not meet conservation goals, there are no resource users. They are all in the same boat from the standpoint that, until we meet our conservation goals, no one is going fishing anywhere and anyone who does, if it is authorized by the government, is being most irresponsible. This is a very big deal indeed.

The B.C. Conservative members in this place certainly recognize what happened during this unmitigated disaster of a season. Several of us held a press conference, including the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, on October 7. We talked about what needed to happen, not just with the Fraser River but with some of our salmon enhancement programs and other projects which are getting cut back by the government.

Supply

• (1035)

On November 17 the B.C. Conservative caucus called for a judicial inquiry. That is unequivocal. That is what we must have if we are going to get to the bottom of this. People are reluctant to talk, particularly people who work for the department, because they know there will be consequences if they talk and they are not in a protected status.

The day after we made that call the minister announced his post-season review which completely downplays this collapse. The minister has already tipped his hand. He has pre-empted the judgment of that post-season review. In the House on October 22, in responding to the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, he said that record water temperatures caused the high mortality.

This is the old defence. This is where the government goes. It blames the weather and it blames the counting fence. We all know that those are not the least likely, but if they are contributing factors, they are certainly not the entire picture. We cannot pre-empt where a judicial inquiry would go and what it would find out.

Every fisherman on the coast whom I have talked to, aboriginal, commercial, and recreational, has a good idea of what happened on the Fraser River. Every employee of DFO, who had anything to do with the Fraser River management this year, has a good idea of what happened. We must have a non-threatening environment and an environment where people have no option but to tell the truth.

As my colleague stated earlier, “the truth will set you free”. What is it that the government and minister are trying to hide? There should be nothing scary at all about a judicial inquiry. It is a very serious piece of business, but the collapse of the Fraser River sockeye is a very serious piece of business for British Columbia. It is an issue that will not go away.

We have a systemic problem. I come from a riding that cares immensely about fish. Just this morning I received news from a government employee of DFO, who will not allow his name to be used, who has written a long piece to the local paper about what is happening in DFO. This individual wrote, “Most large corporations start at the top to do their restructuring. DFO starts at the bottom and we constantly hear from the minister there is not cutbacks or layoffs happening at DFO. This year alone there were 55 people handed their pink slips in the Pacific region”.

That is what is happening. We need this judicial inquiry. I hope we get all-party support for it. That is what British Columbians deserve. That is what the resource deserves.

• (1040)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the comments of the member. This is a very serious issue. It is a concern to I believe everyone in British Columbia, and it should be a concern to everyone across Canada. We certainly heard that in the three days we were in British Columbia. This should be made a priority by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

As I said in my previous question, I do not accept the proposition that a judicial inquiry is the proper forum to carry this out. All it will do is give a forum for the commercial fishers to attack the members and leadership of the bands along the Fraser River. It will be public, it will be ugly and it will do absolutely nothing to resolve forever the issues on the Fraser River.

The committee sat for three very long days, to which the previous member will attest. We sat from 9:30 in the morning until about 7:00 every night, and we heard from a lot of witnesses. The committee received a lot of documentation. The committee deliberated on the issue and decided earlier today that the judicial inquiry was not the route to go. The Liberals do not have any majority on the committee. This was a vote of the committee.

After all the work that the House of Commons committee put into the issue, should the minister ignore the direction and wishes of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans on this issue?

• (1045)

Mr. John Duncan: Madam Speaker, I believe that the fix is in. I am sure the Liberals on the committee voted against it. If they had supported, they would be calling for a judicial inquiry. It is that simple.

The majority of members from British Columbia come from my caucus. Virtually the entire rural portion of British Columbia is represented by my caucus. It is very ingenious of the minister to say that in a minority government, government members do not control the committee, but their votes are very meaningful. Their votes were not to hold a judicial inquiry. If they had voted yes, they would have combined with us and the standing committee majority would have recommended a judicial inquiry.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member did not answer the question, and I would like to ask it again. Should we ignore the fisheries committee recommendation?

Mr. John Duncan: Madam Speaker, I just answered that question. Yes, I believe that for British Columbia, for British Columbians, for the resource and for the future, for 2008, 2012, 2016 when there will be in all likelihood no fishery, we cannot afford to lose another four year cycle. This has our user groups very concerned indeed.

We can follow the short term recommendations that will come out of the standing committee, but in the longer term we cannot have a repeat. We have lost one quarter of the fishery now. If we have another one, we will have lost a half, and that makes most of the fishing community uneconomic. Yes, it is crucial that we have this judicial inquiry. It is the only avenue by which we will actually get to the bottom of what happened.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it amazing that the government members are questioning opposition members about following committee recommendations. I have sat on many committees where there have been unanimous recommendations and the government has yet to act on them. It has been unacceptable practice.

However, I want to focus on one particular aspect, which is the difference between the independence of a judicial inquiry versus that of the business of Parliament. What are the particular benefits of having an independent judicial inquiry to help with this problem?

• (1050)

Mr. John Duncan: Madam Speaker, the main benefit is gravity is brought to the situation because it is a judicial inquiry. It is also independent of DFO, which the other investigation is not, and DFO employees feel quite threatened. Those are the main things. Also, the findings from a judicial inquiry would carry that much more weight. Anything that is internal within DFO would probably be ignored and buried. That is the track record.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House today to say a few words about the salmon river fishery.

As I have stated before and as other members have stated, I just came back from three days of extensive hearings in Vancouver on the issue. We heard from many aboriginal fishers who were seeing their allocations decreased. We heard from a number of aboriginal fishers along the Fraser River. As I pointed out previously, I believe there are 91 individual bands along that river. We heard from the Pacific salmon panel. We heard from other individuals who had lived this issue their entire lives and seen the salmon come and go and the complexities of the whole salmon industry. Of course, we heard from the Pacific salmon commission chaired by a previous speaker, the Hon. John Fraser.

If I can say anything, it is that this issue is extremely complex and important to the people who live on the Fraser River and the people who fish salmon at the mouth of the Fraser River. It also is extremely important to everyone who lives in British Columbia.

I appreciate the concerns from the members opposite. As the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans does, I share those concerns about the state of the sockeye fishery in that province.

I come from a coastal community myself. I have seen the importance of a strong, sustainable fishery. Whatever discussion is held in this debate today, the primary concern, as we leave this chamber, has to be that the number one issue is the conservation of the resource and the sustainability of the industry for the generation of fishers and aboriginal bands out there now and for generations to come.

We heard in Vancouver that the importance was there for many reasons. It is not only economic, but it almost takes on a mythical issue. The Pacific salmon has a strong cultural significance and a long history in that province.

To give a little background, the commercial fisheries and aquaculture production in British Columbia are valued at nearly \$630 million. That is close to one-quarter of the national total. The figure is significant and it speaks to the continuous strength of this sector in British Columbia despite, as we have heard, the challenges experienced in recent years. I do not wish to understate this issue for one second, but those challenges are significant.

Supply

The fishing industry in British Columbia is far different than the fishing industry a decade ago. Low market prices of certain species, a shifting abundance, conservation constraints and new harvest restrictions to protect endangered species have all left their mark on this industry. Nowhere have the challenges been greater than with salmon. In fact, when we look at some of the other species, such as halibut, the sablefish and herring, the management has been recently good and well structured.

Most fisheries in British Columbia are performing well, despite living through a decade of what I would refer to as fundamental changes, but salmon does remain the exception.

The challenges faced by this stock were especially felt during last summer's salmon fishery. Conservation challenges for the stock at risk, combined with limited opportunity to harvest more abundant stocks in harsh migratory conditions, took their toll on many stocks. In the face of these challenges, some are left with the impression that DFO is not doing its job, that salmon is not the priority it should be. I am here today to tell members that this is simply not the case.

Pacific salmon management, although complex, is a high priority for the department. The numbers tell the story. Each year DFO's Pacific region spends a total of \$150 million for all fisheries management and science activities in Pacific Canada. This includes funding for stock enhancement, enforcement and science for a range of stocks, including crab, halibut, herring, groundfish, clams and other species that are fundamental to the overall success of Pacific fisheries.

• (1055)

Eighty million dollars, or nearly half the total of this budget, is spent on salmon alone. That \$80 million is used to assess, evaluate, enhance, protect and manage salmon in the Pacific region. I should point out also that the largest part of that amount is directed to the area which is the most complex, most difficult and most challenging, and that is the Fraser River.

No other activity in the region and no other fishery receives a similar level of effort and resources. The Pacific region spends far less on managing the region's remaining fisheries even though the number of fisheries, depending on how the fishery is categorized, far outnumber the salmon fisheries.

I want this to be loud and clear: clearly the Fraser River salmon fishery is a priority for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. There is good reason for this. It has been said that managing the Fraser River fishery is perhaps one of the most complex fisheries management jobs in the world, if not the most complex. After spending three days there, I certainly can appreciate the complexity of this fishery.

Let us talk about what has happened over the past decade. As I have stated previously, there is a commercial fishery at the mouth of the Fraser River and there are 91 bands along the river. What has happened through cases that have been decided by our Supreme Court of Canada is that aboriginals of this country have a right to fish for food, social and ceremonial purposes.

Supply

That right has to be managed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. That right is a very difficult and complex job for the department to manage effectively. Many Canadians, and probably some people in the House, suggest that this right should not exist, but I am not one of those Canadians. That is one of the reasons why this issue is certainly challenging. It is not simple.

From my hearing of the testimony, was there overfishing by commercial harvesters at the mouth of the Fraser River? The answer clearly is yes. Was there uncertainty as to the numbers that did pass the Mission counting station by use of an echo sounding device? The answer is yes. Was there serious overfishing by certain bands on the Fraser River? The answer is yes. Was it an extremely bad year for water temperatures and water flows, which would have caused serious mortality as the salmon migrated up the Fraser River? The answer is yes. Could the Department of Fisheries and Oceans perhaps have done a better job overall? The answer is probably yes, despite the efforts that it did make.

We have heard from a panel of eight employees of the department in Vancouver, and these employees are certainly committed to the salmon industry. They are committed to the Province of British Columbia. They are committed to the conservation of this resource. I was very impressed by those people.

I have a very big concern and question about this motion. Is a judicial inquiry the proper method for proceeding in this case? I was not at the meeting this morning, but I am going to agree with the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, whose decision was no. All it would do is pit the commercial fishers against the aboriginal citizens who live along the Fraser River.

●(1100)

I will give an example. There was an article in the *Vancouver Sun* quoting the member for Delta—Richmond East about this. The article stated:

“The DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) allegation that warm water decimated the early Stuart run is clearly a fabrication”, states the report, which blames a “wall of aboriginal nets”....

That is from a report prepared by the member for Delta—Richmond East. That member would like nothing better than to have a judicial inquiry and repeat these allegations: “a wall of aboriginal nets”. I want no part of that at all. It would do nothing. I suggest and submit that we have to manage this issue and we have to do it by looking forward, not looking through a rear-view mirror.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was aware of the problems experienced by the salmon in the Fraser River. There were environmental problems, water temperature problems, and certainly over-harvesting problems, and there may have been problems in the actual count. He was not going to wait around for months to do something. He immediately asked for a very quick post-harvest review, independent and public, chaired by former Chief Justice of the Province of British Columbia Bryan Williams.

That commission is doing its work as we speak. It is expected to report over the next several months. That will be of great assistance. Whether it will answer all the questions, problems and challenges I rather doubt, but it is certainly going to give all interested stakeholders a forum in which to discuss this issue, ask the basic

questions on what happened during last year's Fraser run and hopefully give some guidance and foundation for what changes to the management plan can be put in place for next year's run. We can do the calculations: it is only a matter of a couple hundred days before the salmon are back in the river. These issues have to be resolved.

Again, the root of the problem goes back to the changes that have taken place over the past decade and how the resource has been allocated. There are some fundamental differences that have to be resolved by the people in those communities.

Having said that, it is my view that the department has made considerable strides over the past five years in the whole allocation process, the enforcement process and the conservation process. Again, we have the commercial fishers and the aboriginal fishers, but we should not forget in this debate the sector that perhaps contributes most to the British Columbia economy and that is the recreational fishers, which the previous speaker mentioned.

The biggest improvement I see in this regard has been the department's focus on consultation and collaboration. If we listen to some people, and we will probably hear it today, they will say that all we can do is send in the army and have a soldier or a fisheries officer every 20 feet or so and that might solve the problem. It might, and of course that would have to be done 24 hours a day, but I do not suggest that for one minute.

●(1105)

Over the past several years the department has developed new consultative models, new ways to bring all the interests to the same table to share in the decision making process. Of course some people do not want to share in that decision making process. We heard loud and clear from those people last Thursday and Friday in Vancouver. On both sides of the table, they just do not want to share. There were commercial fishers who stated very specifically that they do not agree with this right of food, social and ceremonial purposes. There were aboriginal witnesses who said that they do not; they feel the fish is theirs. That is the problem.

That is the problem that has to be resolved by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The department has been working over the last number of years on a wild salmon policy, and it will be released very shortly, which will describe the objectives, highlight the principles and define the strategies to conserve and manage Pacific salmon into the future.

DFO has taken the time to fully consider recommendations received from several internal and external reviews to incorporate clear guidelines to implement the policy. By bringing together the various threads of salmon management, I am confident that the wild salmon policy will allow the department to work with our partners to conserve this very important resource for everyone's benefit.

The department is equally committed to modernizing our habitat management regime, focusing on the high priority areas, including those for salmon.

The Pearse-McRae report and the complementary first nations panel report are two more examples of how the department is working to change the fishery on this coast. The recommendations stemming from each report are now being considered with first nations and other stakeholders. Both reports point out the need to ensure access to a sustainable and profitable fisheries resource for all—and I underline the word “all”—participants. An implementation strategy will be in place for these recommendations in the very near future.

Let us look at the motion before us, which calls for a judicial inquiry. As I stated previously, the minister has established an independent commission chaired by retired Chief Justice Bryan Williams. It is at work and it will report very shortly. Again, the commission will be independent and impartial and it will certainly be public. Also, its recommendations will be available before the 2005 season. My caution to the department, though, is that I would not wait for the Williams commission report. It is something which I urge them to be at right now.

I am especially pleased that Mr. Williams has agreed to chair the review. He is widely regarded as a skilled negotiator, arbitrator and jurist. His extensive experience will serve him well as he sits down with the various interests involved to examine last year's fishery and put forward recommendations in the best interests of this resource.

The department has a mechanism in place to carry out a study of this year's salmon season. It will be open. It will be public. It will be transparent. Let us be clear: everyone, DFO officers, commercial fishers, independent people, the panel and the commission, should be invited and should testify. I want them to testify.

I want to conclude by saying briefly that not only is the motion before us today unnecessary, but it would slow down the process the government has already put in place. It would not permit stakeholders to participate. It would not provide the important information that is so needed. For these reasons, I urge all members to agree with the recommendation made earlier today by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to reject the motion.

• (1110)

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Madam Speaker, I determined at committee this morning that the NDP did support our call for a judicial inquiry, which makes it clear that it is the government that is avoiding the issue of a judicial inquiry by its own actions.

The government will take advice from itself not to do what the motion calls for. The problem with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is that it is investigating its own actions and it has a vested interest not to get to the bottom of the fact that it was its management style and management practices that led to the 1992 and 1994 collapses on the Fraser River.

Those collapses were investigated by Pearse-Larkin in 1992 and they blamed DFO mismanagement. They were investigated again in 1994 by John Fraser and he also blamed DFO mismanagement.

Supply

That is why the government is in this kind of cover-up. It does not want to have true independence because that would I point out that it has learned no lesson.

I am glad the parliamentary secretary has been to British Columbia and is now a three day expert but what I am very disappointed about is not knowing where the British Columbia Liberal members of Parliament stand on this very important issue. They are not speaking to this issue and that concerns me.

The Government of Canada has a constitutional obligation to British Columbia to conserve the resource and optimize the fishery. The British Columbian economy will lose hundreds of millions of dollars in 2008 and beyond because of DFO mismanagement that happened this year and that has been happening for many years, and we need to fix it.

It is the Liberal parliamentary secretary who is invoking that we might have some racial conflict if we were to actually try to get to the bottom of it. It is not us. That is another typical Liberal ploy to avoid some unpleasant truths, which has everything to do with the way the Liberals are mishandling the file.

I appeal to the parliamentary secretary to do what is right and I say that the truth will set him free. Let us have a judicial inquiry. I would like to hear the response of the parliamentary secretary to those comments.

• (1115)

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Madam Speaker, the first point I will make concerns my comments with regard to the problems with this judicial inquiry.

It was not me who made the comment that this whole problem was caused by a wall of aboriginal nets. That was a comment in a report prepared by the member for Delta—Richmond East who would like nothing better than to have an open bear pit like this traditional inquiry go on for two or three years and pit one group of society against another group so that he can repeat over and over again that this problem was caused solely by a wall of aboriginal nets. That is inappropriate. It would not solve any problems. It has to be dealt with by other mechanisms as we move forward in a modern management of this resource.

I want to make another point concerning a comment the member made. I hope I am not interpreted as downplaying this issue. He said that it has been gradually going down but that is not the case. This year was an anomaly.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: It happened in 1992, 1994 and 2000.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: I am getting heckled here, Madam Speaker.

I am talking about the last number of years. They are going back to 1992. I do not recall who the minister was in 1992 but I believe it may have been John Crosbie. Perhaps the learned member can explain why things were so bad in 1992.

Supply

Again I want to point out that this year was an anomaly. It has not been perfect. There have been real allocation problems. There was an anomaly in 1992, as the heckler has pointed out, and a problem in 1994, but it certainly had not been as bad as some of the members have stated.

I want to repeat what I said in my speech. This mechanism that has been suggested here today is inappropriate, wrong and it would accomplish nothing. I hope and believe every member of this House should reject it outright.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to say, for those who may be watching, that the best argument any of us could make for a judicial inquiry is to listen to the member opposite. He gave us just about every reason why we should have an inquiry that would get to the bottom of the complete mismanagement of the fisheries.

However let me correct the member in what he said. He said that this morning the standing committee rejected a call for a judicial inquiry. I will give two reasons for that.

First, the standing committee just returned from British Columbia where it had three days of excellent hearings. We will hear a lot more about those hearings today. The committee needs to finish a report. It is only right and fair that the committee be given time. The committee was put on the spot. I respect the committee's right to say that this is not the time to make the request. It has not yet assessed the evidence. That is fair ball.

However, do members know how we were defeated this morning? The majority of the people who were at the hearings supported it but five Liberal goons, who had not been to British Columbia and who did not have a clue about the issue, were sent in and they voted against the inquiry. That is why the standing committee made that decision this morning.

The hon. member talks about other inquiries. The standing committee did a report in 2001, which was tabled in 2003, making pointed recommendations that would have solved some of the problems that we are facing today. The Fraser report did the same thing. Both reports were completely and utterly ignored by government.

The minister, under pressure, waxed together a committee, which every stakeholder out there said would not work because all the players around the table would just argue and fight and that there would be no coordination, especially with the short timeframe.

What we need are some recommendations from the committee, even such as it is, to deal with the upcoming season because if we lose this coming season we will lose half the cycle.

What we need for the long term is to get to the root of what caused the problems in 1992, 1994 and again this year, and the ensuing problems. If we do not have an inquiry, I ask the member, how will we get to the bottom of the problems?

• (1120)

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Madam Speaker, the hon. member was in British Columbia and he certainly participated in the hearings, and I agree with him 100%. They were good hearings and we heard a lot of witnesses. Today is only Thursday and we have not had a chance

to write a report. We certainly will be writing a report. I expect it to be a good report and I expect it to have some clear recommendations on this whole issue. I, like the hon. member, hope the executive of the government will heed these recommendations. We will do that in a timely basis.

I agree with a lot of what the member says. This is an important issue and it does need to receive priority from the minister but a judicial inquiry is not the way to go. An inquiry would take a couple of years, would cost millions and millions of dollars and we would have people like the member for Delta—Richmond East repeating the allegations that he published in his report and in the *Vancouver Sun*. It would do nothing to bring the parties that fish—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jean Augustine): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Mata-pédia.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, as you are no doubt aware, this can be a heated debate when the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl takes the floor, because he was highly convinced and also highly convincing during the hearings held last week in Vancouver.

I will start by quoting from a report that very clearly describes the current situation. I will simply read the following:

The frustration of 1994 lies in the fact that no one, including the authorities, the experts, and this Board, knows precisely what happened or how—

This quote describes perfectly the situation in 2004. But, it is straight out of the Fraser River Sockeye Public Review Board's 1994 report.

Therein lies the problem. I am asking the same question I asked the departmental representative; what did we learn in 1992 and 1994, to see history repeat itself, almost exactly, in 2004? As one historian said, history repeats itself, but never looks the same. Unfortunately, the impression we are getting is that history does repeat itself and, on the contrary, looks much the same as before.

What conclusion can we draw from what happened in 2004 on the Fraser River? First, I want to give a brief explanation to people in eastern Canada who are less familiar with the region. The Fraser River is over 1,000 km long. With its tributaries, it can be extremely difficult to get one's bearings. There are approximately 97 aboriginal bands, in addition to commercial and sport fishers, all along the river.

It is easy to imagine the distance that needs to be covered and the extent of the problem when there is a disaster such as the one in 2004. It affects many people and groups and, in my opinion, perhaps it could not have been avoided, given what we have heard, but it could at least have been foreseen. In fact, a similar situation had occurred in 1994.

So, I was wondering, and I still wonder, if the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is capable of remembering? Does it learn from the past? Can it manage operations based on past experiences? I get the feeling that it cannot, that it has no historical culture. Experience is something that, every year, has to be acquired all over again. Planning is done without consideration of what has happened or of past experience. These are a few of the things we realize when we look at the current situation.

We talked about this situation. We talked about the possibility that two million salmon have vanished. We have also met with scientists, and they cannot tell us today whether two million salmon have, in fact, disappeared. What is the figure? That is another problem. The scientists have told us that the infamous counter of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is not working correctly.

This is the extent of our knowledge, of our ability to understand the situation and an ecological system like the Fraser River. It is clear that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans does not even have the means to carry out serious, scientific studies so that we can have some answers.

Of course, hypotheses exist. Could the water temperature have affected the salmon run? Could it have killed a large number of salmon? Perhaps it was the stress caused by fishing. Or maybe the salmon, rather than swimming in a straight line, so to speak, had to work their way around obstacles, such as the setnets in the Fraser River, or other kinds of nets, and therefore tired themselves out more so that fewer and fewer reached the spawning grounds up river?

The scientists cannot answer any of these questions today and have only hypotheses. They do not have the means to carry out an in-depth study on the situation. We must therefore make do with guesswork.

• (1125)

The first thing needed for a solution to the situation is knowledge, in my opinion. At the present time, it seems clear to me that we lack scientific knowledge, and we will continue to do so until there is a major investment by this government and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in research. That is fundamental.

This is true for the eastern fisheries as well. I can speak about the western fisheries and about the Fraser River, but my remarks apply just as well to the situation in the east. Since 1993, Fisheries and Oceans budgets have been drastically cut back, particularly research budgets. And, again this year, we hear that the department will have to cut 5% from its budget, when it is already under-funded. What it needs instead is more funding, since we know that its key responsibility, its main role, is protecting the resource.

If I were a senior Fisheries and Oceans official, I would be tempted to say: they have given me a mandate but they have prevented me from carrying out that mandate by not providing me with the means to do so. That is what this government is doing as far as Fisheries and Oceans is concerned. That is how it is affecting knowledge about the resource. That is why we do not know what is happening with the resource. So knowledge is the first requirement.

The second is the public inquiry. I am not much in favour of that, or perhaps should say I am not in favour of a public inquiry, because I see it as again relieving the government of responsibility. The

Supply

judiciary is being asked to come up with some conclusions, when the government should be doing so as it should be properly managing the resource. No inquiry is needed; everyone knows that the resource is badly managed and everyone knows who is responsible for that mis-management. There is nothing complicated about it. Everyone knows. That is the way it is in the east, in the west, in every part of the country where the resource is managed by Fisheries and Oceans.

I feel like talking about resource protection. I can give a very specific example of what the department is not doing currently in my region. With respect to the precautionary principle this government is applying to resource management, I will give a very specific example. At present, in Belledune, New Brunswick, an incinerator is under construction on Chaleur Bay to dispose of highly toxic material imported from the United States. It is not even meant to dispose of our own. This week, it was established by scientists that the release of dioxides and furans from this type of incinerator will cause considerable damage to resources in Chaleur Bay.

There is currently a dispute between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick about how to share the herring resource. Chaleur Bay is one of the main nursery areas for herring; that is where it grows up. This resource is now facing destruction in the long term, perhaps even the medium term, because it would take only a minor accident for the resource to be contaminated and banned for human consumption.

When we talk about accountability, the precautionary principle, prudence, the government has shown none of that. At present, it has the tools to deal with this problem, but is not dealing with it, under the Fisheries Act. With this act, it could deal with the situation in Chaleur Bay, but it does not.

I could give many examples. Another problem I have noticed on the west coast is that, when an accident happens, Fisheries and Oceans takes no part in any assistance plan. What should be done, really, when these communities are hit is to provide them with practical assistance. When people lose their livelihood overnight, they need practical assistance to survive. What people are asking for when fishing is closed or banned is an assistance plan for those affected, so that they can survive.

Supply

•(1130)

We asked for it in reference to groundfish and we went even further. I recommended an individualized service plan to the government at the time. I recommended that the government or public servants meet with each person affected and find out how to bring these people back into the labour force, because we know very well that at present the fisheries resource is not recovering as quickly as we thought. There is even some chance that the problems will last for many more years. Consequently, there are people who have left the fishing industry in the east and found themselves with practically no income. They have ended up working at little jobs for \$7, \$8, \$9 an hour and have found themselves on EI at the end of the year and then facing the gap.

If that is how a responsible government operates, and if that is how responsible managers operate, the party opposite has missed the boat, not only on the Fraser River, but on the east coast too. It can be seen everywhere: in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland—which has been hard hit by the groundfish crisis—and in Quebec as well. In fact, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence there are many injustices and problems to be dealt with.

It is extremely difficult to resolve the Fraser River situation. There is no use in pretending that this can be resolved easily. There are 97 aboriginal bands and a multitude of groups of sport fishers and professional fishers. I asked everyone involved the following question: “If you all decided to sit around a table and talk, do you think this problem could get resolved? Do you think that we could resolve the allocation problems, that the resource could be shared reasonably and fairly, and that we could find a way for everyone to benefit?” The answer was yes.

However, in the current problem it seems that the government wants to divide and conquer. When there is a multitude of groups that do not agree, it is much easier to make whatever decision you want. That is what the government is doing. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the government would have a much harder time responding to and dealing with just one organized group representing all these people or a well-structured, determined organization of all the participants of the salmon fishery in the Fraser River.

There is another element whose effect is extremely difficult to adjust. I am talking about higher water temperatures. Is this the cause, as I stated earlier? Possible, say the scientists, but far from certain. Did the Fraser River's warmer water temperatures during the spawning season cause many more salmon to die? This question needs answering, but I do not think water temperatures are the sole reason.

We have also talked about overfishing. I do not think this is the sole cause, either. We have talked about poaching. I do not think this is the sole cause. However, I want to add something here. In my opinion—the parliamentary secretary talked about this earlier and did not seem to agree—the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has recently made efforts to increase surveillance so as to reduce poaching in the Fraser River.

Nevertheless, the current resources are clearly inadequate. I have said so before. We are talking about a river 1,000 kilometres long

and its various branches. It is a huge territory to watch over, and I do not think that, realistically, the resources allocated to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, with respect to fisheries wardens, are sufficient to cover as large an area as that, and to cover all the activities on the Fraser River as well.

We have heard, as a result, that there is a lot of poaching. That cannot be 100% wiped out, but, if the necessary effort is made, perhaps 50% or 60% could be dealt with, and that would give the resources more of a chance. In the end, of course, it is the fishers who are penalized the most.

This is what the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is doing. It is also a question I have asked. It would not even need to monitor this resource, because it deducts the percentage it has estimated for poaching. In fact, it deducts that percentage automatically before it awards fish quotas, which are the number of salmon that fishers are allowed to catch.

•(1135)

What the Department of Fisheries and Oceans does is deduct x , the number of salmon it knows very well will be poached. That penalizes all fishers, Aboriginal groups and the industry.

Those salmon are sold on the black market. Obviously, they could be traced back to the source. At present, methods have been proposed to eliminate most of the poaching. To do so, there is increased surveillance and perhaps a new way to trace the fish stocks. It is the same system that has been recently implemented for beef in Quebec. I think the rest of Canada ought to implement it as well, considering the crisis we have been through.

In conclusion, I do not agree with the creation of a judicial inquiry. We know the answer. We know who is responsible and who must take responsibility, and we have known that for years. We have known it since 1992. We know that the cuts have been hard on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We know that the department is responsible for the resource and responsible for managing it in the interest of the community.

In conclusion, in my opinion, agreeing to a judicial inquiry would be tantamount to relieving this government of its responsibility for this situation.

•(1140)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, you are doing an excellent job.

[*Translation*]

I have three questions for the hon. member.

[*English*]

The first one is technical, and I do not know if he will know the answer. It is related to fishing on the high seas. Salmon has a very broad life cycle. Could he comment on what is happening to them in the high seas and are there other efforts that Canada should be taking in that respect?

Supply

My second question is related to his suggestion that he already knew the answer. He said that the fisheries minister had to fix this, but he did not say that it was specifically related to the run of salmon on the Fraser River. Exactly what items did the fisheries minister not fix in relation to this run?

My last question is this. Does the member think we should continue our large investments related to climate change. As members know, the science shows that some of the problem are related to increases in temperature that has led to mortality and reduced performance of the fish. We have invested large amounts of money in Clean Coal. In fact, we have exported that to China, as well as solar energy, biodiesel, ethanol and wind energy. During the election we said that we would increase that four times. We are trying to market state of the art Candu reactors. EnerGuide is in thousands of homes. We are doing world-leading research in frozen methane and adaption studies, an investment of over \$3 billion.

I hope the member will support this as we continue to make large investments in climate change which might help resolve the problem with some of the species because of increased temperatures.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his two questions. There were in fact two questions.

The first question was related to fishing on the high seas. Indeed the high seas have to be monitored and the government also has to protect the resource. There is a problem there as well. I cannot say for certain, since we do not know yet, but it is very possible that there is overfishing on the high seas.

I will answer his second question related to climate change by reminding him that scientists are saying that what has happened cannot be explained simply by the warmer water. That is what we are being told and that the budget is not big enough to do more indepth research.

Is the warmer water to blame? Perhaps it is—I say perhaps because this is still just a hypothesis. I agree with the hon. member that we must continue to invest significantly in research on both climate change and the impact it might be having on the resource. This may be the answer, but I think there is more to this. It is true we must continue to invest, but whose fault is it, if not the members opposite, that the investment falls short?

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to bring to the attention of the House that the son of my colleague from Windsor, Ontario celebrated his first birthday yesterday. Congratulations to one-year old Wade Masse.

I have a question for my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois, who is a well-respected member of our fisheries committee. I have been with him for several years as we have travelled the country. I greatly respect his input and that of his party into the issues related to fisheries matters, and not just in the province of Quebec. He has a real concern for fishermen and their families across the country.

Without valid whistleblower protection, employees of particular departments, and in this case the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans, are afraid to come forward and publicly state their serious concerns with their department. They will always be fearful of retribution if they come forward.

A classic example, and the member was there when it happened, occurred in Ucluelet, British Columbia when we were discussing issues of the marine communication and traffic services. An employee in that area came to us with very serious concerns and he said them publicly on the record. As he was giving his presentation to us in committee, he was handed a letter of discipline from the department. The department said that it was on a completely different matter. The timing of that was extremely suspicious.

That sent a very clear message to employees of DFO who might have wished to come forward to the committee to discuss their concerns about middle and upper management . If thy speak, thy shall be disciplined. That clear message was sent out. It is very difficult to get employees of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, especially in my area of Nova Scotia, to come to an open forum to bring these issues forward.

Without whistleblower protection, to which I do not think the Liberals will ever agree, why does the member not think a judicial inquiry would be another tool in the toolbox to assist us to finally open up DFO, find the skeletons in the closet and fix the problems of management within the department once and for all?

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question, because I want to clarify something about the idea of a judicial inquiry.

In a judicial inquiry, people are under oath, obviously, but they can decide not to answer questions. No one in the world can force them to answer. Even under oath, they are not required to answer any question they do not wish to answer. If they are asked a question and refuse to answer, that is their right. A judicial inquiry will not change anything. People will still have the right not to answer; they have the right to remain silent.

How can a civil servant be protected upon returning to work after testifying in a judicial inquiry? This is a public process. The individual will refuse to answer questions that involve him. There is no doubt about that. A judicial inquiry will not be useful, because of the issue of ensuring the protection of witnesses. That is another problem.

Supply

What the hon. member is suggesting, naturally, is that steps should be taken to protect whistleblowers. That is right. Even in a judicial inquiry, if I were a civil servant and I had information, I would remain silent because I know it would end up in the newspapers the next day. Back at my department, what do you think would happen, even if I was under oath? I would not be protected. A judicial inquiry is pointless.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. It is always worthwhile to hear someone speak on a topic he is familiar with, one he addresses with passion, love and interest. Enough flattery; now for the criticism.

First of all, I would like to ask my colleague whether the problems with the Pacific salmon are similar to those with the Atlantic salmon? And second, what is his opinion of genetically modified salmon?

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his Christmas gift of such lavish praise.

Is there a similarity between the problems with the Pacific salmon and those with the Atlantic salmon? I think they are equally serious. We know that investments are being called for in order to better protect the Atlantic salmon resource, and the department's response is "No, we will not give you any more to protect the resource, because there are groups in the Atlantic that specialize in resource protection."

Now, for the transgenic salmon. These cannot be sold in Canada at the present time. I hope that situation will not be changed. Anyway, we do not need that type of salmon to feed our population.

There is, of course, farmed salmon. They are trying to improve its quality but there is certainly no comparison between it and Pacific or wild salmon. That is obvious. At the present time, however, efforts are being made to improve its quality, and to ensure the acceptability of the industry in terms of sustainable development and environmental protection.

I must make it clear that I will never agree to allowing transgenic salmon to be marketed in Canada.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the federal New Democratic Party to discuss the very serious issue of what happened to the Fraser River sockeye in 2004. If I may first give a historical review of this situation, our review of the Fraser River sockeye salmon quite possibly could enter into a debate about where we go in the future.

I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans since June 1997. I am currently the second longest serving member on the Standing Committee of Fisheries and Oceans, besides my colleague from the Delta area. Of all the committees in which I have had a chance to participate, this committee is the best one in the House of Commons.

At first there were five political parties; now there are four and the reality is that how the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans works is the way that government and Parliament should work. We have had four chairmen since I have been there, each one of them very good. Our current chair from Scarborough, Ontario is outstanding. We may disagree on other issues but as the chair of our committee, he does a very good job for us. I am proud to work with him and colleagues from the Conservative, Bloc and Liberal parties in order to advance the issues of fishermen and their families throughout the country.

On the debate of the inquiry, the question is whether or not we should have a judicial inquiry into what happened to the Fraser River sockeye salmon. My simple answer is that we should. I will relate the reason to another event that is happening now, which is how quickly the government moved to have a judicial inquiry into the sponsorship scandal. A whole bunch of money somehow went away, went into pockets of people, friends and associates, and what did the current Prime Minister say? "We are going to get to the bottom of this. The Canadian people have a right to get to the bottom on this". What did he do? He called for a judicial inquiry into the sponsorship scandal.

If we correlate that to today's discussion, the Canadian people have a right to know what happened to their public resource, the salmon. Mr. David Bevan, an ADM at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, a gentleman for whom I have great respect, handed out a document to us in committee the other day which states that fisheries is a common property resource belonging to the Canadian people, to be managed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on behalf of the Crown.

I agree with him. That fish belongs to all Canadians, not just British Columbians. The department has the constitutional duty and obligation to manage that resource in the way that benefits the majority of Canadians. If anyone could stand in this House and say that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has done a good job, that statement would have originated from the south end of a north bound cow because it simply is not true.

If we look at the east coast of Canada, for example, since the collapse of the cod stocks we have spent \$4.5 billion of taxpayers' money to readjust the east coast fishery. What happened the other day in Harbour Breton, Newfoundland? The plant shut down. Over 300 people lost their jobs. We have to ask ourselves, why? There are many reasons.

The Liberals are so afraid of having a judicial inquiry because it would open up a can of worms which they would not be able to close. All of a sudden things would come out that the government would be very afraid to have disclosed.

Mr. Bevan said that this is a common property resource, but what we see in this country is the very rapid privatization of that resource into fewer and fewer hands. On the west coast today, Jimmy Pattison's company effectively controls 50% of the wild salmon stocks. How did that happen? If we go back to 1996, the fisheries minister, Mr. Mifflin, a former admiral in our forces, brought in the so-called Mifflin plan on the west coast.

Immediately in early 1998 the committee went to the west coast to communities like Sointula. We saw a fisherman, his wife and three children crying before the committee. He was in tears about the Mifflin plan which brought in area stacking of licences.

● (1155)

For years and years fishermen could go from Victoria to Prince Rupert and fish their quota up and down the coast. Then the Mifflin plan was brought in with area stacking which meant that fishermen were boxed in. If they wanted to fish in another area, which they historically had rights to, they had to stack their licence. This meant that they had to pay another \$100,000 in order to have that privilege, a privilege that they and their ancestors had had for years. Many fishermen could not afford that. Effectively the government got rid of a lot of fishermen, but the fish ended up in the hands of the corporations.

On the east coast we have trust agreements with our lobster stocks. The fact is we believe in the owner-operator principle. There has to be a separation from the operator of the vessel and the ownership of that.

Last week I spoke to three guys who just signed over trust agreements to a company in Nova Scotia. A trust agreement means that a company owns it. The company gives the fishermen the money to buy the licences, but they have to fish for that company and sell their catch to that company. They are no longer independent fishermen, like the small independent family farmer. They now owe themselves to the company store.

Slowly but surely, actually very rapidly, the fishery is being corporatized. I have said for years that this is the direction in which the government has been going. The government will never admit it. It will never stand up in the House and say, "We want to corporatize the public resource to manage it more effectively and do whatever". If that is the reason, the government should come out and say it.

At least Joey Smallwood when he was Premier of Newfoundland said to the people, "I am going to resettle you into other communities". This is a resettlement by stealth. It is absolutely unacceptable that the government can treat fishermen in this manner. We owe it to Canadian families and fishermen and their families from coast to coast and our inland waters to have a much better government and a much better Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The department receives \$1.5 billion of taxpayers' money every year to do one thing and one thing only, to protect the fish and fish habitat. To say that it has been doing a good job is simply not correct at all. This is why a judicial inquiry would be very helpful.

The argument that a judicial inquiry would take a long time is absolutely correct, but that has not stopped the government from having the independent inquiry that is going on already. It has not prevented that from happening. The government could do both. If the government was willing to call an inquiry into the sponsorship scandal, then it should be willing to have an inquiry into the fisheries concern as well.

One of the most frustrating things for the opposition is with respect to committee reports. The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, as I have stated, is one of the best committees that a

Supply

member could ever sit on. I am honoured and privileged to work with my colleagues on all sides of the House. In 1998-99 we did two reports on the west coast, the interim report and the final report of 1998-99.

My colleague from Vancouver Island North of the Alliance Party at that time moved concurrence in the report in the House of Commons. We had a unanimous report, which means that nine Liberals, including the chair, had to agree to every word of that report, otherwise they would not have signed it.

We stood up in the House of Commons and voted on that report. Five Liberals of that committee did not show up for the vote, although three of them were in town. Four of them, who had signed on to the report, were in the House. They stood up and voted against their own report. They were told by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans that it was not what the government wanted, that the government wanted something else.

Why would they sign on to a unanimous report only to stand up in the House of Commons a month later and vote against their own report? It is simply unacceptable that that kind of behaviour happens in the House of Commons.

We spend a lot of taxpayers' money travelling the country, listening to witnesses, hearing the evidence, and drafting a report. Anyone who has been on a committee knows there is a lot of tug and pull in a committee about language, words and what can happen and what cannot happen. I have issued minority reports because I could not accept the overall version of where a report was going, but that is my prerogative and the prerogative of other members as well. If the Liberal members had a problem with that report, they never should have agreed to it.

This frustrates Canadians. They hear us when we go to their communities, such as La Scie, Newfoundland; Sointula, British Columbia; Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; and Trois-Rivières, Quebec. We listen to their concerns. We say that we are going to do a report, that we are going to try to make it unanimous and put pressure on the government, only in turn to have the government tell the committee members, "You did a good job but we are not going to listen to it". That is very frustrating.

● (1200)

When we did a report on the MCTS services of the Coast Guard in Ucluelet, British Columbia, Mike Henderson was then heading the Coast Guard on the west coast. The first question I asked him was whether he had enough money and manpower to do the job that we asked him to do. Mr. Henderson's comment was "money is not a problem". That is exactly what he said to us.

Supply

We then went to Victoria, Tofino and Ucluelet and told the workers and the middle managers in those stations exactly what their boss had told us. They were fit to be tied. A lady in Victoria said she had been screaming for millions of dollars for equipment and manpower and asked what the heck that guy was talking about. We went to Ucluelet and spoke to a woman who worked every single day in August because the service was short staffed. She worked every single day.

How can someone say to the committee that money is not a problem? How can someone say that everything is just fine when out in the field it is completely the reverse?

It frustrates people like myself on a standing committee when we ask middle managers and people within DFO direct, simple questions, and I cannot say they misled us on purpose, but their answers are certainly not forthcoming in the affirmative. They are out of touch with reality.

When we were in Ucluelet, one gentleman came to us to tell his story about what was going on. The day of the committee he was issued a disciplinary letter from DFO. Of course DFO management said that the letter concerned something completely different from his appearance before the committee, but the timing was very suspect.

Why would the Department of Fisheries and Oceans do that? Why would it do that? It sent a very clear message, that if anybody else spoke to the committee in an open forum, thou shall be disciplined. That is not on the official record of course, but that is the interpretation it left. That is really unacceptable.

This is why my party is demanding whistleblower protection to protect the workers for a very long time. I would only hope that one day the Liberal government would see the light and protect those people.

We have other issues in the Department of Health. We know what happened there and those are grave concerns.

A few years ago Ransom Myers and Jeffrey Hutchings, two very prominent scientists within DFO, issued a very scathing report of science misinformation within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. They accused the department and the government of misleading scientific information, misinterpreting scientific information for political means. That was a very scathing report.

We in Nova Scotia for many years were very proud of the Bedford Institute of Oceanography. It was one of the greatest institutes in the world for oceanographic studies. We are very proud of the people who are there still. There is just not enough of them. It is a shell of its former self.

The government consistently, minister after minister after minister, has told me and others in the House that it operates on the precautionary principle and on the best available scientific information. If it does not have the scientific information to begin with, how can it possibly say that it is operating on the precautionary principle? That is what is so frustrating. What happens and what is said are two completely different things.

No wonder the Conservative Party of Canada is asking for a judicial inquiry into the Fraser River sockeye. Something happened

to those fish. We can blame it on the environment. We can blame it on wrong science. We can blame it on commercial fishermen. We can blame it on aboriginals. We can blame it on all kinds of people, but the fact is there is only one management team, and it is the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. It is ultimately responsible for the management of those stocks.

Mr. Speaker, you know, as you live right where it happened. You had grave concerns when you appeared before a formal committee. I have never seen you on our committee, but I was very impressed with your knowledge of what happened in your back yard in terms of the fishery. You asked some very good questions. I might add that they were very good questions which were never answered. Seeing as you represent the area, I think you have a right to those answers.

As a former British Columbian and a person who lived in the Yukon, and who now lives on the east coast, what I have seen happen to the fisheries in this country is simply unacceptable. It is time to open it up.

● (1205)

In 1998 Michael Harris wrote a book called *Lament for an Ocean: The Collapse of the Atlantic Cod Fishery*. He had studied and followed our fisheries committee for quite some time. In November 1997 I was new here, but I already knew that the department was out of control. I asked for a judicial inquiry into the practices and policies of the entire department. It went absolutely no where. Hopefully, we are now going to have a judicial inquiry into one small aspect of the department regarding the Fraser River sockeye. That is the least we can do.

There is no doubt that my colleague from Delta and I disagree on certain aspects of quota management in the fishery. As a commercial fisherman himself, I believe he was sincere when he talked about his serious concerns regarding the stocks.

Management of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on the west coast of British Columbia is incredible. When I first came here, there were discussions about highway maintenance, and building new roads and bridges on Vancouver Island. That totally wiped out fish bearing streams. It was the department's job to ensure that did not happen. We were told afterward that some errors had been made, but the department would ensure they would not happen again.

We heard concerns about lifting the moratorium on aquaculture. We heard concerns about sea lice. We still do not have the proper scientific information on them. We have conflicting information. The government said it operates under the cautionary principle, but one would think that it would wait until it received all the information possible.

We received records today about a meeting between Larry Murray, the deputy minister of fisheries, Richard Wex, the director general of fisheries on the west coast and Terence Chandler, the head of Redfern Resources, who wants to build a road 160 kilometres long through the beautiful watershed of the Tlingit people in the northern Taku. John Ward, chief of the Tlingit people in the northern British Columbia area, asked for that same type of meeting, but he could not get it. Why would DFO meet with a mining company to discuss roads and a mine, and not meet with aboriginal leaders in that regard? That is unacceptable.

I firmly believe that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans could eliminate many independent fishermen. We have seen this done on the farm. Many farmers have lost their ability to farm on their land and have left the farm altogether. The land is still producing because huge corporate farms have taken over from individual farms. Ever since the 1982 Kirby report, larger companies have been fishing our waters. Slowly but surely, independent fishermen are losing their ability to fish. There are a myriad of reasons for that.

DFO needs a cleansing of its soul. There are some good people working for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I speak to them on a regular basis from Cape Breton to Vancouver Island. There are very good people on the ground, but there is not enough of them. There are 1,600 good people working at 200 Kent Street, but no one is fishing for salmon or cod in the Rideau Canal.

We need to get to the bottom of what happened to the Fraser River sockeye. Although a judicial inquiry would be a long process, it may solve the problem and allow DFO employees to speak freely without retribution. It would also allow the independent review that the minister has already allocated.

It does not matter if the minister is changed, the department still has serious flaws that need to be corrected. We hope we can learn from our mistakes, learn from what happened to the sockeye, and protect the interests of fishermen and their families.

• (1210)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about corporate concentration and trust agreements. He elaborated on some of the problems experienced by the fisheries on the east coast. I was part of the fisheries committee over the weekend for three days. This is a very complex issue in the Fraser River. It is difficult and challenging. It involves, to a certain extent, some environmental issues and allocation issues between the original commercial fishers who fish in the mouth of the Fraser River and the aboriginal bands who live along the river, and who now have a certain amount of access.

I do share a lot of the member's concerns. The department has a number of processes in action. We have the Williams commission, which is out there now doing a timely report. Everyone is invited to appear before the commission. Our committee will be releasing a report, which I hope will be unanimous. We had the B.C. salmon panel and the B.C. salmon commission.

Given everything, and given the complexity of the whole issue, will this judicial inquiry not just be a forum to allow one segment of society to pit itself against another segment and accomplish nothing, with all the other things that are going on in the fishery right now?

Supply

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, the recent comments of my hon. colleague from Charlottetown, for whom I have great respect, about pitting one aspect of the fishery against the other is completely off base. I am hoping that it is not correct. If it is, then I would be very concerned about that and would raise very serious issues about pitting one aspect of the commercial fishery against another.

The hon. member has just said that this is a very difficult and challenging subject to discuss. If I am not mistaken, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has asked for a report within a few months. If the hon. member is correct, that it is very difficult and very challenging, that there are lots of unanswered questions that need to be dealt with, and that a very thorough review needs to happen, then how can the Williams commission do that in the span of a few months?

I question the timing and the rapidity of that. I understand there are seasonal openings and quotas to give out, methodology of fishing, and all those concerns. I wish Mr. Williams and the group of people working on that inquiry all the very best of luck.

I hope they are very successful and give their recommendations to the government, which would be binding, but they are not. They are only recommendations to the government and the government can choose to accept them or choose to ignore them, just like a unanimous report from the committee.

I wish the Williams commission luck. I am rather concerned about the quickness with which it has to bring in a report, considering the difficulties the commission has to face, but I wish them good luck. I hope and pray that it is not an avenue of separation between people in British Columbia.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the opinion of the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore with the respect that he holds for the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I have had the pleasure of being a member of that committee on several occasions over the last number of years. Each member of that committee can stand in the House and take a great deal of pride in the fact that very few times do the discussions splinter down partisan lines.

We agree and we disagree. Sometimes we agree to disagree. For the most part, the committee moves forward in the best interests of fishers and fisher families and communities. That is what drives the work of the committee.

That being said, the committee has just come back from a study out west. The committee invested a lot of time and money, and it heard witnesses. It received the testimony of those witnesses. Now that the researchers have that kind of information, they are in the process of making a compilation of that information, and recommendations will come from that.

Is it not in the best interests of the committee, and the issue in general, to sit tight and wait for the recommendations coming from the committee? Are we showing a disregard and a disrespect, and are we undermining the work and effort put forward by that committee by accepting the supply day motion today?

Supply

•(1215)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from Cape Breton used to represent the community of Canso. I am sure he could have represented that community alone and been very busy. However, he knows all too well what happens to a fishing community that is on its last legs. I say in a non-partisan manner that I thought he treated the people of Canso with great respect and dignity. Although he did not solve all the problems and serve all their concerns, he at least brought their issues to the forefront. For that, I commend him for his effort in that regard.

I will respond with a question. If he assumed that a judicial inquiry would superimpose or possibly have an effect on the committee's recommendations, then why did the government ask the public accounts committee to deal with the sponsorship scandal and then call an inquiry at the same time? Would the sponsorship inquiry not affect the public accounts committee's work in the same way?

I believe that the committee's report, chaired by the member from Edmonton, and quite possibly the judicial inquiry may all have positive effects on the Government of Canada. Hopefully, in a non-partisan manner, we can deal with the very serious issues, come up with recommendations that the government will accept, and move forward to enhance fishing opportunities for many years to come.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to participate in this debate, as I am sure you, sir, are probably delighted to be here to witness this debate today because it centres on your very area, the Fraser River.

I have some concerns about the interpretation of the resolution given by government members. I heard the parliamentary secretary talk about the concern he would have about the judicial inquiry because all it would do is pit one side against the other. I also heard him talking about the department and asked if we wanted the army sent in.

At no time in any of this debate or in the wording of the resolution have we talked about pitting one side against the other or about any disputes between the various users or stakeholders in the Pacific fishery. I want to clearly outline what the resolution is about. The resolution states:

That the House recognize that the maintenance of the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River is crucial for conservation and for commercial, recreational and aboriginal users; that the government's investigation—

—which it slapped together and is still not off the ground by the way—

—into the collapse of this resource cannot be considered independent; that this resource—

Here is the key part, the crux of this resolution, the resource, and we could say all fishery resources in the country, but in this case it is the sockeye salmon in the Fraser River.

—has been mismanaged; that past decisions have been made without the proper science; and that, as a consequence, the House call on the government to establish an independent judicial inquiry to determine the cause of the collapse of the sockeye salmon stocks on the Fraser River.

The parliamentary secretary also said that the department had assessed various reviews to bring together recommendations to deal with this issue. What a pile of baloney.

First, very good studies have been done into this issue. We had the Fraser report because of problems in 1994. We have had several audits by the provincial and federal auditor general departments dealing with concerns about this issue. We also had a report tabled in 2003 by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, which, by the way, went out to B.C. on the weekend.

Before I go any farther I would like to remind the House that I will be splitting my time with the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

During the latter part of last week and over the weekend, the standing committee went to British Columbia and held hearings on the concerns about the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser. Before I get into what happened at the hearings, I want to give a couple of examples of what we are talking about when we talk about the complete collapse.

This year, about 4.5 million salmon returned to the Fraser. Of that, only about 200,000 reached the spawning grounds, a minuscule percentage of what is necessary to guarantee a fishery four years from now.

With one particular part of that stock, the early Stuart run, with which you are quite familiar, Mr. Speaker, the powers that be within the department felt it necessary that at least 90,000 of that run should reach the spawning grounds. They made allocations to the various users, the food, social, and ceremonial fishery, the commercial fisheries and the recreational fisheries. They left the 90,000 salmon there to get to the spawning grounds.

However we saw a slight rise early in the year of the water temperatures, not what we saw later in the summer but the early run might have been somewhat affected. Therefore, to err on the side of caution, they added an extra 29,000 salmon to the escapement, which means that 119,000 salmon should have reached the spawning grounds. In reality, only 9,000 reached the spawning grounds, less than 8% of what was needed in order to guarantee any kind of a fishery in 2008.

•(1220)

We have seen people scrambling to explain what happened, not only in the early run but in the total run. They talked about water temperatures. We heard evidence from practically every stakeholder group in British Columbia during our three days out there. All of them stated that there was no evidence whatsoever that the increased temperatures had any effect on the disappearance of that number of salmon.

At no time did anyone see any amount of carcasses on the river, on the banks or being eaten by birds, all the signs that would be there if there had been a massive kill in the river. Could the higher temperature have had an effect? Yes, it certainly could. Could it have killed some salmon? Yes, it certainly could. It would have weakened the salmon anyway. Did it destroy 1.8 million fish? Absolutely not.

Where did they go? Most of the groups that came before us looked inwardly and said, "*mea culpa*", meaning that it was their fault and that they all contributed. We know that is true to some degree but any amount of overfishing or misreporting would be a minuscule amount.

It comes down to the fact that someone has to get to the bottom of why so many fish disappeared. There could be a number of reasons. It could be overfishing, misreporting, water temperatures or predation. We do not know. However, more important, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans does not know either despite the fact that we had a similar catastrophe in 1992 and another one in 1994. Studies have been done. The auditors general have made reports, the standing committee has made recommendations but the Department of Fisheries has completely ignored everything.

When we asked for a judicial inquiry, the department, through the parliamentary secretary, said that an inquiry was not needed because the minister had set up a committee to study it.

Because of the pressure, the minister has pulled together an ad hoc committee, under all kinds of questions by stakeholders, but no one at this stage has a clue who will be on the committee. We have heard talk of about 30 or more groups being represented. Then there are talks about picking, choosing and involving others from the side, and yet the committee is expected to report by February or early March in order to make recommendations for the coming season.

Knowing where the members opposite come from, they know that is not going to work. Nobody else thinks it will work. None of the stakeholders thought it was a practical way to address the problem.

What we have is a committee, which right now is not even operable, and it is questionable at best as to what will happen. Even if it were to come out with a few recommendations about next year, which would be very important, our standing committee recommendations will be important because we must save next year's stock. If we do not, half the cycle will be gone. However in the long term we have to get to the root of the problem.

Mismanagement and lack of science is at the bottom of this. The responsibility for this rests solely with the department. The only way to get to the truth about what happened this year and what is happening generally is through a judicial inquiry, for which we have a lot of support.

It is very interesting that a motion at the standing committee this morning was turned down because the Liberals brought in five goons, who had never heard about this before, to make that decision. A number of them will be voting on this very issue again tonight and I am sure the same thing will happen. It will be interesting to see where our Liberal colleagues from British Columbia sit, or more important, where they stand tonight.

•(1225)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps this morning the member, along with all other B.C. Conservative members, would have received a package of information on our fax machine from a senior advisor, Pacific agriculture and ocean action plan.

This gentleman, on behalf of the Department of Fisheries, and presumably the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, told us, as members know, the Conservatives have put forward a notable motion calling for a judicial inquiry into the Fraser River sockeye salmon run of 2004.

Supply

However, the fisheries minister recently announced an independently led post-season review, chaired by former Chief Justice Brian Williams. He went on about the fact that work has begun and that significant recommendations will be produced by March 31, 2005, in time for implementation for the 2005 season.

I know our fisheries critic has already referred to this, but I wonder if he could give us an idea of how practical this is. In other words, I hold in my hand a tremendous number of documents that arrived in my office, as a member of Parliament, that seem to indicate that everything is fine, that there would not be any difficulty to get this report out by March 31, 2005.

I would expect that my friend would have a contrary opinion. I wonder if he could outline why he would hold that contrary opinion.

•(1230)

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the document. It is basically a document sent by representatives of the minister, undoubtedly at the request of the minister.

There is no way to answer his question, and I will tell him why.

There is no way in such a short timeframe that a committee representing so many diverse stakeholder groups can be put together, get to the bottom of what has happened here and get a report done that would be of any value whatsoever or any credibility.

The minister is in a panic. We saw a fishery disappear on the east coast. We see problems in the Great Lakes. Wherever there is a fishery, we see problems because of the complete lack of science, the cuts, which the department will be doing again this year, and because of complete and utter mismanagement. The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

Why are we seeing this come in? It is imply to deflect attention and try to affect the vote of people in this House who, because of their concern for the fishery generally but mainly because of the Fraser River, they want to say that everything is okay and that we do not need it.

Why do they not want a judicial inquiry? It is because, in the words of a great actor in a great movie, they cannot handle the truth.

Mr. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I was reading the report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans from June 2003, which, by the way, was unanimously supported by all parties, and I noted that there were a number of recommendations.

Recommendation No. 1 states:

That DFO return to a single commercial fishery for all Canadians, in which all participants in a particular fishery would be subject to the same rules and regulations. Consequently DFO should bring to an end the pilot sales projects and convert current opportunities under the pilot sales program into comparable opportunities in the regular commercial fishery.

That was one of 10 recommendations. I wonder if our fisheries critic would be able to tell us, considering that this was an all party unanimous report, including the government of the day, the Bloc and ourselves, how many of these 10 recommendations were actually acted on by the Department of Fisheries. Once we have that answer, perhaps he could tell us why he thinks the DFO responded in the way it did.

Supply

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl will have to do it quickly, because he only has about 25 seconds.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, it does not take long to say that DFO basically rejected all the recommendations. As we know, it did very little to implement any of them. Pilot sales have now been changed, but we are hearing about an economic opportunity, and that is causing some concerns. The aboriginal people who are also affected by this are suffering under this complete and utter mismanagement. The fishery out there has to be clarified. Our recommendations would have helped do it. They were ignored completely. We will see what happens today. Maybe a judicial inquiry can solve our problems.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the B.C. Conservative caucus has been seized with this right from the word go. The 21 Conservative members who come from British Columbia recognize this as being one of the key issues, not only for people in our province but indeed for the environment, for ecology and for a major world food source. This is not an incidental problem.

Right now we have wiped out fully 25% of the Fraser River salmon run, and I repeat, 25%. If this should continue to go awry, if we do not get this right, by next year we will have wiped out half. If we do not get this right the following year, three-quarters of all of the salmon in the Fraser River will be gone. This is not a political problem. This is an environmental disaster.

Going back to October 7 of this year, our B.C. regional caucus put out a news release stating that we wanted action on the Fraser River salmon fishery. At that time we were not talking about a judicial inquiry. In fact, we were saying something had to happen a whole lot faster. Our reaction was that the federal Liberal government was dithering while salmon fish stocks on the Fraser River face extinction. The government received warning after warning that the situation could happen, but failed to do anything about it.

I note that the member for Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon said, “I repeatedly urged the government to implement the recommendations of the 2001 salmon fishery report. The government refused to take this advice and now look at where we are”.

We should understand that the impact on the economy and aboriginal communities of such low salmon runs is devastating. The British Columbia fisheries, both recreational and commercial, are currently the province's fourth largest industry, generating approximately \$2 billion a year for B.C.'s economy. Many aboriginal communities also rely on the resource for food and ceremonial purposes. Our natural resources critic from Vancouver Island said, “Jobs will certainly be threatened if the problem isn't fixed”.

“It's also evident that aboriginal groups may not receive the resources they need for food and ceremonial purposes” was a comment from our Indian affairs critic. That would be truly devastating to their culture and way of life.

Our B.C. caucus has been seized with this issue right from the beginning of this Parliament. It was our B.C. caucus and these efforts, with the cooperation of members from other parties, I must say, on the fisheries committee, that got us to the point where the

committee actually had the hearings in Vancouver and gave the opportunity for people to have input.

If I may say so, it was a bit of a disappointment, this being as serious an issue as it is, that we got such minuscule coverage from the news media, whether television, radio or print, about these hearings, because indeed that was part of the solution. With the kind of pressure that can only come when we have proper exposure in Canada's news media, I would hope that pressure on the fisheries minister would continue.

Our fisheries critic said that the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans needed to reconvene immediately, which it did. This goes back to October 7. He said, “We need to examine this issue and provide advice to the government that is objective and credible”.

I note that our associate fisheries critic, the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, proposed this motion today along with our natural resources critic, who is a member from Vancouver Island. We are trying to force this issue. It should be noted that of the total of 99 members in the Conservative caucus in Ottawa, they were in agreement with us. Whether it was a member from Newfoundland and Labrador, the members from Ontario or the members from Prairies, they were in full agreement that although it is a regional issue there has to be pressure from the House of Commons, and it is the Conservatives from B.C. that are bringing this pressure to try to create a proper situation.

I did a little research. I went back to a parliamentary report prepared for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, dated April 7, 1995. One might wonder why I went back as far as 1995. This is sort of *déjà vu*, because on page 14 of this document the recommendations are as follows: “In the end the Board concluded there was no definitive answer as to exactly what went wrong in the 1994 season. According to the Board, in many respects the frustration of 1994 lies in the fact that no one, including the authorities, the experts and this Board, knows precisely what happened or exactly how it happened. However, this is no excuse for not taking action to ensure that what happened in 1994 does not happen again”.

●(1235)

That is wonderful, Mr. Speaker. That was the recommendation from 10 years ago and do we know what? It did not happen again; it happened worse, far worse than what they were actually faced with in 1994. The report goes on to state that, “To this end, the Board made 35 recommendations in dealing with a series of issues including institutional problems, quality management, enforcement, the aboriginal fisheries strategy, the environment, and responsibilities of user groups. Among the 35 recommendations made by the Board were the following highlights”, and I have all the following highlights.

This was 10 years ago. What was the government response? In response to the recommendations of the Fraser River Sockeye Public Review Board, the minister announced a five point action plan for the 1995 Pacific salmon fishery. Wonderful. We have an action plan from only 10 years ago. It said:

—a more conservative approach to management; increased enforcement and compliance; better integration of science and management priorities; a tough stance on the conditions of agreements under the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy, particularly with respect to pilot sales; and, necessary measures to build a fishery of the future based on recommendations from industry on fleet capacity.

This is what all those recommendations are worth: here we are fully 10 years later with exactly the problem that we had before, only this time the problem has been magnified. This is grossly inadequate.

This is an environmental disaster. To this day I do not understand it, with the supposed power and strength that the Liberals now have. They have five ministers on the front bench, although I must say I believe it was the member from Sarnia who just yesterday was in the press as saying that he questioned their intellectual capacity and their ability to be able to fulfill their job. That was a Liberal member talking about the Liberal front bench, but we will leave that one aside.

The point is that we are supposed to—

An hon. member: I wouldn't bring that up.

Mr. Jim Abbott: No, I wouldn't bring that up.

We are supposed to be seeing representation of British Columbia by these Liberals. This is what the Prime Minister promised during this last election campaign: "If I do not get over the whole issue of alienation of people from the west, then I guess I'm going to be a failure".

The dithering Prime Minister is a failure because the people who are currently in his cabinet are incapable. Either that or they are gagged in not being able to bring this issue to a head, in not being able to bring this issue to resolution.

This is absolutely inadequate. The reason why now we are calling for a judicial inquiry is that in the longer term this must be removed from the political process. In the longer term, there must be someone who is fully competent and fully capable of shedding a light on this. Hopefully from that this government will end up doing what is necessary to avoid a continuation of this environmental disaster.

• (1240)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his presentation. I must say first of all that I certainly agree with a lot of what he said, and this is a very important and very serious issue. I did spend the three days in Vancouver and I agree with the member that perhaps it would have been better if the committee hearings and testimony had had more coverage, not only in Vancouver but perhaps across Canada. I certainly agree with him on that.

I believe the committee will act quickly and come forward with a report. I hope the report will be unanimous. I hope the report will be followed up on.

Supply

As the member knows, back about a couple of months ago the minister appointed a commission to, on a timely basis, do a post-harvest review to try to identify some of the problems. He appointed a retired chief justice of the member's province, Mr. Justice Bryan Williams, to chair the commission. Of course a number of stakeholders are involved in the commission and they are at work as we speak. It is my understanding that the commission is going to do its work and report in several months.

But also as we speak, we have a very concerted effort from the member's party to get rid of Mr. Williams. In fact, we have a motion before the fisheries committee asking that he be replaced—

An hon. member: No, no, wrong—

Hon. Shawn Murphy: —although his appointment is supported by the environmental groups, by the aboriginal groups, and by a whole host of other groups in British Columbia, and the commercial fishers are participating.

• (1245)

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, we cannot let the remarks of the hon. member stay on the record. There is no motion before the standing committee to get rid of Mr. Williams. I ask the member to retract his statement.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. It is a point of debate. I would ask the member from Charlottetown to continue, please.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I was there yesterday, and the motion may have been withdrawn today, but here is my question for the member. Why are the members of that party so intent on derailing the Williams commission?

Mr. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I have the vice-chair of the committee sitting behind me who says that they are not. I have the representation from our fisheries critic who says that they are not.

What this is about is bringing as much pressure as we can possibly bring to this issue. There must be a solution to this that is going to be a long lasting and complete solution.

It may be that the work of Mr. Justice Bryan Williams will be able to shed some light on it. It may be that in the course of time there will be some work toward coming to a solution, but what the motion today is about is specifically to get an independent light shed on this.

It is not exclusive. Our motion does not say that everything else is shut down and that we will go exclusively for a judicial inquiry. We are simply asking for a judicial inquiry because we must have a bright light on this topic. We must have the details of what is going on so that there will be pressure on the department to bring corrective resolution to this desperate situation.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleague from Kootenay—Columbia if he thinks that we have taken the right approach.

First of all, let me clarify that there is no motion to get rid of Mr. Williams. There is a motion asking the minister to review the decision to appoint him in light of the fact that a majority of the stakeholders in British Columbia has expressed concern about his chairmanship.

Supply

Our comments about the commission, and I will ask the member if this is not true, have been that we do not think it can in such a short length of time with such a diverse commission get to the bottom of the major problem here. What we do hope it will do, it is the same thing as when we asked the standing committee to go to B.C. It was to get an interim solution to save this year's fishery. Is it not right that we ask for a judicial inquiry to deal solely with the overall problem so that we can correct it in depth?

Mr. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, the position of my friend is absolutely accurate. I should mention, and I speak as the B.C. caucus chair, that the B.C. caucus is fully aware of the interest in this issue by the citizens in British Columbia. This motion is in response to a groundswell of interest and of wanting a judicial inquiry.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I get speak to the motion, I would impart the sad news of the death of Sergeant Roy Overfors who worked on the Hill, honourably, for many years. Sadly, he died at the age of 47. Today is his funeral. On behalf of all our colleagues, we send our deepest condolences to the wife and family of Sergeant Overfors on their loss.

On the motion, I want to assure all the members that we too are seized with this issue. I and my colleagues from British Columbia are working hard to deal with the problem, which is very important, not only to our province but to our country.

There is no question that the salmon populations on the west coast have been and are under threat. The last thing we want is to see the salmon population on the west coast go the way of the cod fishery on the east coast. It is our responsibility to ensure that does not happen.

Contributing factors are environmental challenges which include raised water temperatures, poaching, overfishing and habitat degradation. These factors have all contributed to this loss. It is important for us, whatever we do, to we base our decisions on the facts, on the science and on the information we receive on the ground. We need to address those by working with all players in this important area.

My friend from the NDP mentioned that science was being altered. If that is the case, then he is welcome to give us those facts so we can look at them and deal with them. The last thing we want to see is the science, on which we base our ideas, altered in some way. That is not acceptable.

The scope of the problem is quite significant. We expected four and a half million salmon to reach the Fraser River this year. Unfortunately, only 200,000 salmon made it. This is a staggering difference and it affects many people. For our province, the fishery is the fourth leading industry, representing \$2 billion per year and jobs for all manner of people, aboriginal, non-aboriginal, sports fishers and commercial fishers. The user groups and other industries around it are attached to this industry. We have to deal with this for the sake of those people.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is committed to dealing with these issues. He has come up with a number of initiatives that I will get to in a while. He has read the reports by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and the report of the Commissioner of the Environment, Madam Gélinas, who is under the auspices of the

Auditor General. She has articulated a number of serious challenges with which we have to deal.

I met with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He has been very open to ideas and solutions. He is committed to getting those from members across party lines. I would recommend to anybody who has some ideas and solutions to give them to the minister. He also recognizes that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has the fiduciary responsibility to manage these resources by working with all user groups.

We also want to ensure that our enforcement officers have the power to enforce the law and have the back-up to do that. It is a significant group of people who have worked for decades in the protection of our fisheries resources. They are a committed group of individuals who perhaps do not necessarily receive the thanks that they should. On behalf of my party, I would like to thank them for the work that they do on the ground, day in and day out.

As I said before, we have to base our solutions on science, listening to all groups and officers who are working on the ground. We have to use that information accurately and effectively. Certainty and sustainability are important and we have to address the issues of environmental degradation, other environmental challenges and poaching.

I would also like to talk about the commitment our government has to the fisheries on the west coast. Of the total budget of \$150 million, \$80 million goes into the salmon fisheries and \$40 million of that goes into the Fraser River. What is more important than how much money we spend, is how we spend it. We have to use that money wisely and effectively.

In 2000 DFO began to implement an integrated salmon management plan, and we have built on that plan. We are considering the factors of science, enforcement and the people who use this. We have three such plans: one for Yukon, one for northern B.C. and one for southern B.C. It is important that we have moved to a consultative approach to dealing with this issue. In the past there were numerous disputes, as there are today, and we have to sort those out. The only way we can do that is to bring all groups to the table and deal with their concerns.

We have read the Pearse-McRae report and the first nation panel report. We are using those solutions to save our fishery. In particular, the Pearse-McRae report has five key elements.

The first is to build a fully integrated commercial fishery with all participants operating on equal footing.

The second is to introduce a more flexible and responsive management system.

• (1250)

The third is to adopt co-management and provide stakeholders with meaningful decision and role making. We have to listen to people.

Supply

The fourth is to enhance fishermen's security of access and allocation. This is so important. In the past we have had problems with the timely administration of information. We have to do better. I think this is part of the solution.

The fifth is to ensure that we have an orderly process that is consistent with the treaty process occurring now.

The minister has said that an implementation strategy for these recommendations will be forth coming.

We also have the very important independent post-season review, chaired by former B.C. Chief Justice Bryan Williams. I know there has been some criticism on that. However, the purpose of this is to get quick, accurate information and implement it in a timely fashion before the fishery starts next year, so all the user groups know what the allocations are. If we wait too long, it is not useful or effective. We also want to ensure that we have an impartial assessment on this issue to explain the poor spawning return on the Fraser River sockeye.

The long awaited wild salmon policy is another important link. We have been asked to implement the wild salmon policy in the near future. The minister will be releasing an implementation plan on this very quickly.

Another important thing that no one has really spoken about is the importance of changes to the Fisheries Act. The Fisheries Act is 136 years old. We cannot have a 136 year old act to deal with the challenges we face today. The minister will bring forward a new Canada oceans action plan that will replace the Fisheries Act and make it relevant to the challenges of today.

In the end, we need an integrated management and that the ecosystem and precautionary approach be applied. This plan will help to ensure that Canada continues to play a leadership role on the world stage. By working with our partners, we can save our fishery, so it has a long term life.

I want to emphasize that at the end of the day the importance of this to our province is quite significant. If we do not act on this issue, jobs will be lost. As a B.C. member for 11 years, it has been very disheartening to see the friction and the lack of cooperation that sometimes occurred. I am glad the minister has taken the role to try to bring the groups together, to find out their plans and determine what their needs are. Above all, we need to ensure that our fishery is put on a sustainable footing based on fact. We have to apply the law to the our rules. If we do not do that, we will be in trouble.

There are a number of other challenges. Habitat destruction has been a significant problem not only in my province but also on the east coast. The destruction of habitat is relevant to the spawning grounds and it extremely important. If that habitat is destroyed, the spawning fish do not have a place to lay their eggs and, as a result, we see a massive degradation and destruction of the fishery. The reclamation of those habitats and spawning areas is critically important.

I wish to inform you, Mr. Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough East.

All of us in the House are committed to saving the fisheries on the west coast, as we are on the east coast. We are dependent on

receiving good solutions to that. We will back up the department and get the right people in the right places. We will back up our fisheries officers on the ground and ensure that we have a sustainable fishery for aboriginal communities, non-aboriginal communities, sports fishers and commercial fishermen. At the end of the day, if we accomplish that, we have done a huge service and we have done our duty.

• (1255)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am curious as to whether the member thinks a judicial inquiry is ever a good idea? The way I see it, a judicial inquiry is not something we want to use often, but there are times when it is needed. One of those times is when public confidence is at an all time low in any particular department or if there is some sort of crisis. It seems to me the case in B.C. meets all of those criteria. We need something that would give us credible fact-finding and something that could produce forceful recommendations. That is the whole purpose of a judicial inquiry. I do not see that coming out of this post-season review.

To get back to my colleague's first point, if there were any point that received unanimous support in the hearings, it seemed to me it was the lack of confidence in the ability of DFO to manage this resource. To restore that in B.C. we need this inquiry. I would appreciate my colleague's comments on that.

The member referred to the Pearse-McRae report and all the great recommendations in it, and there are many. He did not mention one significant one and that was the call for individual quotas in the salmon fishery. Does he and his government think that would be a good idea as well?

• (1300)

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, our objective is to restore public confidence and to have credible solutions and implement those solutions. I completely agree with my colleague. That is why we have asked Justice Bryan Williams to do this.

I have not heard a retort as to why certain members think Justice Williams cannot do this. I have not heard a logical reason as to why they think asking Justice Williams to do this is a problem. He has been tasked to accomplish the exact objectives for which the hon. member has asked. I think that will be an effective solution.

It is not that we will ignore other solutions that are put forth. Madam Gélinas, who works under the Auditor General, has put forth effective solutions. The standing committee has put forth effective solutions. All those will be used by the justice and also by the minister in implementing solutions. If all we have are ideas and solutions and they are not implemented, then they are not worth the paper on which they are written. Implementation forthwith is a key element to saving our salmon fishery.

Supply

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just stated that he had not heard a serious reason why there would be any question over Mr. Justice Williams and the review panel. Does the hon. member believe that someone can be appointed to a panel with 30 different stakeholders to work with and be expected to come up with a quick and concise review of any situation?

Time after time the complaints we heard from every sector in British Columbia, leaving any bias about Mr. Williams out of this totally, were that the panel was too large. There were too many stakeholders, too many players, and they would not have time to do a thorough review in the time allotted.

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, there are three aspects to that: first, do a thorough analysis; second, all the stakeholders have to be dealt with; and third, and most important, solutions have to be out in time. If we adopt the solutions of the hon. member, they will not be out in a timely fashion. We are under the gun with respect to the fishery. We cannot allow what happened this year to happen next year. We want solutions and we want them implemented quickly.

All the groups that the member has talked about will not start *de novo* with their own ideas. They will come to panel and the justice with those solutions and the chief justice will put them together forthwith and do it in a way that will be useful and effective for the fishery.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since this is the first opportunity I have had to enter into debate in the House with you sitting in the chair, allow me to begin by saying congratulations and best wishes to you for however long this Parliament lasts. I know you will do a good job, as you have been doing to date.

I am standing here today in my capacity as the chairman of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I want to make my remarks in the capacity of chairman because I have great respect for the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission. He is a very hard-working member of our committee and has contributed to our deliberations. However, I have a real problem with this particular motion and the day upon which it has been presented. I want to give my perspective.

The official opposition brought the issue of the collapse of the 2004 Fraser River salmon fishery to the attention of the committee in a very timely fashion, and brought a motion asking that the committee travel to British Columbia to investigate the situation. That motion was supported unanimously, by all parties and by all members of the fisheries and oceans committee. That was done, I believe in early October, very shortly after the committee was formed. Because of all of the things that have to happen before a committee is allowed to travel, it took some time to get that in order, but eventually, the week before last, we were finally authorized by the House of Commons to travel to undertake a study on this issue.

The House should know, and people who are listening should know, that things like this do not come cheap. For our committee to travel to the west coast last week, with all of the logistics that go on with a House of Commons committee travelling, cost the Canadian taxpayers approximately \$90,000.

We flew into Vancouver on Wednesday night and we began our hearings on Thursday. We had three fulsome days, well over 12 hours a day of evidence from all of the various stakeholders. Bear in mind that the committee was asked to investigate this issue and then, obviously, to report to the House of Commons and to the minister what our conclusions were.

Last Thursday, Friday and Saturday we heard evidence well into the evening hours, a lot of it interesting, a lot of it compelling. Ten of the 12 members of the committee were there at one time or another. We returned on Sunday.

Our first meeting was scheduled for today, because of other business on Tuesday, to begin to instruct our drafters to prepare a report. We wanted to do this report in a very timely fashion, bearing in mind that it was a week ago today that we began our hearings, but on a complex issue like this one, we cannot conjure a report out of the air in 30 seconds. Clearly it is going to take our researchers time to listen to the views of the committee members, get some direction, look up some of the information we need to have looked up, and then prepare a draft report for us that we can consider after the Christmas break when we return at the end of January. That is precisely what the agenda was and that is what was asked of us when we were asked to study this issue.

Last night we found out that there was going to be a votable motion, that the House was going to be asked to set up a judicial inquiry on this issue, thereby in my view totally kneecapping the work that our committee had been asked to do. If the House moves to have a judicial inquiry and the government follows it, then what is the point of our committee continuing with its deliberations since the focus is going to be on a judicial inquiry? Who knows how long that is going to take and how much money it is going to take?

I am very concerned that we in the committee are doing precisely what we were being asked to do, and in effect we are going to be kneecapped if this motion passes. It is totally inappropriate. We had 36 hours of evidence from every possible interest group that one could think of. Many of them expressed reservations about coming to the committee. They thought that their evidence and their time would be better spent elsewhere but they gave the committee another chance, only to find out that having given their evidence to a committee that had travelled there, for all intents and purposes, the work of the committee would be pre-empted by a motion of the House which would only have a limited amount of debate, one day, and then members would have to vote on it.

● (1305)

I do not think that is the way to proceed. I do not think it gives the issue the consideration and the time that it needs. There is no doubt, and I do not think anyone would dispute the fact, that this fishery is a very important fishery to the people of British Columbia on a variety of levels. I think it behooves the standing committee to do what it was asked to do, and that is to complete its study. It should do what it was asked to do by the official opposition, I might add, which was joined by the other parties and members of the committee.

Let us look at the actual words of the motion. Who can dispute that the maintenance of the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River is crucial for conservation and for commercial, recreational and aboriginal users? I do not think there is anybody in the country who would disagree with that statement.

It is fair to say, and we have heard plenty of evidence in this regard, that over time the resource has been mismanaged. I am talking about a historical progression of mismanagement. It is sad to say that it is not the only fishery in Canada that has been mismanaged over a period of time. One cannot, realistically, argue that.

There is certainly also a dearth of proper science for a variety of reasons. Human beings really cannot know everything about every portion of what a species of animal does from the moment it is conceived until it dies. We do the best we can but with lack of money, there is less science. There is no question there has been a dearth of science and this has contributed to the problem.

However, I think it is premature to call on the House to ask the government to establish an independent judicial inquiry, when we have only now heard the evidence that we were asked to hear. On what basis is the House going to ask the government to have an independent judicial inquiry?

The House has not heard 36 hours' worth of testimony from witnesses, as our committee did. The House will hear perhaps five, six or ten members. I have not heard all the speeches, but one has to presume that some of them undoubtedly condemn the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, DFO and the Liberal government because this is the place of political action and that is to be expected.

Our committee, we like to think, in the past four or five years has demonstrated that it works as apolitically as possible. Most of our reports have been unanimous reports, not all but most of them have been unanimous. We have tried our best to recommend things that are capable of being done.

We have not discussed yet the potential costs of a judicial inquiry, how long that judicial inquiry would take or whether a judicial inquiry would be completed before decisions have to be made for the 2005 Fraser River fishery. Of course it would not. I am aware of no inquiry that has been set up and completed in a matter of a couple of months.

Besides that, I wanted to say that not everyone in the industry—commercial, recreational and aboriginal—is in agreement that there be a judicial inquiry. There are those who agree that there should be one and there are those who feel that the money could be better spent on things like better scientific studies, better monitors and echo sounders to count the fish as they travel up the Fraser River.

Quite frankly, I think that the motion is ill-considered in that it would in effect kneecap the committee's work which I think is very important. It would do a disservice to those witnesses from all sectors who came to give us their testimony and asked us to recommend something to the House of Commons.

• (1310)

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member is the chair of the committee, but I could

Supply

not disagree more with his comment that an inquiry would kneecap the work of the committee. This is something that could happen concurrently. If we actually want to get some results, some action, I would argue that this has to be done. It could be done at the same time that the committee is doing its work.

I was the fisheries critic and the vice chair of the committee as far back as 1998. I was reading through some of the old reports. Report after report after report of the fisheries committee talk about the mismanagement of the fishery time and time again. The vast majority of the reports contained all-party recommendations. There was no dissenting opinion. Five political parties had written the recommendations yet they were not implemented.

The Liberal government has not followed any of the recommendations. Maybe if we had done a judicial inquiry back then on the collapse of the east coast fisheries we would have seen different results today.

That is why it is important that we go down this road. This is a serious problem. Sometimes in this House it takes the work of the Auditor General, it takes a judicial inquiry, and it takes independent work by an all-party committee before we even begin to see any kind of action.

I would suggest to the member that this absolutely does not kneecap the committee's work. In fact it might bolster it.

• (1315)

Mr. Tom Wappel: Mr. Speaker, I guess we will have to agree to disagree. If the House were to pass this motion today, and clearly, if the committee had come to the conclusion after considering all the evidence that we did not want to recommend a judicial inquiry, for example, what would be the point of that if the House had already passed a motion saying that a judicial inquiry should take place?

On the other hand, if the House pronounces today and decides that there should not be a judicial inquiry, does that not preclude or certainly handicap a discussion within our committee as to whether we should recommend a judicial inquiry when we know that the House has already disposed of the issue? What would be the point of spending all of that time and effort discussing whether we should have a judicial inquiry and the reasons therefor, if the House has already pronounced and said no, we are not going to have a judicial inquiry?

Likewise, if we wanted to allocate the moneys otherwise used for a judicial inquiry elsewhere and wanted to make those recommendations, if the House decided today that there would be one, that also would preclude us from making those recommendations.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the attempts by the chair of the standing committee to express his concerns. However, what if we were users of the Fraser River and our livelihoods depended on that resource? If we saw what happened to that resource in 2004 and knew in our hearts, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands just said, that it did not matter what the fisheries committee recommended, that the department would probably ignore it, and we also knew that a lot of witnesses would only say what was really on their minds at a judicial inquiry, then we would be very impatient for a judicial inquiry.

Supply

The member also knows that we have a schedule in this place. We are debating our last supply day opposition motion probably until some time in February and by that time it will be too late to contemplate. I would suggest that we are not being premature at all in making this request. I understand that most of the witnesses on the weekend were supportive of a judicial inquiry, and very frustrated at a lesser opportunity.

It should come as no surprise that we put this motion forward. We were calling for the committee to go to the west coast and for a judicial inquiry quite some time ago. We held a press conference to say so. We said so publicly—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, but we will have to get a quick response from the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Tom Wappel: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has illustrated the problem. I do not think it is accurate to say that most of the witnesses were calling for a judicial inquiry. I would say that it is true that some of the witnesses were calling for a judicial inquiry, possibly close to a majority, but not most. One of the things the committee could help out with would be to identify in our report precisely who called for what.

May I make an alternative suggestion. If people do not believe that unanimous reports of the fisheries committee are going to be listened to, there is a procedure in the House to move to concur in the report of the committee. With respect to the fisheries committee, I invite my colleagues in the House of Commons the next time we table a unanimous report to move a motion to concur in that report.

• (1320)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. Because of the brevity of time allowed, I will narrow my focus to a couple of very important historical points. We have had a lot of talk about the need or the lack of need for a judicial inquiry.

I would like to go back to the 1994 inquiry and the recommendations that came out of that inquiry and some of the pitfalls that I believe were suffered by that inquiry. Without the ability to swear witnesses and have people appear under oath, it is very difficult sometimes to actually get down to that little kernel of truth.

In 1994 we had a disastrous sockeye run on the Fraser River. This came the heels of a disastrous run in 1992. History will tell us that there are a number of things that influence the fish run. In 1914 there was a serious rock slide in Hell's Gate. It prevented the majority of the salmon from reaching the spawning grounds. There are environmental factors. There are natural catastrophes. There is overfishing. There are a number of issues, such as warm water, that can prevent salmon from reaching the spawning grounds.

However, we do know that in 1994 the river was opened by the then fisheries minister, Brian Tobin. To prevent the Americans from catching too much of their quota, he allowed our Canadian fishermen to overfish the stocks and he came within hours, not days, not months, of forcing the extinction of the Adams River stock. It was done with a total denial of what was going wrong in the fishery and trying to use the fishery for political means.

Nobody on the Liberal side of this House needs to lecture anyone else in this House about using politics in the fishery. We have seen the results up close and personal on political use of the fishery.

This is not about politics. This is about conservation. This is about a resource that is important to British Columbia, to the commercial fishery, to the recreational fishery, and that is extremely important to the aboriginal fishery. Those three interest groups will not have anything to worry about if we do not make some changes to the way the fishery is managed, and will be managed, in British Columbia.

There are a number of stocks that are facing extinction. We have federal law under SARA, the Species at Risk Act, that is supposed to protect some of these stocks, and the flagrant abuse of enforcement and conservation practices. There are number of issues at stake here. There has been report after report. Unfortunately, those reports have not been listened to, they have not been followed up on, and, to a large degree, they have been disregarded, and sometimes for political reasons.

We do not have to go to 1994 or 1992 or 1914. We only have to go back to 2001 and look at the recommendations on the Fraser River salmon fishery.

The first recommendation was that DFO return to a single commercial fishery for all Canadians. That is a recommendation. It does not mean that it can be implemented. It does not mean that it takes into serious consideration all the needs and the special constitutional rights of first nations. However, it was a recommendation. I do not think it was ever looked at, thought about, or given two thoughts. I think it was just passed over by the government in power.

The second recommendation was that the government ensures that DFO respects the public's right to fish and that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans reassert his authority to manage the fishery. We are still not seeing the fishery managed.

Recommendation number three dealt with pilot sales by first nations. There is an argument that would say pilot sales by first nations are legal. There is an argument that would say that pilot sales may be problematic. I would probably err on the side that said pilot sales are legal. Other members may disagree with me. However, should we look at the recommendation, thoroughly examine it, and try to come to some conclusion? Yes, absolutely.

• (1325)

Recommendations 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, all the way to number 10, and I do not have to read them all out, were largely ignored by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, DFO and the House of Commons. We have a fishery again this year that is in serious trouble. We have a unique relationship between first nations fishery and the resource. We have third, fourth and fifth generation fishermen in the commercial fishery, the gillnetters, the seiners, and a number of groups that use this resource and there must be a way to allow them to access it and share it based on conservation.

One argument that I have yet to hear from the government side of the House is conservation. We have seen the results of socio-economic policy in the fishery on the east coast. We have seen it in two northern cod openings in the last decade under the Liberal government, both of them within eight months of an election.

Far be it from me to say for a moment that anyone would use politics and allow a stock of fish that has been there for 500 years to be annihilated. There are other circumstances. Is water temperature a factor? Absolutely. Is overfishing a factor? Absolutely. Is illegal fishing a factor? Absolutely. Is misreporting a factor? Absolutely. If we have a judicial inquiry, we can get to the bottom of the misreporting.

Had we had a judicial inquiry on cod fish on the east coast, we could have brought in the skippers. I can name a good many of them who fished in one area off the Grand Banks and reported their catch from another, as happens all across this nation.

The need for a judicial inquiry is not to point the finger at first nations, seiners or gillnetters. It is to recognize that we have a unique fishery. There is only one way of getting to the bottom of it, and that is to have people appear before us under oath, especially in wrap up, to allow the Department of Fisheries and Oceans officials to tell us what they actually know about this fishery and about the mismanagement of it without the threat of being fired or losing their jobs.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of the post-season review was a recommendation. Stakeholders have supported it because it is what they want.

There are problems with the member's call for a judicial inquiry. That is not going to occur in a timely fashion. The information that our fisheries groups need will not be made public in a timely fashion for the 2005 fishery. That is the major problem with the member's solution.

I want to ask the member a couple of questions on enforcement and the use of a terminal fishery. Would his party support, which is something I have advocated, the use of recall-like amendments where we could apprehend the resources of inveterate poachers, those assets would be sold, and the moneys would go into the fisheries to support enforcement and habitat reclamation rather than going to general revenue.

In other words, when inveterate poachers are found, they are tried, prosecuted, their assets apprehended, and those assets would be sold and the moneys would go to support our enforcement groups and habitat reclamation.

The second question I have deals with the use of a terminal fishery with respect to supporting hatcheries. If hatcheries were allowed to have first dibs in the terminal fishery, those fish sold and that money could then be put back into the hatcheries. Hatcheries would be a self-sustaining, self-fulfilling, and self-funding asset to our fisheries.

I would like to ask the member what he thinks about these two ideas and whether his party would support them.

• (1330)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I think that both of those ideas have some merit, but also have certain flaws that are inherent.

First, I will talk about a terminal fishery to supply the hatcheries. What we have seen in the last three or four years in British Columbia and what we have seen in the last several years on the east coast is

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the deliberate divestiture on behalf of the federal government of the hatchery program.

We do not have any hatcheries any more on the east coast. They have all been privatized. The hatchery program is only there for the aquaculture industry. Some of the recreational communities and river groups have river specific fish that they take to the hatchery and put a few smolts back in the river. The member can have that, it is a great idea. The member can get his guys to support that and we can probably get support for the hatchery system on this side without too much trouble.

The issue that the member spoke about was the ability of enforcement officers to confiscate property from inveterate poachers, people who are going to reoffend and reoffend, and use that money to supply DFO with greater funding, either to work on salmon enhancement programs, riparian strip enhancement, stream bed enhancement or whatever that type of environmental enhancement.

It sounds like a good idea at first glance. The argument that has always come out against that from the legal community has been that it leads to entrapment. All of a sudden there is a greater targeting of poachers and entrapment. Therefore, those ill-gotten gains, even though they are ill-gotten gains, end up being abused both by not only the person breaking the law but by the person enforcing the law. I am not saying I agree with that, but that is the argument against it.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to expand a little on the hatchery question. The member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has the Goldstream Hatchery in his riding. The federal government cut \$16,000 out of its funding. It has cut almost \$4 to \$5 million out of British Columbia hatchery programs this year. What does my colleague think about the way those kinds of programs are being handled by the government?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House the results of those types of cuts. At one time we had 75 or 80 rivers in Nova Scotia that had multi-sea winter returning salmon, salmon that went off to Greenland, returned down by the coast of Labrador and Newfoundland, into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, into P.E.I., and around the coast into Nova Scotia. Today we have 17 rivers that sustain real consecutive return runs of salmon. We have no hatchery program. We have no enhancement. We have a total denial by the federal government that there is a problem.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to this motion. It is important that I quickly touch on what the motion is calling for.

The motion states:

—that the maintenance of the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River is crucial for conservation and for commercial, recreational and aboriginal users;—

I do not know who could not support that.

The motion is to basically acknowledge that this resource has been mismanaged, that decisions have been made without proper science and that as a consequence we should have a judicial inquiry to determine the cause of the collapse of the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River.

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Mr. Speaker, the Fraser River is probably close to where you reside in British Columbia. This is all stuff that we have seen going on for years. I do not know how any member could not support this motion.

When I was the vice-chair of the fisheries committee in 1998, we brought the entire fisheries committee out to British Columbia that year. We heard testimony from one end of British Columbia to the other. We heard testimony from the stakeholders, the recreational sector and the commercial sector. The committee travelled to the riding of the member for Vancouver Island North, to my riding and to the lower mainland. We literally packed hall after all. We heard from very angry, not just fishermen but recreational fishermen, every stakeholder in the group. These people were frustrated beyond anyone's wildest imagination about the mismanagement of the fishery. The chair of the committee at the time was George Baker, who is now in the Senate.

The committee made a number of recommendations which were supported by all parties. Unfortunately, six years later in 2004 what are we talking about? We are still talking about the mismanagement of the fishery.

The member just talked about the 2001 fisheries committee report. We also have the 2003 fisheries committee report which states that we should invest in more science and in more enforcement personnel instead of cutting them, but each report keeps talking about mismanagement.

Nothing has been done. If we do not look after the resource it will not be there. This is not something that we can take for granted.

Where does the money go? Where is the money spent in this department? When I was first elected in 1997, I said that there were no fish in the Rideau Canal. Why do we have an ivory tower here with thousands of DFO personnel? Why is almost half the entire DFO budget spent in Ottawa? Why are we not managing that resource on the east coast and managing the resource on the west coast? Why are we not bringing the science that is managing the resource to the source?

We should bring the management of that resource out to each coast. We should remove the politics and the partisanship.

I remember when fisheries ministers would open fisheries weeks before an election purely for political gain and to the detriment of the fish stocks.

I heard the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca talking about this. I could have brought in his quotes from the last six or seven years in Parliament because I clearly remember what he said on these issues. He is singing from a different song sheet today but I guess that song sheet comes from the department.

The member has great proposals. Let us look at the hatchery program. In his own backyard, the Goldstream River hatchery, which is run by volunteers, does an outstanding job but it receives a mere pittance from the federal government. What does the federal government do? It comes and it cuts even that.

The government does not cut the resources in the ivory tower, just out at the front lines. When we hear stories that fisheries officers

have their boats tied up to the docks because there is not enough money in the budget for fuel it makes us shake our heads.

I applaud the committee. The member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, a new member in the House, came to the British Columbia Conservative caucus and said that this was a serious issue. He advocated for it. He is on the fisheries committee. I would also argue that he was largely responsible for getting that committee out to British Columbia to hear witnesses.

Yes, the committee can do this great work and write a great report, but will the government do anything? The record speaks for itself. Why are we even talking about this today? Did the government listen to the Baker report? Did it listen to the 2001 report or the 2003 report? Had the government implemented the recommendations would we be standing in this House today talking about this crisis?

● (1335)

We could always encourage a judicial inquiry. We could put in a scoping clause. We could ask the inquiry to do a preliminary report, appreciating that a full report does take longer, and ask that the preliminary report be delivered before decisions are set in place for the 2005 fishery, but we must start taking these steps. It would be a great investment of taxpayer dollars to hold this judicial inquiry, and then to see some real action.

If we had followed the recommendation in the Baker report of 1998, which talked about moving the management of the resource to the source, I would argue that we would have been a lot better off today.

People wonder why we are cynical on this side of the House. Whether it is the sponsorship inquiry, the government refuses to answer questions; whether it is on immigration matters, it refuses to answer questions. I have been a member here for a few terms and it seems to me that once the Liberals get to the Rocky Mountains they only see the Pacific Ocean. They seem to forget that there is actually more of Canada on the other side of the Rocky Mountains. Whether it is the fishery or it is airport rents, it does not seem to matter. The Fraser River is in British Columbia but the government's actions demonstrate that it does not care.

For years the government has been warned about the east coast cod fishery. It should have listened and acted, but instead the fishery collapsed. For years we heard similar warnings about the west coast salmon fishery. It should have listened and acted, but the fishery collapsed.

The government must take immediate steps to fix this problem. History has proven that it cannot be trusted to take good advice. It has been there. There are permanent records. I worked with the member from Prince Edward Island and I appreciate his comments on many of those reports. He knows what I am talking about. He was there. He helped draft those recommendations and those recommendations have still not been followed.

It should not have come to this. I would have been the last one to ask for a judicial inquiry but it has come to this. Nobody can deny that fact. The House owes every fisherman in British Columbia, regardless of where they are involved in the industry, an apology, and we owe them our best effort to make it right.

I would ask all members to remove the partisan politics and let us start getting some honest answers. Let us start looking for solutions. Let us let the judicial inquiry do some work, concurrently with the work that the standing committee is doing on fisheries, but let us make sure that this does not happen again.

• (1340)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out for the hon. member and several other members who spoke this morning about the serious and troublesome problems in the cod fishery, that the shutdown in 1992 was made by the hon. John Crosbie in the previous government. I think we should all be cognizant of the fact that the mismanagement occurred under the reign of the hon. member's party, not this government's reign.

As I pointed out earlier, I spent three days in British Columbia and I do agree with a lot of what the member said. This is a complex and challenging issue. However where we fundamentally disagree is on the call for a judicial inquiry, which I do not support.

The member talked about a song book this morning. I have the song book prepared by the Conservative member for Delta—Richmond East which has been circulated through the House and throughout British Columbia. The report says, “The Department of Fisheries and Oceans' allegation that warm water decimated the early Stuart run is clearly a fabrication”, and the report goes on to blame a wall of aboriginal nets for the disaster. In my view that song sheet is provocative, explosive, divisive and it is not helpful. The member will certainly want to get that song book before any judicial inquiry.

Our committee report will be coming out soon. The Williams commission, which is independent, impartial and transparent, is out there doing its work. Would the member not agree with me that the judicial inquiry would serve no useful purpose in this case whatsoever?

• (1345)

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, I could not disagree more. The hon. member said that it would serve no useful purpose.

The member referred to 1992 when it was the hon. John Crosbie who made a decision. I accept that there were politics involved in that decision. I was not elected at that time. What I am advocating is that we do not let that happen again. What I am advocating is that it happened then and it has been happening ever since. We must remove the partisanship from these decisions.

Why are the Liberals so opposed to a judicial inquiry? Are there facts they are afraid may come out? He talked about the member for Delta—Richmond East. He has made all kinds of statements, many with which I would disagree, but we should let them be part of the judicial inquiry. I have no problem with that. The judicial inquiry will rule on that. Let us get to the truth instead of pointing fingers.

The member stood up and did exactly what I asked him not to do, which was to turn this into a partisan debate. I accept that in 1992

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decisions were made at the peril of the cod fishery on the east coast. However that is what we are trying to prevent.

I would ask them to support this motion and remove the partisanship in this place in the interest of the salmon stocks in British Columbia.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, too, have been on a previous fishery committee that looked at the issue of the salmon on the B.C. coast and in the Fraser River.

I agree with a lot that has been said in terms that there are serious problems, but a judicial inquiry is not the way to go from my point of view. We are parliamentarians. Committees can work in a non-partisan sense. I think we should accept our responsibilities as parliamentarians to do that work, to make the recommendations and to demand that the minister and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans abide by those recommendations.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more about the committee doing the work, but I disagree with the hon. member when he says that we should not have a concurrent judicial inquiry.

The committee is doing that work he talks about. I sat with the member on the committee and he did great work. However the problem is still here today because minister after minister has completely ignored the recommendations of these committees at the peril of the stocks on both coasts. Let us fix it once and for all.

• (1350)

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on this matter, particularly since, over the past few days, I have had the opportunity to become more familiar with this issue. As a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, I took part in the trip to meet a number of witnesses and stakeholders with regard to the Fraser River sockeye salmon problem in B.C.

Just before I start my speech that will, I believe, be interrupted by statements by members and oral questions, I want to say the following. Given what I have just heard about depoliticizing the debate on the Fraser River sockeye salmon, I would have liked our Conservative colleagues to have done the same thing with regard to Bill C-9. This legislation concerns politicizing local and regional development throughout Quebec. Currently, I think that, yes, it should have been done, and it is not too late because the debate is not over yet. So, the debate on local and regional development in Quebec is being politicized and we are being asked to depoliticize the fisheries issue in relation to another matter. This is somewhat inconsistent.

On one hand, with regard to this particular subject, I first want to extend a vote of thanks, of appreciation to the Conservative Party for allowing us, today, to talk in greater depth and detail about this very important issue for British Columbia. I think that all regions, including my own, can have an interest in this issue. When it comes to species conservation, Quebecers, particularly people in Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, like those in other coastal ridings, are interested.

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So, I congratulate the Conservative Party for having introduced this matter today and, particularly, the Conservative critic from St. John's South—Mount Pearl and the interested members who had the opportunity to talk about this matter on various occasions, particularly the Conservative member for Delta—Richmond East. I also want to recognize those who took part in this trip and who are working hard on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

When we went to Vancouver to meet people, we did so thanks to an amazing amount of work. We too often forget the work done by committee staff. Let me say that over the past few years in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, I have had the opportunity of seeing it from a real-life viewpoint. Now, as a member of Parliament, it is even more obvious. I think it is appropriate to congratulate the people who work for each of our committees. Some of them help us figure out the issues and some provide us with information or organize the meetings. Three days in Vancouver, in the rain, with many hours of discussions and listening on subjects related to our portfolio; it took a lot of work to prepare for that. The committee staff worked very well, and I really must pay tribute to them.

I would also like to express special thanks, and many thanks, to the witnesses. We held public hearings as we have done on other occasions. I remember very well that in the matter of Atlantic groundfish, the committee went to meet the people in Quebec, in Gaspé, particularly, and in other provinces, including Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

The witnesses who came to meet us took the committee's work very seriously, and the committee has tried to do its work professionally and conscientiously. I believe the members of the committee worked together respectfully and listened attentively to all those who came to testify. There were a number of groups.

•(1355)

These people spoke of their experiences and expressed their views.

We also heard from commercial fishers, the committee's first witnesses. Many fishing groups, including commercial fishers, benefit from the sockeye salmon in the Fraser River. At that time, I had the opportunity—I have said this before and I will say it again—to hear Ms. Nguyen, spokesperson for the BC Vietnamese Fishermen's Association. The association represents commercial sockeye salmon fishers. I can tell you that Ms. Nguyen's testimony was extremely moving.

She told us, clearly and simply—I am repeating it today for those watching—that she agreed to come to Canada in the hope of sharing in the wealth of the Fraser River sockeye salmon industry. Her words were filled with emotion. At one point, even, she had difficulty continuing.

She spoke from the heart, saying all she and her group wanted was to join in the sockeye harvest on the Fraser River. Yet, given everything that has happened in recent years, they now find themselves with practically nothing, making what I would call a miserable income.

She spoke candidly and eloquently. Ms. Nguyen deserves our praise. The committee members had the opportunity to hear her, and I imagine they feel the same way as I do about what she had to say.

Then there was a group of sport fishers, recreational fishers as they say. They gave a very interesting presentation on their vision, their way of looking at things. Essentially, what they said was that illegal fishing was, in their opinion, mainly practised by the Aboriginal groups.

The Fraser River, I should point out, for those less familiar with it—I was one of them until recently myself—is 1,000 kilometres long. So its role is far from insignificant. It has generated considerable income from the salmon resource, hundreds of millions of dollars in the past. Now that figure is down to tens of millions. Hon. members can see what a difference that is, and what an impact this would have on fishers. So, those who fish for sport expressed their point of view.

We also had representations from the aboriginal groups, and the main thrust of their testimony was that for them the Fraser River red salmon, the sockeye in other words, was more than a source of food or income; it was also a continuation of their ancestral practices. We are all aware that this is a controversial point, and it is hard to know how to interpret the ritual consumption and other uses of these famous fish. Their presentations gave us a very good idea of their point of view.

I think my time is very nearly up and that we will have an opportunity to continue after members' statements and oral question period.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have ten minutes later on to finish his speech.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this statement, the fourth in my series analyzing whether the courts are protecting our children, I would like to draw the House's attention to the case of Sergio Arcana-Martinez of Toronto who used an Internet chat room to lure an 11-year-old girl.

Fifteen hours after he seized her from a public meeting place, took her to his apartment and sexually abused this poor 11-year-old, Martinez dropped her off alone at a Toronto subway station.

The police and the Crown both asked for a 10 to 12 year sentence. Judge Bruce Hawkins ignored these requests and sentenced the child predator to time served while awaiting trial, namely 21 months; 21 months for kidnapping an 11-year-old girl, terrifying and sexually assaulting her.

Toronto Chief of Police Julian Fantino stated, "The system has failed this young girl. The system has failed all of us". I agree. The courts are not protecting our children.

* * *

●(1400)

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our men and women in uniform continue to make us proud. The Canadian Forces special operations military unit, Joint Task Force Two, has been awarded the United States presidential unit citation for heroism in battle for its service in Afghanistan.

During a ceremony in California on December 7, President Bush presented the citation to the American commander of joint special operations task force south, a multinational force in which our JTF 2 personnel were involved. The citation is given to U.S. and allied nations for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy.

This is only the second time a Canadian unit has been so honoured, the first being the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry for heroism during the Korean war.

Because of the nature of the JTF 2 unit, we may never know who these brave Canadians are. Without knowing individual names, on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, and all Canadians, allow me to extend our thanks, gratitude, and our blessings for safety, to those who fight against terrorism for a secure and safe world.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the northern part of my riding, the town of Parent, located 275 km from La Tuque, is completely isolated. Its only link to surrounding urban centres is a single unsurfaced road and an airport with a dirt airstrip.

In light of the risks facing the population of this town and surrounding reserves if a disaster were to happen, or just to meet the development needs of this area, the municipality of La Tuque has requested the assistance of the Department of Transport to make the area safe and foster its development by asphaltting the airport's only airstrip.

This project should have had the approval of the Minister of Transport, if he really believes in regional development, yet the assistance was denied. The Minister of Transport has not fully grasped this urgent need. This is why we are urging him to reconsider his decision as soon as possible.

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CENTRE D'INTÉGRATION SOCIALE ET PROFESSIONNELLE DE LAVAL

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the team at the Centre d'intégration sociale et professionnelle de Laval on setting up a computer room which will be available free of charge to the centre's users.

The CISEP offers a wide range of services to members of any cultural community, children as well as adults, and acts as a stepping stone to school or the labour market.

The new computer stations will be used for computer courses and to surf the Internet for school research or job search purposes.

This is the kind of initiative that facilitates the integration of newcomers into our society. I thank the CISEP for its initiative.

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[English]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts is hosting the first major museum exhibition of contemporary art from my riding of Nunavut, Canada's newest territory. The exhibit opened on November 26, 2004 and continues until January 30, 2005. The artworks, all created in the last 50 years, include sculptures, prints, wall hangings, photographs, videos and sound installations.

I would like to thank all the people who worked so hard to ensure this event would happen, especially the federal government, which supported this initiative from the beginning; Consul General Ron Irwin; INAC; and the Departments of Canadian Heritage and Foreign Affairs.

I would also like to thank the Peabody Essex Museum for showcasing Inuit culture and traditional Inuit knowledge, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.

* * *

PRINCE ALBERT CENTENNIAL

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the City of Prince Albert on its 100th anniversary as a city.

Prince Albert started as a settlement along the banks of the Saskatchewan River in the 1860s and soon emerged as a major centre for trade and development in the Northwest Territories. Upon Saskatchewan's entry into the Canadian federation, the thriving community of Prince Albert was incorporated as a city.

Prince Albert has a rich history. It has been home to three prime ministers: Wilfrid Laurier, Mackenzie King and John Diefenbaker. It has been a major factory for outstanding hockey players and coaches throughout Canada and North America. It was a pioneer in developing the model for our modern health care system.

I know that all members will want to join with me in offering the residents of Prince Albert our best wishes on their city's 100th birthday celebration.

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•(1405)

CHRISTMAS FULL OF CARING DINNER

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the 10th annual Christmas Full of Caring Dinner was held in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. This event, which raises money for Feed Others of Dartmouth, a community group that feeds the homeless, started in 1994 and sprang from the compassionate and productive mind of Neil Black, inspired by long-time patrons John and Margaret Savage and carried on this year by Paul and Mary O'Regan and an army of dedicated volunteers that has for a decade made this event a staple of the Christmas season.

The late Fred Marsland and the great Pat Connolly and Bill Carr have given freely of their time, as have so many others. Today, Doug Livingstone, Hector Muise, Debbie Norris, Marg Scott, Peggy Landes, Susan MacKay, Karen Goudie, Kim and Joyce McGinn and Elaine and Paul Robinson, as well as many others, put countless hours into this project, which is devoted to providing comfort and dignity to the least advantaged. This year's event was the most successful ever.

This event is what Christmas is all about. I know all members will join me in commending this great committee.

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[*Translation*]

SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Réal Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, stakeholders in shipbuilding agree on the need for a marine policy. In this area, as in many others, the federal government gives with one hand and takes away with the other, according to Denise Verreault, CEO of Les Méchins shipyard. Individual protests have not been successful to date and will never solve the problem.

The best example is Davie shipyard in Lévis, a shining example of expertise and infrastructure, which unfortunately has filed for bankruptcy. Thanks to subsidies from the Quebec government through a trustee in bankruptcy, it is on life support, all because the Canadian government is not doing its homework.

There is an urgent need for the federal government to implement a marine policy that ensures, once and for all, that our shipyards are sustainable and able to compete on an international level.

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ROBERT GORDON TEATHER

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the efforts of a retired RCMP officer who recently passed away, Corporal Robert Gordon Teather.

[*English*]

Corporal Bob Teather joined the RCMP in 1967 and served primarily within British Columbia in a variety of roles until his retirement in 1998.

On April 25, 1983 he was awarded the Cross of Valour, the highest Canadian bravery award that can be bestowed in peacetime, as a result of his actions and courage when he rescued two fishermen trapped in an overturned hull of a boat in September 1981, nearly

losing his own life in the process. Indeed, his actions had serious repercussions which impacted his future quality of life.

He is the only member of the RCMP to ever have been bestowed with the Cross of Valour. Corporal Teather is also leaving a significant legacy through his mentoring and books. A memorial service will be held on December 10, 2004.

I encourage members of the House to join me in recognizing this most extraordinary individual.

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SANITEC CANADA

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize a Regina based company that has developed a product which may make Canada a global leader when it comes to the treatment of biohazardous waste.

Earlier this year the World Health Organization put out a statement that said, "Unsafe health care waste management leads to death and disability". I am very proud that a company from my riding has developed a product that directly combats this problem.

Sanitec Canada has developed a product called the Ozonator, which uses ozone to sterilize hospital waste while reducing the volume of this waste by 80%. Until now dangerous hospital waste could only be disposed of through incineration, a process which releases hazardous materials into the atmosphere and raises significant environmental concerns.

The success of Sanitec is even more amazing since this company has yet to receive any funding from the federal government.

Today I call upon the government to closely examine the issue of biohazardous waste and take a look at what is truly an innovative product from Saskatchewan.

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GRENADA MEDICAL CLINIC

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the wrath of hurricane Ivan was felt thousands of miles away, but that did not stop two doctors living in Wallaceburg from feeling the pain of its devastation. Grenada is where Dr. Atoe studied medicine and met his wife, Dr. Gemma Bain-Atoe.

The Atoes' way of giving back to another community was to build a medical clinic in Grenada. The clinic has been hit by hurricanes and constantly suffers power outages. It is difficult to provide proper medical care. The Atoes recently sent a very large generator to the clinic. The residents of Wallaceburg and surrounding areas held their fundraising event on November 19 to support the doctors' project and raised over \$7,200.

It was a successful evening thanks to the residents of Wallaceburg. The true generosity to help out another community that has been impacted by a natural disaster speaks volumes for the spirit of the people of Wallaceburg and the support of their doctors.

•(1410)

[*Translation*]

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, December 10, is the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the founding of a new world that advocates equality for all.

[*English*]

Our Canadian charter is an important example of such ambition, and we heard this morning a landmark decision from the Supreme Court reinforcing the right to equal marriage for gay and lesbian couples, one proud step forward for Canada.

However, for every step forward, there are two steps backward. The United Nations announced this morning that one billion children are without basic food and shelter and live in poverty, disease and despair. At the same time, the Bush administration wants to spend one trillion dollars on star wars. This money could address the fundamental needs of every single one of those children for housing, food, sanitation, health care and education.

Parliament has a responsibility to uphold human rights and that means we must at once implement equal marriage laws and fight star wars. Let us act swiftly and with resolve.

* * *

LONDON KNIGHTS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the London Knights major junior A hockey team skated into the history books last night in Kitchener: 28, 0 and 1 to start the season, 18 wins in a row and counting. This ties a record set by the 1978-79 Brandon Wheat Kings.

Coach Dale Hunter and co-owner brother Mark Hunter have built the team worthy of hosting this season's Memorial Cup. This young team leads the Ontario Hockey League in all categories: the league's leading goalie, the Knights; the top three in scoring, all from the Knights; the top power play and the top penalty kill, all from London.

Yes, there are stars on this team, but the success stems from the desire to work together as a team and have fun doing it. I am here to say as a fan that it sure is fun to watch, and go, Knights, go.

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[*Translation*]

GRANDE GUIGNOLÉE DES MÉDIAS

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, December 9, is the annual Grande Guignolée des médias.

For three years now, all media outlets in Quebec, radio, television or written media, have been involved in this fund-raising drive for the less fortunate. Journalists will be taking to the streets with a red container in hand asking Quebeckers for a donation.

These volunteers are appealing to the generosity of Quebeckers from all regions in Quebec. The money collected will go to various

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local agencies such as the Sun Youth Organization, St. Vincent de Paul and Montréal Harvest.

Corporate sponsors are also lending a hand. Donations can left at any St. Hubert restaurant or Jean Coutu pharmacy.

I want to congratulate the Grande Guignolée des médias volunteers and organizers on their admirable work. The holiday season is a time for sharing. We must remember that not everyone will have a joyous holiday without our help.

The Bloc Québécois joins with the event spokespersons, Rita Lafontaine, Vincent Gratton and Louis-Josée Houde in calling upon Quebeckers to give generously.

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[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker:

A cabinet minister is aahing and oohing,
Romanian stripper could be her undoing,
Biggest story in this town,
Gonna get a dressing down,
Termination has been signed,
It's the Liberal bump and grind.

We need new Canadians, she has the answer.
You can become an exotic dancer.
And if you're a Liberal volunteer
She's gonna let you stay right here.
Step up to the front, all the others won't mind.
It's the Liberal bump and grind.

You might be a doctor or a nurse,
Improve your chances by stripping first.
Chemist or engineer, heavy or gaunt
Your chances expand if you do the full Monty.
But don't let them touch you or else you'll get fined.
It's the Liberal bump and grind.

She isn't quite sure if she's coming or going.
Her cover's been blown and the naked truth's showing.
Doing partisan favours has led to a bashin'
You can't jump the queue in the name of compassion.
It's time for the PM to make up his mind.
It's the Liberal bump and grind.

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•(1415)

PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Peace Research Institute in Dundas, Ontario was founded in 1976 by Dr. Hanna Newcombe and the late Dr. Alan Newcombe.

For three decades, during times of great change in the world, the private non-profit organization dedicated its efforts to international peace advocacy and research. The institute conducted and published peace research in the anticipation that the presentation of facts may drive out myth and lay the foundation for a new society and a new humanity.

Oral Questions

Hanna Newcombe is now in her mid-eighties and legally blind. Thus the Peace Research Institute is closing down. Hanna herself, however, insists that she will continue to work for peace.

I extend congratulations to Dr. Newcombe for a vocation well spent.

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[*Translation*]

LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I attended the 10th summit of La Francophonie, which was held in Burkina Faso. The theme this year was “La Francophonie, a community that supports sustainable development”.

Some of the negative effects of globalization, such as increased inequality and poverty, require our attention.

It is the hope of the summit organizers to encourage conditions that will foster shared growth and progress. The disadvantaged member countries of La Francophonie are calling for support from the more advanced member countries to help them develop more quickly.

We call upon the Canadian government to accelerate its policy of reducing the debt of the poorest countries and to commit to a realistic plan that will enable it to achieve the aid target of 0.7% of GDP by the year 2015.

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[*English*]

ROY OVERFORS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is a very sad day in the House of Commons. Last week, we lost one of our great House of Commons security personnel, Sergeant Roy Overfors.

Sergeant Roy Overfors served proudly in the House of Commons security services for over 20 years, protecting and serving members of Parliament, employees and thousands of visitors to Parliament Hill.

He left behind his loving wife, Cathy, and two devoted sons, Jason and John. I would like to speak directly to John and Jason and say, I know you have lost your father, but your father was a very decent and honest man. We thank you for sharing him with us in the House of Commons.

The House of Commons security personnel provide us with the safety and security we need to do our jobs for all Canadians. On behalf of all members of Parliament and those in the Senate, we salute the memory of Sergeant Roy Overfors. To all the men and women of the House of Commons security staff, we say God bless each and every one of them, and God bless Sergeant Roy Overfors.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Ethics Commissioner said that there was nothing preventing the Prime Minister from asking questions or, more important, firing the minister of immigration. The Prime Minister, by refusing to do so, is accepting the standard for his government of trafficking in ministerial permits for selected friends and campaign workers of the minister.

Why does the Prime Minister condone this low ethical standard? Does he believe that this is the best minister of immigration that he can produce from his Liberal caucus?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a certain standard of decency that ought to apply in this House despite the fact that hon. members have immunity. The fact is the member opposite has just breached that.

The fact is there is an independent Ethics Commissioner. He was put in place by this Parliament in order to look at these questions. That is why we want to give him the right to do so. What the hon. member is arguing is that we should take that right away.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner is not there as a shield for the Prime Minister to dither and dodge on this issue.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, the Ethics Commissioner revealed that the one and only question submitted to him by the minister concerned the campaign worker. There was nothing about meetings in clubs, nothing about invasion of privacy, nothing about threats to MPs and nothing at all about fraudulent campaign expenses.

How long is the minister going to continue to try our patience?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ethics commissioner is the one to decide on his mandate, on what he will examine. There are no restrictions.

The real question is this: how long is the member going to continue to abuse his position as a parliamentarian with these questions and insinuations concerning another member?

● (1420)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am just glad to see the Prime Minister finally get up and answer questions for us.

Yesterday the Ethics Commissioner confirmed the only thing that he was investigating was the immigration permit that the minister gave to her campaign worker.

For the last three weeks the minister has refused to answer questions about deportees, questionable election donations, privacy violations and inappropriate staff conduct. Day after day she has stood in this House and has told us that the commissioner was looking into those things. That was false. The minister misled this House about the scope of the Ethics Commissioner's investigation.

Oral Questions

When will the Prime Minister simply do the right thing and fire that minister?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I referred the issue of this individual permit to the Ethics Commissioner and I have asked him to report back. I am very confident that I have not broken any rules. It has the appearance of it and for that it gives me concern and I have referred it to the Ethics Commissioner.

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MARRIAGE

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Supreme Court of Canada refused to agree with the Prime Minister's position that the traditional definition of marriage is unconstitutional. The court refused to answer the question and referred the matter back to Parliament.

Why did the Prime Minister mislead Canadians when he stated that the Supreme Court upheld lower court decisions on the issue of constitutionality of the traditional definition of marriage?

Why does the Prime Minister continue to play politics with this important issue?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would recommend to the hon. member that he read the judgment in its entirety. The judgment fully supports our draft legislation organized around equality rights and freedom of religion.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, coming from the justice minister, that is a disgrace. He should read the decision. The Supreme Court also ruled that the provisions of the draft bill dealing with the protection of religious officials was outside Parliament's jurisdiction.

How does the government propose to protect not only religious officials, but also public officials, such as marriage commissioners who, for reasons of conscience, cannot support same sex marriage? What about public officials, not only religious officials?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect the hon. member, but the more I hear from him, the more I am convinced he has not read the judgment.

The judgment is clear in its respect for freedom of religion as a foundational principle under the charter. It said that the provinces can add to that protection, not detract from it.

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[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for Quebec has admitted he is powerless. The Minister of Transport has said that the new Bombardier project was "big enough to provide jobs", including in Ontario.

Since 55% of the aerospace industry is based in Quebec and the momentum must be encouraged, will the Minister of Transport admit that, in the case of Bombardier, it would be better to increase Quebec's share rather than to resort to "scattering"?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my discussions with the aerospace industry from all across this country, they all agreed that Bombardier is a critical piece of that industrial cluster. We are working with the aerospace industry in all parts of the country. We are dealing with Bombardier. We will have a strong aerospace industry going forward as we have had in the past.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the automotive sector, Ottawa openly favours concentration in Ontario. Investing to save the GM plant in Quebec would have been "irresponsible", according to the federal government at the time. But Ontario's automotive industry had to be given \$500 million right in the middle of an election. Strangely, when it comes to aerospace, Ottawa no longer wants to concentrate. It wants to disperse and scatter.

Will the Minister of Transport admit that he, a minister from Quebec, was given the task of selling this in Quebec?

● (1425)

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our strategy continues to be to build a strong automotive industry for all of Canada. Yes, a lot of it is concentrated in Ontario. We intend to build a strong aerospace industry for all of Canada. Yes, a lot of it is concentrated in the province of Quebec, but we will have a strong industry for all of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec industry minister considers that the Bombardier project will only come to fruition if the federal government and the Quebec government have the same commitment.

In this context, how can we be sure that, in his statement about sharing the economic spinoffs from the Bombardier project, the Minister of Transport is not softening up public opinion to having these spinoffs scattered all over Canada, rather than concentrated in Quebec, as would be natural and desirable?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody has shown more will and more drive to ensure we have a strong aerospace industry in Canada than the government has shown. We will continue to ensure that we have a strong aerospace industry, but it will be based on where the economic strengths are in this country. Undoubtedly, Quebec will get a large portion of that industry, but other parts of Canada will benefit as well because that is where efficiency is.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of Industry justify all the time the federal government has spent on developing an aerospace policy, which has yet to appear? It has taken a huge amount of time to finalize an offer for Bombardier, an offer which has to appear, but no time at all to put \$500 million on the table for Ontario's automotive sector, even though the plans were not yet ready.

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are as ready for Bombardier as Bombardier is ready for us. The reality is it is a moving target. We are having discussions. The details are not fully known but we are working closely with the industry. We will continue to do so. We will not miss any deadlines. We will be there to support those in the aerospace industry when they need it, as they need it, and we will do it in the interests of all Canadian taxpayers.

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MARRIAGE

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Supreme Court has clearly said that same sex couples in Canada should have the right to marry. It is a historic day.

On the three questions asked by the former prime minister, Jean Chrétien, the answers are clear, but on the questions submitted by the current Prime Minister, ones seen widely as a step to avoid making a decision because he could not make up his mind on how he believed and put the issue beyond the election, the Supreme Court has refused to rule.

My question is simply, will the Prime Minister now apologize for delaying equality for Canadians throughout these last months?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has made it very clear that we are dealing with an issue of fundamental rights, that the charter is a pillar of our democracy. We will be introducing legislation as soon as possible in the new year.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has delayed equality and now it looks as though he wants to delay the introduction and establishment of professional credentials for doctors, as well as other professionals in Canada.

We heard a lot about the urgency of ensuring that something would be done about professionally trained doctors who were in Canada but were unable to use their skills. Yet now we hear that for the seventh time the program that was much ballyhooed and promised in the election is being delayed.

My question is simply, when are we going to see some sense of urgency around this issue?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with the provinces. We are working with the professional associations. We are working with all the bodies across this country so that we can bring in the needed measures to ensure

that when new Canadians come to this country with skills, they can put those skills to work.

The leader of the NDP should be under no doubt that we are breaking new ground. It is not the NDP, not the Bloc, not the reform. It is the Liberal Party, the Liberal government, and we are going to do it.

● (1430)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's election laws prohibit anyone from making an indirect campaign donation. Yet the immigration minister accepted a \$5,000 cheque and written right on the cheque was "donation on behalf of" someone different from the person who signed the cheque. Still the minister and her official agent, a lawyer, went ahead and used the money to help her get re-elected.

I ask the Solicitor General, are the police investigating this clear illegality by the minister?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member knows that I do not comment on whether or not any matter is under investigation by any police force in this country. I am a bit surprised that the hon. member, herself a lawyer, would ask that question.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cover-up continues.

Here is another troubling example where the minister's story does not square with the facts. Yesterday she denied that any of her present or past staff were under investigation. Today we learned that security officials have confirmed, unlike the Solicitor General, that one of the minister's former staff is being probed for allegations relating to national security.

Why did the minister tell the House just the opposite?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, it is unacceptable for me as Minister of Public Safety, responsible for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to comment on any investigation. It is equally unacceptable for any minister in this House to comment upon the activities in an operational sense of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the immigration minister repeatedly claims she cannot answer our questions while the Ethics Commissioner is reviewing the situation. Yet according to the testimony of the Ethics Commissioner yesterday, there is "nothing preventing the minister from commenting while under investigation".

Now that the minister's flimsy excuse for avoiding full disclosure has been demolished, will the minister finally inform this House how many ministerial permits she issued in total during the last election, and how many she issued to individuals affecting her own riding?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I referred the issue in question to the Ethics Commissioner.

Oral Questions

I would like to ask why did we bother to spend the amount of time and effort to hire an Ethics Commissioner and put a whole department in place if we have no intentions of waiting for him to respond?

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear that the only thing the minister asked of the Ethics Commissioner was for confidential advice. The only investigation going on is by the Conservative Party of Canada.

Additional concerns have arisen since she raised this issue with the Ethics Commissioner. The Ethics Commissioner informed this House that he has had no contact with the minister since her initial request.

The minister pretends that all of her conduct is under investigation when it is not. Why is the minister misleading Parliament and hiding behind the Ethics Commissioner?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have stood in this House for, I think, three weeks now answering questions to the extent that I am able to answer them. I have asked the Ethics Commissioner to do his work, and I will await his response. I have also indicated in the House that I will share that report when I receive it.

* * *

[Translation]

TEXTILE AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, import quotas for the textile and clothing industry are set to expire on December 31, threatening thousands of jobs in Quebec and Canada.

How can the federal government behave so irresponsibly, and not use the transitional measures available, which would help better prepare the industry and preserve thousands of jobs?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is jumping the gun. I have had the privilege of consulting with many representatives of the textile industry and a great many members in the Liberal caucus who have been forthright and vigorous in putting this case before the government. They have made the point that a decision needs to be taken before the end of this year, and I say to the Liberal caucus, it will be.

[Translation]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 65,000 jobs in Quebec's textile and clothing industry, including several thousand in my riding, are at risk because the government is twiddling its thumbs while the December 31 deadline approaches. Chinese imports are the greatest trade threat in this sector.

How does the government explain the fact that it has not shown any interest in availing itself of the transitional measures allowed under the protocol of accession for China's membership in the WTO? These measures exist; the government does not want to use them. Why not?

● (1435)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am intrigued by these last minute and deathbed repentances from the Bloc. This issue has been before the government for the last number of months. It has been raised squarely by members of the Liberal caucus. We will respond to those representations, and we will deliver a very good program to the textile industry before December 31.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Finance has considered the difficult situation facing the textile and clothing industry. Its unanimous report makes the following recommendations. First, to maintain the duty remission orders for major clothing manufacturers; second, to eliminate duties on apparel fabrics manufactured outside Canada.

Why, instead of taking an insensitive and passive approach, does the federal government not implement the measures suggested by the committee? It would at least be doing something.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the standing committee studied this issue, going back over a year now. It has been very creative in its ideas.

I am pleased to say that members of Parliament, including particularly the member for Ahuntsic and a number of others, have been very aggressive in saying the industry committee's report is good and useful, but we can build on that to do even better.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Boire (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the extent of the federal government's indifference to the situation facing the textile and clothing industry is unacceptable and unbelievable.

How can the Minister of Industry explain to people throughout Quebec, particularly those in Valleyfield, in my riding, who are losing their jobs, that he has no suggestions and, furthermore, is taking none of the measures currently available to him to help them? The people in my riding are calling for help and they need it now.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is any indifference, it is on the part of the Bloc that chose to wait until the last number of days before Parliament adjourns to even raise this issue on the floor of the House of Commons.

Members, like the member for Brome—Missisquoi and others across Quebec and Ontario in the government caucus and others in New Brunswick and Manitoba, have put this issue squarely before the government. Action will be forthcoming, designed by this caucus for Canadian workers, with no help from the Bloc Québécois.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister dithers about whether to fire his Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, real people in the real world continue to suffer.

Oral Questions

Due to the minister's mistakes and some bad publicity, a malnourished baby boy starves in Vietnam while strippers were fast tracked into Canada. This tragedy unfolds, while his adoptive parents and biological sister anguish over his suffering as they await his arrival in this country.

Why does the self-proclaimed minister of hopes and dreams continue to deny this child any hope?

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard about this case two weeks ago, when I read it in the media. If I could have gone over to Vietnam, picked the baby up and brought him here, believe me, I would have done it.

Vietnam will not allow children to leave the country until it has a framework specifically on international adoption. It is working on that with my colleagues in foreign affairs.

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when will it end? The minister has simply politicized the Department of Citizenship of Immigration with partisan favouritism. She has used her position to reward cronies and campaign workers while legitimate Canadians wait in line.

There is a six month backlog for resident cards and a nine month backlog for citizenship cards. Legitimate Canadians who requested citizenship cards nine months ago have not even had their envelopes opened or entered into the system. How long must they wait for integrity and—

• (1440)

The Speaker: The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are so many aspects to that question, I am not sure which one the hon. member would like me to answer.

There has been a 40% increase in applications for Canadian citizenship, which is wonderful. People are moving forward and recognizing how important it is to become citizens. A new computer system has been put into place as well. Nine months is approximately what the timeframe is now. People ought to be patient when we have a big input to come back to.

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FIREARMS PROGRAM

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, taxpayer money is just simply too precious to be wasted on the \$1 billion gun registry boondoggle. Two current Liberal ministers and numerous other Liberal members are on record as joining the majority of Canadians in calling for the elimination of this ineffective program. We have an opportunity this evening to put an end to this abuse.

I ask the Prime Minister this. Will his government follow the lead of the Conservative Party and hold a true free vote so all members can represent their constituents, and finally scrap this wasteful, ineffective gun registry?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The poor member for Prince Edward—Hastings asked a question and now he cannot hear the answer. No one can hear the answer. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has the floor. Everyone wants to hear the answer, including the member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Hon. Anne McLellan: I am not so sure about that, Mr. Speaker. The gun control program, in all its aspects, is an important part of our public safety agenda as the Government of Canada. Let me remind hon. members that we have had over seven million guns registered in the country. Police have made over three million queries to the Canadian firearms information system.

Our gun control program is increasing safety in the country. It is a valuable tool for front line police officers. It is keeping—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Essex.

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BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a December 1 bust in Montreal turned up a gun smuggling ring across our border with the U.S. A cache of handguns, automatic weapons and 642 rounds of ammunition for their immediate use passed by border officials without detection on a day when border security was supposed to be on highest alert. These weapons could also have entered through one of our many unmanned border crossings.

Will the Prime Minister admit his failure to protect Canadians and redirect money from a rifle registry to the RCMP to combat gun smuggling?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have invested now well over \$8 billion in the national security of the country. It was the Prime Minister who created the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. It was the Prime Minister who decided we should have a new border agency, the Canadian Border Services Agency.

That agency is doing a first class job on the front lines in terms of keeping Canadians safe, and working with our American allies to keep them safe.

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AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry with regard to Bombardier, but specific to that company's development of the new C Series jet class of aircraft.

This project is expected to generate \$250 billion over the next 20 years and Bombardier is seeking a favourable interest rate or royalty agreement to fund the government portion of the investment.

Oral Questions

Will the minister please inform the House whether the Government of Canada will commit to the project to ensure that this investment is made in Canada, and renew the government's commitment to the aerospace industry and the many thousands of jobs it provides?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people should know that the aerospace industry employs about 78,800 people in the country. More than half of the employees in the aerospace industry are outside the province of Quebec. The C Series project will be very important to launch Bombardier and the aerospace industry on another chapter of evolution in that industry.

The Government of Canada is working closely with the industry and with Bombardier to ensure that happens.

* * *

• (1445)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Ed Broadbent (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, and it goes to the root of ministerial responsibility.

In recent weeks the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration have all refused to answer serious allegations in the House about wrongdoing by the minister of immigration and senior members of her staff. They have refused to answer on the grounds that the Ethics Commissioner is looking into this.

Is the Prime Minister aware that yesterday in committee the Ethics Commissioner told us that those questions could be, and he implied ought to be, answered in the House and that there was no contradiction between what he was doing and answering questions?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, questions can be answered in the House, but the whole purpose of setting up the Office of the Ethics Commissioner is so an independent officer of Parliament can determine the facts. It is on the determination of those facts that further questions can be answered. It is all about that.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, will she or will she not? That is the question arts groups across Canada are asking because they are being devastated by the fact that the heritage minister has refused to say whether she will reinstate funding for Tomorrow Starts Today.

Tours are not being booked, programs have been cut, and meanwhile the minister continues to do the dance of a thousand veils, or as she calls it, reallocation exercises.

Will the minister commit to full funding for Tomorrow Starts Today? Could she give us that assurance today?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind members of the House that it was this government that reinvested over \$560 million into the arts in May 2001, the largest reinvestment

in the Canada Council. Since that time, the program has been renewed and will continue until at least March 31.

I am pleased to advise members of the House that members on this side of the House are working very hard with the Minister of Finance to ensure that this program is possibly renewed in the budget.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to dither on the recognition of professionally trained immigrants. It is not the Bloc members, it is not the NDP members and it is not the Conservatives who are delaying this program. It is the incompetence of this Liberal government. An official has said, "It's been cancelled seven times, it's totally out of control".

These people want to maximize their contributions to Canada. When will the Prime Minister stop breaking his election promises and get the program going?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the program is already going. We have a team of coordinating deputy ministers who are bringing together five different departments: health, international trade, foreign affairs, human resources and immigration.

They are already putting together the network that is required to validate any education, any formation that has been achieved outside of our borders, then applying it to ensure they are qualified for licences and matching them as well with networks of employers.

All of this takes—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

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GOVERNOR GENERAL

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, six months ago during an election campaign the Prime Minister promised Canadians he would fix the democratic deficit.

The government's motion to restore the Governor General's budget is out of step with the Prime Minister's lip service to fixing the democratic deficit. Canadians do not believe the Governor General's budget should increase 50% in just five years. Members from all parties, including the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, voted in committee to rein in the Governor General's spending.

Why is the Prime Minister overriding the free and informed votes of committee members?

Oral Questions

•(1450)

Hon. Diane Marleau (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in all honesty, we have to be responsible. The Governor General has not had a chance to explain to the House how the budget would be affected with this cut. The government is moving to restore that cut, and rightly so.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, due to a glitch in the tax law, former JDS employees owe hundreds of thousands of dollars on money they never earned. They have been ignored by the government for over three years. The Prime Minister told these people to their faces that his government was going to help. Two months ago the Minister of Finance said he could help. Last month the revenue minister said a solution was doable. Nothing happened. Nothing ever happens.

Why does the Prime Minister break his promises? Will he stand up today, keep his word and help these people?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member understands that the law prevents me from commenting on any specific case. However, as has been said before, officials from my department and the Department of Finance are seized of this issue and are working on it at this time.

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MARRIAGE

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan people licensed as marriage commissioners have been told that they have to perform same sex marriages or turn in their commissioner licences. This is clearly an infringement of their religious and conscience rights protected by the charter. All these commissioners want is to be able to provide the same services that they have faithfully provided for these many years.

Will the federal government correct this discrimination to ensure that the appointment of any commissioner, who objects to performing same sex marriages on the basis of religious beliefs and conscience, will not be terminated?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the judgment is clear that no official should be compelled to perform a same sex marriage if it is contrary to religion or conscience. We will take this up at the federal-provincial-territorial conference in order to ensure that provincial legislation is in line with the federal and provincial commitments under the charter.

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[Translation]

MILLENNIUM FUND

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we recently learned that the millennium fund, a \$150 million fund, was administered like the sponsorship program. The money was supposed to curry Quebec's favour, the correspondence was kept

secret, the program was run by Alfonso Gagliano, and some of the funded projects were dubious, to say the least.

In light of the sponsorship scandal, has the Prime Minister asked for a full internal audit of the program, just to be on the safe side, in order to make sure the abuses of the sponsorship program were not repeated?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the program was established to benefit Canadians and Canadian organizations across Canada. The millennium partnership program was not in fact managed by the Department of Public Works and Government Services. It was managed by the Millennium Bureau of Canada. It was established to oversee the operations of what was a temporary program because it was, of course, time sensitive based on the millennium. The program does not exist any more. It has been terminated.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would refer him to statements made by Ms. Bouvier last Thursday.

Will the Prime Minister, who, the day after the Auditor General's report was released, expressed public outrage at the administration of the sponsorships, admit that anyone the least bit prudent would have ordered a full investigation into this whole matter?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the millennium program did not have any connection to the sponsorship program. The evidence he is describing was actually raised at the public accounts committee. I would urge him to let the public accounts committee do its work. We are looking to the public accounts committee moving forward and reporting at some point on the millennium program. Quite clearly, the last millennium is over and, as such, so is the program.

* * *

FIREARMS PROGRAM

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my hometown a 22-year-old woman was selling crystal meth. She was attacked by a sword-wielding 17-year-old high on this addictive drug. Two lives were ruined.

When the minister is voting on the additional \$80 million for the firearms registry tonight, he should consider that the money would add one additional police officer to every one of the 308 constituencies for five years. This would go a long way to combat illegal drugs.

How does the government justify wasting money on a gun registry, when the money is needed for the front line crime fighters?

•(1455)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, our gun control program is an important part of public safety. In relation to the hon. member's question, we have a national drug—

Some hon. members: Oh. oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. It is impossible to hear the Deputy Prime Minister give her answer. I know she doubts it when I suggest that members want to hear the answer, but we have to try to get order somehow. I would urge hon. members opposite her to remain a little more quiet, so we can all hear her answer. Some members may want to hear it.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, we have a new national drug strategy which has a number of different components. Clearly, we need an education component, a prevention component, and an enforcement component.

I have talked to law enforcement officials across the country about the challenge of crystal meth. In fact, the RCMP is working with local police forces across the country in an integrated way to see what we can do to prevent—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us here have the opportunity to do our Christmas shopping whenever we want. However, those who receive old age security and Canada pension benefits must wait until the cheques come, usually December 22. This forces them out into all kinds of weather in the midst of huge crowds.

Will the minister responsible be a Santa this year and not a Scrooge, and get the cheques out a few days earlier?

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is the first I am aware of it. We will certainly check with the department to see what can be done on that basis.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment will be in Buenos Aires next week to take part in the Conference of the Parties, COP 10, on climate change, of which the Kyoto protocol is the first step.

I want to ask, what is the minister's objective for this meeting?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the objective is to ensure that Canada can fully play its unique role, because it can play an essential role in helping the world reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Oral Questions

First, Canada is a northern country affected by the problem. Canada is a partner in Kyoto. Canada's economy depends heavily on energy, like those of the United States and Australia, countries that have not signed on to Kyoto. Canada enjoys excellent relations with emerging economies such as China, India, Brazil and Mexico. Finally, Canada has extensive technological expertise.

Canada is a part of the problem, but it will be part of the solution.

* * *

[English]

INDUSTRY

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government of China is trying to buy Canada's largest mining company and has now also expressed interest in Alberta's oil sands. It would be state ownership of Canada's natural resources. It sounds like the national energy program all over again, except this time by a totalitarian regime with an appalling human rights record.

Government ownership was a disaster for western Canada that destroyed businesses and families, and ended up costing Albertans \$60 billion. Why is the government supporting NEP 2?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is completely hypothetical. We have no transaction in front of us whereby the government of China is seeking to acquire any company. Until we do, the question is hypothetical. Our human rights record is second to none in the world. I do not know why the hon. member would make such an insinuation.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last January the Minister of Natural Resources promised a quick answer on federal funding for the cleanup of abandoned uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan. It has been almost a year. We are still waiting for an answer.

However, in the meantime over four million tonnes of radioactive material is being leaked into Saskatchewan lakes and streams. This is becoming an environmental disaster and people's lives are at risk.

Will the government commit today to the cleanup of these abandoned mines?

Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just made a statement that is not correct, that I promised a quick answer. I promised the minister from Saskatchewan an accurate answer. I did not place a timeline on it. We have had discussions with the government of Saskatchewan. We are very concerned about what is happening. There will be an answer coming soon.

Business of the House

● (1500)

[Translation]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the day before yesterday, a group of mayors were in Ottawa to denounce the closure of nine RCMP detachments. They said they were pleased with what they perceived as virtual unanimity at the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Just this morning, it became obvious that no agreement had been reached for the services provided until now by the RCMP to be taken over by the SQ or other police forces. Furthermore, the mayor of Rivière-du-Loup was quick to express his displeasure at the remarks of the Minister of Public Safety yesterday during question period.

How can the minister be so insensitive to the mayors, who are denouncing a decision that will be of no benefit to anyone except organized crime and will leave our borders practically unmonitored?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I would not want to comment upon what happens in committee, I believe the commissioner of the RCMP appeared before the committee. He made a very compelling case, as he should because this is an operational matter, explaining why the redeployment of officers in the province in Quebec, and in particular the region of the eastern townships, will actually lead to heightened public safety.

In fact, the Sûreté du Québec was consulted in relation to this redeployment. Let me reassure the hon. member that the redeployment of these officers will actually heighten the level of safety and security for the people of Quebec.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Infrastructure and Communities.

The gridlock between Mississauga and Toronto is horrendous. It costs businesses billions of dollars. It is creating deadly air pollution and affecting the quality of people's lives. This problem must be addressed. The way to address the problem is a bus rapid transit link between Kipling and Square One.

The people in the Mississauga and Toronto corridor can wait no longer. I understand that the municipal and provincial governments are ready. Will the minister commit to funding the BRT project from the strategic infrastructure—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of State.

Hon. John Godfrey (Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised a very interesting proposal. I would be delighted to sit down and talk to him about it, and discuss the process by which we might come to some sort of conclusion.

I would like to highlight our ongoing commitments to investments in sustainable infrastructure, including public transit. Since 1994 we have put \$12 billion into public infrastructure, including public transit. In March or February of next year, when we have our budget, we will be putting out \$5 billion over the next five years for sustainable infrastructure, including public transit.

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PRIVACY

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga—Erindale, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the current scandal affecting CIBC and other banks, and the sloppy conduct regarding wayward faxes is an infringement on the privacy of Canadians. However, an even more egregious attack on this privacy exists. Tens of millions of Canadian credit card holders are now open to wholesale scrutiny by the U.S. government.

Many financial institutions subcontract credit card operations to Total Systems, a U.S. company which operates under the patriot act. Private information on Canadians can be, and is, routinely shared with the FBI, the CIA, and other security organizations. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians who travel to—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Diane Marleau (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about access to private information of our citizens. We are working very closely with all the departments to check all outsourcing, so that we can ensure protection of privacy of information.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a point of order, but it does not arise from question period. I understand there may be some other requests, but question period is over. We will move on to those other things.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government House leader if he could tell the House what the business is for the rest of today, tomorrow, and as far into next week as he would like to forecast.

I would also like to tell him that the opposition will agree to go back to tabling of documents so that Bill C-20 can be brought back today, in the spirit of Christmas cooperation.

● (1505)

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his cooperation.

Today we will conclude consideration of the business of supply for the present period.

Tomorrow we will start with Bill C-10, the civil law harmonization legislation. I believe that there is agreement to do this at all stages.

Points of Order

Then we will start on a list that will carry us into next week: report stage and second reading of Bill C-18, respecting Telefilm; reference to committee before second reading of Bill C-27, respecting food and drugs; second reading of Bill C-26, respecting border services; report stage and second reading of Bill C-15, respecting migratory birds; second reading of Bill C-29, respecting patent regulations; and of course, completion of business not finished this week.

My hon. colleague has also indicated cooperation on Bill C-20. I know that there are some ongoing discussions with respect to a quick completion of Bill C-20, the first nations fiscal bill. We would hopefully get to that before we adjourned.

On Monday evening there will be a take note debate on the problems in western Canada with pine beetles. Accordingly, I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, a take note debate on pine beetles take place on December 13, 2004.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions with all parties and I think you would find unanimous consent to revert to presenting reports from committees.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to revert to presenting reports from committees?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development regarding its order of reference of Friday, November 19, 2004, for Bill C-20, an act to provide for real property taxation powers of first nations, to create a first nations tax commission, first nations financial management board, first nations finance authority and first nations statistical institute and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

The committee has considered Bill C-20 and reports the bill with amendments.

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POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. A *Globe and Mail* story today claims to have a copy of a confidential draft report of the Standing Committee on Finance in regard to its prebudget consultations. The story begins:

The high-profile House of Commons finance committee wants Ottawa to tap surplus cash to slash taxes across the board—

This statement is false. The committee began considering the report yesterday, but had not considered or approved any of the recommendations mentioned in the *Globe and Mail* article.

As chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, I decided that it would be of assistance to members in their work, unlike previous years, if they were permitted to take one copy of the confidential draft report away with them. It appears that my trust was misplaced, as has that of the many members of the committee who are not responsible for this leak.

Whoever is responsible for this leak clearly intended to give a false impression to the public and may even have been trying to sabotage the committee's consideration for this draft report.

In any case, it certainly constitutes interference with a committee that is trying to exercise its responsibilities under the rules of the House.

The committee is continuing to work toward its very tight deadline for producing a report but has asked me, as its chair, for guidance from the Speaker with regard to dealing with an unacceptable interference with its work.

● (1510)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel has raised a point of some importance obviously. He has clarified the position with respect to the article that was published and made clear what is incorrect in respect of that article and that is, I am sure, satisfactory from the point of view of the committee.

It seems to me though, before the Chair can act on the hon. member's suggestion, that I give the committee advice. I will perhaps give the committee some advice now but I am limited to that. The committee can bring a report to the House indicating that its privileges have in its view been breached, and the House can then choose to act or not on that report by having it referred to another committee for study, or the committee may wish to investigate the matter itself. However, until the committee has reported to the House, it is not for the Speaker to give rulings on matters that the committee may or may not regard as questions of privilege or breaches of its privilege.

I am inclined to wait for a report from the committee, or of course, the hon. member can discuss the matter informally with other colleagues and the Chair to determine what course of action might be appropriate in the circumstances. However, it seems to me that until a report from the committee is here before the House, it is not something I can make a ruling on. Normally where a committee feels its privileges have been breached, it presents a report and the House then acts on that report, or not.

We will leave it at that, if that is satisfactory.

*Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION — SOCKEYE SALMON STOCKS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Before oral question period, the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine had the floor. He now has 10 minutes to finish his speech.

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will take advantage of the time remaining to me to continue where I left off, which was discussing what happened last week in British Columbia, Vancouver to be precise, when there were public hearings on Fraser River sockeye. We heard a number of presentations.

As I said, we heard from people who spoke of past studies, since this is nothing new. The auditor general has looked at it more than once, as has the commissioner on the environment and sustainable development, not to mention the committee. I will get back to that shortly. We also heard from sports and commercial fishers, as well as from aboriginal people.

That pretty well summarizes the list of people who fish sockeye in the Fraser, although it does not go into all the details. We need to keep in mind particularly the American fishermen, and the fact that salmon as we all know is in the ocean before it gets to the river, so there may be a lot of fishing opportunities during that long trip. This shows that the matter is not simple. It is complex, given the number of different fishing opportunities there may be.

Today we are discussing the presentation made by the Conservative Party concerning a motion that I will take this opportunity to read again, and to comment as I go along. It starts out:

That the House recognize that the maintenance of the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River is crucial for conservation and for commercial, recreational and aboriginal users—

I think we can easily support this part of the motion, given that the salmon stock in the Fraser River represented hundreds of millions of dollars in the past. Today, it represents tens of millions of dollars. This is a significant drop and illustrates the importance and seriousness of the issue. Continuing with the Conservative motion:

—that the Government's investigation into the collapse of this resource cannot be considered independent

I cannot agree, given that several studies and investigations are currently underway on this issue. Continuing:

—that past decisions have been made without the proper science

I agree with this.

—and that, as a consequence, the House call on the Government to establish an independent judicial enquiry to determine the cause of the collapse of the sockeye salmon stocks on the Fraser River.

I must tell you that we cannot support this request because, as has been mentioned a number of times, including by the Bloc Québécois critic for fisheries, the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, holding an enquiry now would be premature.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, we now have an opportunity to study this issue. Holding an enquiry would mean giving up on the work that has been done and that is currently underway, especially with the request and complicity of the same party presenting the motion today. It is this same complicity and this same action requiring us to quickly and attentively examine the issue of the Fraser River salmon. I think we should give the committee the time it needs to fully examine this issue.

Public hearings were held in British Columbia only a few days ago, and the Conservative Party already wants to cut the committee's work short. The Conservatives do not believe the committee is well placed to carry out its work and are renouncing this aspect and calling for a judicial enquiry.

● (1515)

Furthermore, I will read part of the Conservative Party motion:

—that...the House call on the Government to establish an independent judicial enquiry to determine the cause of the collapse of the sockeye salmon stocks on the Fraser River.

Rather than saying “the cause”, perhaps it should say “the causes”. As hon. members have already said a number of times, there is not one single cause of stocks collapsing; there are several causes.

I do not think a judicial inquiry is an appropriate way to examine the causes of the collapse of such significant and crucial stocks as these. In my opinion, the right thing is to take some time for work and reflection, such as has already begun in committee and also as provided for by the commission that is now operating and aiming to shed light on these causes. I do not think that a judicial inquiry into the causes of the collapse is appropriate. Consequently, I cannot support the Conservative Party motion, in view of its wording and its implications.

Moreover, we can also mention that we had an opportunity to hear from people at the Office of the Auditor General and from the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, since they have been looking into this matter since 1997.

This brings me to comment more specifically on the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, which has considered this file more than once. Recently, in June 2003 to be precise, it issued a report on the Fraser River salmon. There were a number of recommendations. I shall come back to some of them, because, in view of the time I have available, I will not be able to go into details. I will begin with the recommendations.

Supply

If there were the political will to go and see what is really happening with respect to the causes, if the Department of Fisheries and Oceans were really doing its work, then we might get some light shed on what is happening with the Fraser River sockeye salmon.

One of the committee's recommendations was to return to a single commercial fishery for all Canadians, in which all participants in a particular fishery would be subject to the same rules and regulations. Consequently, DFO should bring to an end the pilot sales projects and convert current opportunities into comparable opportunities in the regular commercial fishery. That is one of the recommendations.

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans made other recommendations too. One of them concerns the government's ensuring that DFO respects the public right to fish and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans' assuming his authority to manage the fishery.

There was also another recommendation that quite clearly illustrates the work with regard to the causes. This is a little of what is being put before us today. We are being called upon to consider a way to resolve this complex situation by determining the cause or causes. If I am to believe the Conservative Party, there is one cause; but if I am to believe what I have heard, there is more than one cause. I repeat that it is too early to say. A judicial inquiry is not needed to determine the cause or causes that can lead to collapse.

I will stop here, by saying that we the goodwill of the stakeholders who appeared before the committee in British Columbia was evident and that we are thinking of the commercial sport or aboriginal fishers, the scientists and the staff at Department of Fisheries and Oceans, who, in their various capacities, clearly have a number of shortcomings to fix.

However, I want to consider essentially those who have benefited from the fishery and those who might benefit from it in the future, if we manage to rebuild the stock. These people have shown beyond the shadow of a doubt a real desire to collaborate. This sort of collaboration is not universal. In fact, when it comes to such complex issues as this, where there is an economic context involving tens of millions of dollars, when we see that various stakeholders are taking part, we must take advantage of it.

• (1520)

Consequently, I think that the motion before us today cannot be agreed to. I invite my colleagues to vote against it.

Hon. David Anderson (Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member. I would first like to congratulate him on taking the time to travel with the committee to British Columbia. It was evident from his speech that he listened attentively to the individuals appearing before the committee.

My question is this. I cannot recall a judicial enquiry at home, in British Columbia, taking less than four years. Does the hon. member know of a judicial enquiry in Quebec, for example, that took less than four years? If it takes so long to achieve the goal, I am not convinced that this is the best method for obtaining the necessary information.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I have two things to say in reply.

First, yes, it is a matter of years when we are talking of a judiciary inquiry. What the present situation requires is much more appropriate and urgent action.

Second, a call for a judiciary inquiry can, I imagine, easily be made in a situation where the various parties showed no desire to reach an agreement and to cooperate in getting out of the catastrophic mess we are in at present.

Going back there for the umpteenth time, but this time as a committee member, I felt that there was a desire among the various fishers to reach agreement, having heard their presentations. I think their participation is essential if a resolution is to be reached in conjunction with Fisheries and Oceans. Cooperation is important, but action is vital. We could talk about what is going on in the east.

But, to summarize the situation as far as the Fraser River sockeye are concerned, I think that agreement is possible, given the obvious willingness being shown by the parties. The committee members will all agree: people want to work together on this. As a result, we can solve it in months, not years.

I am still confident. Perhaps I am being a bit naive, but I have faith in human nature. When I see these people, all faced with such a huge problem, making it clear to us that they are ready to talk with each other, to meet, to eventually sit together on a committee or even a commission, it seems to me we can assume this desire to cooperate will lead us to one or more solutions and will also enable us to find out why the stocks have diminished so greatly.

Rushing to point fingers or threatening to take legal action will not resolve the situation. If something gets into the legal system, it seems to become a matter of finding the guilty party, whereas in this case just about everyone shares the guilt.

Why then not go about this in the right, logical and responsible way and most importantly in a way in keeping with this goodwill we have seen, rather than going with the Conservative Party of Canada's motion as presented to us?

• (1525)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member from the Bloc. He indicated near the end that he might be naive and I wonder if that might not be true. I was there along with him and I appreciated his good work in the hearings, but I would like to ask him if he heard anybody during those three days say they were confident that DFO could fix this problem, a recurring problem, a problem over and over again. What have we lost now? Maybe a quarter of the cycle. Who knows where this is going to end?

Supply

Those who have looked at this from an independent point of view have said that these salmon stocks are seriously in decline and we must do something long term that will get to the truth of the matter. Nobody on this side thought that holding three days of committee hearings was going to be the solution. We wanted to begin the process with that. I do not think we heard anybody at those hearings say that the review process the minister put in place is going to be the solution.

We need something that has credible fact-finding that results in forceful recommendations. I do not know of anything better to do that in the long run, to fix this once and for all, than a judicial inquiry, unlike the member has commented.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I do not want to argue whether it is necessary to be naive. However, given what he has just said, I want to point out that the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans should not automatically be forgotten simply because those involved are willing to work together.

The collapse did not happen by chance, or overnight. That is why the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is still fully and completely responsible. It is quite clear that the lack of action and the absence of any political will to intervene in this issue have certainly contributed to the situation before us today.

Calling for a judicial enquiry will not fix the situation, especially since the enquiry requested by the members of the Conservative Party pertains only to the causes. Holding an enquiry into the causes alone will not by magic make the stocks reappear.

Decisions have been made, which in my opinion were unjustified, or which, politically speaking, could have been justified from a certain point of view but which had a definite and negative impact on the resource, the collapse we are discussing. I think we should be looking at more positive aspects.

In that way, we must remember what we heard from witnesses and what we had already heard. This is not the first time the stakeholders have looked into this matter and had an opportunity to appear before the committee to testify or to explain their viewpoint on the subject.

Having the will is one thing, but if there is no openness that goes with it, there may be a problem. This can be seen in various issues, such as cutting RCMP detachments in certain regions. There is the will, in theory, to improve people's safety and security, but instead of openness, this situation is closed tight when one sees what is really happening in the field.

Like a number of other areas, the Îles-de-la-Madeleine is not an appropriate place to cut out a service. The situation on the islands is such that the doors are being opened wide to criminals. The islands will soon be a prime destination for crime, and so will the rest of Quebec.

This also illustrates, it is easy to say, that words can often give us the impression we are getting close to a solution, but we must watch carefully to see that words are followed by actions. We must be very vigilant in cases where words can also mean actions that might come

later. That is why the real political will on this matter will have to be carefully weighed.

We must not forget the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, but I think we should also rely on the good will shown by the people in British Columbia.

In closing, I want to thank the people in B.C. for their welcome. I may have an opportunity to accept a personal invitation from one of the aboriginal groups to come and see with my own eyes just what is happening. Things on paper may look fine; meeting people is interesting; but I think that going to see what is really happening will provide me with a better understanding and enable me to take better action.

That is why I appreciated this trip very much, despite the short time available. I was not part of the problem, but in the coming weeks and months I hope to be part of the solution.

• (1530)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Langley, which is a community on the Fraser River, I am proud to address this most serious issue in the House of Commons today.

If we are to discover the root causes of the 2004 Fraser River sockeye salmon disaster, which is a very appropriate word, the department's fisheries management practices must be exposed by a judicial inquiry bestowed with the powers and independence found in the Inquiries Act, which includes witness testimony under oath.

What we must avoid is a time-consuming toothless review that is beholden to the minister for its authority. Our government tried this approach in 1992 and 1994 following similar salmon stock depletions and look where we find ourselves today.

A judicial inquiry is a must and to not have it would be, in my opinion, a serious dereliction of duty by the Government of Canada on behalf of the people, especially those whose survival hinges on the fishery, including aboriginal peoples.

The facts are that out of a total count run of 4.4 million, more than 1.8 million salmon disappeared from where they were counted at the counting station on the lower Fraser at Mission this year and the spawning beds upstream.

Four major factors are being touted as the cause or causes for the 1.8 million missing salmon: first, warm water; second, a miscount; third, overfishing at sea; and fourth, overfishing and poaching in the river.

I would like to discuss these issues and bring to the attention of the House another factor that may have played a role, which is silt buildup, a significant problem in the Fraser River through Langley and Maple Ridge and may have contributed to the warm water theory.

Finally, it cannot be ignored that the common denominator for all these factors, including the warm water theory, is to some degree the mismanagement by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention that I will be splitting my time.

The DFO has claimed that unusually high water temperatures in the Fraser kill some sockeye by acute thermal shock or by heat induced disease. The fisheries department says that 21° Celsius is lethal to sockeye, while other data suggests a toleration point up to 24°. Due to hot weather, the Fraser River was about 4° higher than the normal of 16° this summer, resulting in high fish mortality.

While this act of God theory seems credible scientifically, we must consider that there certainly were not 1.8 million dead fish floating on the Fraser River this summer. I do not recall any sightings of dead fish on the Fraser and I live there. I ride my bike on the beautiful trails along the Fraser River and I saw no dead fish.

This issue is of particular concern to interested parties in my riding of Langley. On November 12 of this year I had the opportunity to meet with the mayor of Langley township, the Fraser River Port Authority, Fort Langley business leaders and the Kwatlen First Nations.

As a group, we toured the Bedford Channel and the Fraser River. A primary issue of concern is the man-made backup of silt deposits. The silt starts filling in from upstream where a gas pipeline was installed across the Bedford Channel. There has not been any maintenance of that channel and we now have literally changed the topography for the worse.

It is a very serious situation on the upstream tip of MacMillan Island where 10 to 15 acres of land have disappeared into the Fraser River. This slough is being caused by a change of the current in the river which is a direct result of silt buildup in the Bedford Channel. In some places the level of silt is so high it has impeded the flow of the river. I could literally wade across that channel, where usually a boat would be required.

It could also be argued that the flow is so low at some points that the salmon have difficulty passing through. They are spending more time in shallower and warmer water and this could be costing them their lives.

The silt buildup has also become a navigational problem for watercraft. The high silt levels are man-made problems. Shallow water flow means higher water temperatures in hot weather. Higher temperatures means dead fish. This is a maintenance issue. This is also a mismanagement issue.

The salmon habitat is suffering from the spread of urbanization, forestry and agriculture, yet the provincial and federal governments have no clear vision for sustaining wild stocks.

The B.C. auditor general, Wayne Strelieff, said that the province should take more aggressive action to sustain wild salmon and report on the provincial role in the management of wild salmon.

• (1535)

Mr. Strelieff also said that B.C.'s ability to ensure the sustainability of wild salmon is handicapped by the lack of a clear vision on priorities and the inability of the two governments to produce a common strategy or develop clear goals and objectives.

Strelieff teamed up with Canada's Auditor General who also criticized the lack of a management plan. The Auditor General's report says, "This is the fourth time since 1997 we have reported on

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a salmon related issue and we continue to see little progress in managing key risks". It continues to state:

Overall, we are not satisfied with the progress made by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in responding to the recommendations we made in the three previous audits in 1997, 1999, and 2000. While many stocks are abundant, some Atlantic and Pacific salmon stocks are in trouble. We continued to identify significant gaps in managing risks.

Again, this is a mismanagement issue.

With regard to a possible miscount of the number of fish that were counted at 4.4 million by the Pacific Salmon Commission, a sonar equipped boat crosses back and forth across the river 215 times a day at Mission to provide a count of the adult fish. Did it err? A judicial inquiry would be needed to determine that.

With regard to overfishing at sea, in 1988 the public commercial fleet delivered 1.8 million in gross escapement at Mission which resulted in 1.4 million sockeye on the spawning grounds. In 2004, in staggering contrast, 2.6 million in gross escapement resulted in only 200,000 to 300,000 in the spawning grounds.

The numbers simply do not make a valid argument. If part of the blame were to lie with overfishing at sea, it would be the management of the fishery that allowed the overfishing, that would have to come under scrutiny. This is a mismanagement issue.

Now with regard to overfishing in the river itself. While DFO's regional director of fish management, Don Radford, has acknowledged that native poaching increased in 2004, it is very important for me to note that overfishing, or not reporting stocks, is not a problem that is the exclusive domain of the aboriginal fishery. Illegal fishing charges have also been laid against members of both the commercial and sports fisheries.

There are many factors that would allow for an unchecked number of salmon to disappear via that route, including that in 2004 aboriginal fishermen enjoyed legal access to fish processing plants, including two new plants in the lower Fraser aboriginal reserves, and commercial freezing operations. Aboriginal fishermen also have legal access to unscrupulous fish brokers and a legal ability to transport fish in semi-trailers across the Canada-U.S. border and into Alberta.

As well, it appears a hands-off enforcement policy in certain areas of the river also facilitated the harvest, transport and processing of unreported stocks by all fishermen.

Much blame has been laid on the wall of nets used by aboriginal gill netters on the Fraser, but it is important to realize that the drifted gillnet fisheries between Mission and Hope were authorized by DFO as part of negotiated agreements. That makes it a fisheries management problem, not an aboriginal fishery problem.

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This summer, members of the B.C. Fisheries Survival Coalition in Langley staged a fisheries protest by turning their Canadian flags upside down, the universal marine message for a vessel in distress. The fishermen were protesting the apparent inequality of the aboriginal gillnet agreement which allowed for 50% of the fish caught by natives for food, social and ceremonial purposes, to be sold commercially, while other commercial fishermen have been asked to dry dock their nets. That is a mismanagement issue.

• (1540)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member would know about the four possible scenarios that were given by various stakeholders in British Columbia as to the cause of the very serious problem that occurred in the Fraser River with this summer's salmon run.

He has added a new dimension and I am going to ask him to elaborate on it. I did spend three days in Vancouver and I did not hear about it. I want the hon. member to be given a chance to elaborate on the silt buildup. He briefly alluded to the cause.

He also made mention of a pipeline. Who is responsible for that pipeline? Are any enhancement groups actually working on that part of the river? Also, does this cause the temperatures to go down and, if so, all the way through the river? Perhaps he could elaborate. I did not hear that during the three days of testimony in British Columbia.

• (1545)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, on the silt buildup, a pipeline runs from Langley Township into McMillan Island. Silt is now building up from that pipeline and going upstream. Silt has been continuing to build up since the pipeline was put in, and it has not been maintained.

The maintenance of the Fraser River was the responsibility of the Coast Guard. Up to Langley, it is now the responsibility of the Fraser port authority. The Coast Guard, with an agreement, gave \$14 million to the Fraser port authority to maintain the Fraser River. The funds were insufficient but that was all that was offered so the funds were taken. The Fraser port authority is looking for additional funds so it can maintain that very important part of the Fraser River. So up to Langley it is being maintained, but the money has run out. That is an issue that the government needs to deal with.

From Langley up, there is no maintenance of the Fraser River. The silt has built up into the Bedford channel and now commercial fisheries are having a very difficult time. All navigation on that part of the river is very difficult and dangerous. It has caused a change in the flow of the Fraser and now 10 to 15 acres of McMillan Island, which is part of the Kwantlen reserve, have disappeared. It is a very serious situation. Lack of maintenance of the Fraser could be one of the causes for some of the loss.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague got cut off because of time and I know he had other wise and valuable insights for the House. I wonder if there are additional insights that he could divulge to us with respect to the end of his speech.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, the government needs to develop a fisheries management framework that would give provinces and territories more input and control over fisheries management in their regions.

There are many problems with attempting to solve this crisis with a DFO review, which this Liberal government suggests is the right approach. If DFO is investigating itself, there is a clear conflict of interest in establishing and controlling a review of what happened.

The membership of the committee being proposed by the Liberal Party, which would be made up of first nations and commercial, recreational and environmental interests, could also be in a position of conflict of interest because they have a direct financial interest in the outcome of that review. How would that committee be capable of getting real answers to the problems?

Bureaucrats do not testify under oath and are less likely to point a finger at themselves or their minister and give honest observations if their jobs are on the line. What guarantee is there that DFO would take a review seriously? It has reviewed this issue year after year but does not implement recommendations.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise on this issue today. In this year of 2004, close to two million sockeye went missing on the Fraser River somewhere between Mission and the spawning grounds. These are the worst returns in history on this cycle, even worse than the returns after the Hell's Gate slide back in 1914. This a tragedy. There is no question about it.

Here is what it is akin to. If fish were trees it would be akin to clear-cutting one-quarter of the Fraser River basin, because these fish are on a four year cycle. There are three other cycles to go, but in my view there will not be a fishery on these stocks until probably 2020 at the earliest. Things will not be back to normal before then.

DFO's response to these problems has been to blame factors beyond its control. It suggests that the echo counter at Mission was not functioning properly. It suggests that there may have been problems with counts on the spawning grounds. It suggests that warm water temperatures again may be the problem.

All of these issues were raised back in 1992 and 1994 as a defence when fish went missing. They were addressed by Mr. Fraser and Dr. Pearse in 1992. Both of them looked at the echo counter and found that it was functioning properly. The spawning counts were fine. Temperatures were not a big issue in 1992, but they were somewhat of an issue in 1994. In fact, combined with that there were higher water flows and a higher discharge in the river, which increased problems for the fish. Again, though, former Speaker Fraser said that at most there would be a 15% mortality from these sorts of things.

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When the department addressed this issue and listed the problems, the only issues that it did not raise were management issues themselves and the issue of enforcement. I will give an example of why the department should have raised those issues. In 1998, the run size on early Stuart was similar and actually statistically the same as the run size this year, at about 180,000 sockeye. In that year the department shut down the fishery for a little better than three weeks in July and only allowed one day of fishing during that time in order to get a sufficient number of these early Stuart fish on to the spawning grounds.

It was similar as well in 1987. It was a similar number and the fishery shut down. It was shut down purposely so that it would get an adequate number of early Stuart spawners on to the gravel.

This year was entirely different. It was the same run size, but instead of shutting down the fishery DFO allowed fishing every day during the month of July. When I raised this issue with departmental officials in British Columbia, they were at a loss to explain that. They said, "We'll have to get back to you". I said, "Get back to me? This issue is current".

What happened in 1987 and what happened in 1988 is current. The people managing the fishery now should be able to explain why they are operating differently than they did in 1987 and 1988. Why was it okay in 1987 and 1988 to shut it down? Why was it okay this year to allow fishing every day?

They could not explain it. The government said that we needed an inquiry, so it appointed Mr. Williams to head an inquiry of stakeholders. That is like asking the accident victims to investigate the accident.

When Mr. Fraser conducted his inquiry, he was a man of great experience: a former Speaker of the House and a former fisheries minister, a man with a long history of studying and responding to fisheries issues in British Columbia.

To support him, he had either five or six people, five Ph.D.s and one lawyer who was a specialist in these matters of environmental law and so on. He had with him five people who were accustomed to conducting investigations and accustomed to looking into these sorts of issues. One gentleman was an echo sounder specialist. Another gentleman was a statistician. They were people whose very training taught them how to investigate and search for answers to these mysteries. It was not a committee of stakeholders.

The commission that the government has put forward is doomed to failure because it simply does not have the resources to do the job that should be done.

• (1550)

As well, we heard from many members of the commercial fishing industry. In fact, I think everyone from the commercial fishing industry who addressed the committee, and members of the sport fishing industry as well, felt that the government appointee in this particular instance, former Justice Williams, had a bias in these issues, not that he is a bad man, but he comes to the table with a bias and they felt that it would be inappropriate for him to conduct this investigation.

If we are going to get to the root of the problem here, we do need an investigation. We need the ability to subpoena witnesses and take testimony under oath. Let me refer back to Speaker Fraser. Speaker Fraser gave testimony again before the committee in Vancouver. In his report, he addressed that very issue and his inability to get to the bottom of the question. He told the committee and, as I have said, wrote in the report that he went as far as he could in his report to answer the questions and address the issues, but he ran into a stone wall because he lacked that ability to bring the people before him who could give the kinds of answers we need.

Let me give an example of how this works. This committee cannot even afford the kind of protection to departmental witnesses that a House of Commons standing committee offers. Our fisheries committee back in 2001 took testimony from a member of the Coast Guard, a gentleman who gave very explicit testimony which did not put the department in good light. He was threatened with disciplinary action by DFO for appearing before a House of Commons standing committee.

In 1996, I was asking questions about the operation of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. A memo went out from the minister's office to the extent that any DFO official who talked to me, had any information or was requested for information by me had to advise the minister's office within 24 hours of any discussion they had with me.

Why should we expect that now suddenly today there is going to be an open discussion here and we are going to hear the true story?

Mr. Radford, who is the acting regional director of fisheries management, is quoted in the national media this morning. His comments were that there is no real problem here, that there is nothing the matter. He said that investigating wrongdoings is what a judicial inquiry is for. He said that there were no wrongdoings here. He asked what there was to investigate. He said, "But it's not the lowest run on record for this cycle either". Not the lowest run? Let him come forward with the information. I have the information. I searched it out. It is the lowest run on record.

Then he goes on to say that I say it will be 2020 before the fish are back to normal. He trashes that idea. He says there are all sorts of variables that come into play. Yes, there are, but prudence—and we should be operating this fishery with prudence—suggests that it will be 2020 before the fish return to anywhere near the numbers that we have today. That is three cycles. It is not a long time.

• (1555)

He goes on to assure me that the minister is interested in getting to the bottom of the key issues, and I am sure he is. However, he can demonstrate that quite clearly by recognizing the will and the wish of the people of British Columbia, the fishing industry in British Columbia, including many native organizations, that there be a judicial inquiry into this mess.

• (1600)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we just spent three days in Vancouver, having extensive and lengthy hearings on this issue. I can tell the House that the member is very passionate and knowledgeable about the issue.

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I believe members are aware that he has written a report on the issue and he obviously put a lot of time, effort and energy into that report. He makes no bones about his view that the cause of the problem is a wall of aboriginal nets, "During an aboriginal fishery, set-nets create an almost impenetrable barrier to fish".

When I look at the background of the fishery, in 1992 and in 1994 there was a major problem. In 2004 we have what is called a disaster, and I do agree with the hon. member that it certainly was a disaster. Why do we not see any consistency over the years? We had the problem in 1992, we had the problem in 1994 and we had what he referred to as a disaster in 2004, with which I agree. If this aboriginal unauthorized fishery is taking place, why is it not consistent? I do not see that. I am not saying it is or it is not.

The second part of my question is about the Williams report. As we speak, an independent, impartial, public commission is going on with Bryan Williams, and it will report on a timely basis. Why does the hon. member not wait—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Delta—Richmond East.

Mr. John Cummins: Mr. Speaker, let us deal with the first issue. I referred to a wall of death in my report. If people would like that report, they are certainly welcome to it. It is available on my website. I defend that report to death, so to speak.

What the member is trying to do is to suggest somehow that this is perhaps an aboriginal issue, those for and against. Let me put on the record that Chris Cook, the president of the Native Brotherhood, has expressed his concern about the net fishery in the Fraser Canyon. I went to see the people of the Tsilhqot'in national government about a month and a half ago. They are concerned about it. They say that in those sorts of fast waters they dip net. They should be dip netting in the Fraser Canyon. That is one Indian group looking at another saying that this is what they should be doing.

I presented a petition in the House from the people of Alert Bay. Alert Bay is a native community. They are calling for a judicial inquiry.

Let us talk science as well. I talk about a wall of death because I have looked at those nets in the Fraser Canyon. I have seen it year after year. I have taken videos of it. I showed it to Mr. Fraser when he did his report. I have told anybody who would listen.

One of the scientists, Mr. Farrell, was before our committee, and I asked him about this. He pointed out that when these nets were in the water, the fish scattered. They head out to the deeper and faster water. When the fish are going up the Fraser Canyon, they hug the rock wall because they cannot swim against the current. When a net is put in every back eddy, it forces the fish out into the faster water. They get swept back downstream, have to turn around and work their way back up again. The scientific report says that when the nets go in the water, about 85% of the fish head out for deeper water or go low.

Another report came out on the same issue of these nets because they were untended. One cannot tend a net in the canyon consistently. We heard testimony about the Stikine River. After two hours, if someone picked a set net, that person got x number of fish. If that same net was left for 24 hours, there were x number of

fish again. There was no increase for the next 22 hours. Why? Because fish fall out of the net. That is what happens in the Fraser Canyon. They disappear. They hit the bottom and die or they try to come up again and cannot do it. That is what has happened.

This is a matter of science. If that were a public fishery operating there, it would be shut down. There should be no net fishery in the Fraser Canyon. Anyone who has taken the time to go there knows that. The Native Brotherhood, the Tsilhqot'in people and the people of Alert Bay know that. The minister does not know that. Neither does the parliamentary secretary.

If there is unanimous consent, I would be happy to continue.

• (1605)

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the member to continue for another five minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question of how to manage the fishery in that part of the country is very emotional. There are many interests, difficulties and stocks. One would need the judgment of Solomon to come up with a solution that would satisfy everybody. Justice Williams may not be Solomon, but I understand he is very close. He is a very distinguished and learned gentleman who I am sure will do a good job.

The member in his discussion talked about the bias of Justice Williams. I did not understand what he meant. Could he explain what he meant by bias?

Mr. John Cummins: Mr. Speaker, there are problems in this fishery. For example, I have a friend with whom I wrote the 2004 Fraser River sockeye escapement crisis report, Phil Eidsvik, B.C. Fisheries Survival Coalition. Phil is closely identified with the commercial fishing industry, trying to protect its access to the fisheries resource. He has the ability to be very impartial, I am sure. At the same time, former Justice Williams is identified with native issues. Yes, he may have the ability to be impartial, but the perception is there that somehow he has this bias and it will colour the discussions.

Former Justice Williams is a major contributor, donor and adviser to a group called Eagle, which has initiated legal challenges on native rights to all the Fraser River fish. That is fine. I do not have a problem with that, but it does not make him a good choice as an impartial chair. That is what the B.C. salmon harvesters said in a letter to him dated December 6, when they refused to attend his first meeting. They said that he may be fine, but that they did not view him as impartial and they would not participate because of that.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are approaching the Christmas season, and we talk about three wise men coming out of the east. I believe the opposite side is the west, so we have three wise men coming out of the west. We have a fisheries minister, a former fisheries minister and a former provincial fisheries minister. Collectively, they should know about some of the problems in the fishery. I know some of them do, but I will not say which ones.

Hon. John R. Efford: Well, you should.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: They are not federal, and I will not go any further than that. I hope that satisfies my colleague from Newfoundland.

During our hearings in British Columbia, most, if not all, of the major stakeholders made presentation to the committee. My colleague can clarify that if I am wrong. At least 90% said two things quite clearly.

First, they had concerns about the minister's committee and the chair simply because they did not think the committee as set up could ever get to the root of the problem.

Second, they were very clear on the fact that there was absolutely no science on which to base decisions. That is amazing in light of what has happened in the past. There seems to be no continuation of the information gathered from public servant to public servant and from regional director to regional director. Nor is there any management.

Would my colleague agree with me when I say that all stakeholders asked for a complete and utter inquiry to get to the depths of this matter so we could correct it once and for all?

• (1610)

Mr. John Cummins: Mr. Speaker, my friend has hit the nail on the head. The reason we and the stakeholders are asking for an inquiry is because we have been the other routes. We have been the protest route and the court route, and we want an end to it.

The people who are involved in the fishery on the west coast, whether they are commercial or sports fishermen, and the public at large are tired of the strife over it and they want answers. They want clarification. They want to know what is going on. They are tired of the finger pointing. They are tired of reading it in the press. The only way that will happen is to have a judicial inquiry, with the chair being neutral and without any biases and being given the ability to subpoena witnesses and take testimony under oath.

We heard testimony from fisheries officers the other day. When I heard it I thought, and I think anyone reading the public record will think the same thing, that it sounded like everything was okay. However if we were to think about it, in 1994, when there was a problem, there were 33 fisheries officers in the whole of the lower mainland, which meant about six or seven officers on duty for the whole of the lower mainland, up Howe Sound and up the Sunshine Coast a bit.

When Mr. Fraser issued his report, Minister Tobin and others said that they would expand the number of fisheries officers. The number went up to 41 or 42, depending on who was doing the counting. This summer we had 29 fisheries officers, less than we had in 1994.

When I asked officials at the department whether there were helicopter patrols into the Fraser canyon this summer they did not know. I can tell members that there were none. Ordinarily they patrol over 300 hours a year but this year there were none. They do not know what is going on there. They say that they went up the canyon in a boat. What happens to the other areas? They do not get covered. The coverage is not there.

Somebody, once and for all, has to answer these questions. I have been asking questions for 12 years on this stuff and I am getting tired

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of it. I want answers. The public in British Columbia want answers. The fishing industry, the fishing community and the aboriginal communities want answers. We want them and we want it done once and for all. We want a judicial inquiry.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the House for the opportunity to speak to the motion before us today.

As Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I take the future of Pacific salmon stocks very seriously. As I told the media last week, it is the number one priority for us on the west coast of Canada, which is why I share the hon. member's concern for the state of wild Pacific salmon.

This resource makes a valuable contribution to the culture and heritage of both British Columbia and our nation, and that has been very clear to me during my visits to British Columbia over the course of the past year. I have been there five times and I have heard about the salmon fishery every time, especially this fall.

The Pacific fishery as a whole makes a key economic contribution too. Commercial fisheries and aquaculture production in British Columbia are valued at nearly \$630 million, or close to one-quarter of the national total.

Over the last decade the Pacific Canadian fishery has faced its share of challenges. In working with my department, we have made improvements. Yes, we recognize that there is more to do, without question.

Most west coast fisheries have been completely transformed and are performing well. Salmon is the exception. While there have been some significant changes, the salmon fishery still faces an uncertain future. The challenges include a range of economic and environmental factors, as well as the realities of treaty negotiations. We have worked closely with the fishing industry to rebuild the salmon resource, restructure the fishery and help people and communities adjust. The changes have been significant.

Some stocks have recovered, the fleet has been reduced by 50%, an allocation policy is in place, area and gear licensing has now been implemented, and the Pacific salmon treaty has been renewed.

Despite these costly and sometimes controversial reforms, serious conservation problems remain for some salmon populations. The economic viability of this resource remains tenuous. This has led to inevitable criticism of my department. I am told daily that we do not make salmon a high enough priority on the west coast. As my parliamentary secretary pointed out earlier, this simply is not the case.

Out of an annual budget of \$150 million for fisheries management and science, the Pacific region spends \$80 million on salmon, the majority of this going to Fraser River salmon.

The department has made a number of concrete improvements over the last five years to DFOs science program, the fisheries management regime and how we consult with stakeholders. Many initiatives are underway that are dedicated exclusively to this important resource.

Supply

Let me take a few moments to outline some of these initiatives and how they are helping to build a brighter future for stocks like salmon.

Let us take for example the long awaited wild salmon policy. I will be releasing this policy in the very near future, and, yes, it has been a long time coming. Both the federal and provincial auditors general have expressed this. The commissioner for environment and sustainable development and countless people throughout Pacific Canada, people directly involved in the fishery and ordinary citizens concerned for the future of this key resource, have expressed the same thing.

The fact is that my department has worked hard to respond to the issues they identified. As members can appreciate, the development of the wild salmon policy has been an extremely complex task. The range of consultations involved throughout the province has been with stakeholder groups, the public and first nations. Quite simply, we took the time to get it right.

The wild salmon policy will provide the framework to manage and conserve wild salmon in British Columbia and Yukon. It lays out new and transparent processes for decision making and long term planning, and establishes strategies to track the abundance of salmon stocks and plan accordingly.

The wild salmon policy also calls for collaboration among all stakeholders. I realize what a challenge that is. The conflict and the competition of the past needs to give way to cooperation. That is the only way forward. Cooperation is essential. We need public input and the cooperation of stakeholders and all levels of government. I appreciate the comments of colleagues who have expressed concern about the need to work with provincial governments on these things.

We had a national meeting of fisheries ministers in Whitehorse in September this year. My provincial and territorial colleagues expressed their pleasure and some satisfaction at the fact that they had seen improvement over the past year. They were really pleased with what they were seeing in terms of increased cooperation. I give a lot of credit for that to senior officials at the department and my predecessor, the member for West Nova, who did a good job of launching that process ahead of me.

The wild salmon policy will support various related initiatives, like the implementation of the Species at Risk Act, marine habitat protection, and our efforts to seek certification from the Marine Stewardship Council for commercial salmon products.

By bringing together the various threads of salmon management, I am confident that the policy will be a useful road map for working with our partners to conserve and benefit from this vital resource in the years to come.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

The Pearse-McRae report and the complementary first nations panel report are two more examples of how the department is working to change the fishery on this coast.

The recommendations stemming from each report are now being considered by first nations and other stakeholders. Both reports point out the need to ensure access to a sustainable and profitable fisheries resource for all.

An implementation strategy will be in place for these recommendations in the very near future.

• (1620)

[*English*]

On a complementary track, I recently announced an independent post-season review for salmon in southern British Columbia, chaired by the former British Columbia chief justice, Mr. Bryan Williams. This includes representatives from the commercial sector, recreational fishing, the first nations and environmental interests.

Under Mr. Williams' leadership, we have the newly formed integrated salmon harvest planning committee. Members will recall that was one of the recommendations of an inquiry that was held two years ago. I think members across the way ought to note that because they have not so far. However that committee will review last season and provide recommendations on how to improve conservation and fisheries management practices in the years to come. Those are very important objectives.

[*Translation*]

I have asked that the 2004 salmon fishery be impartially and objectively reviewed alongside the fishing plan. The review will focus in particular on the factors that led to the smaller salmon run and will therefore serve as a guide in preparing fishing plans for 2005 and onward.

I have asked the committee to focus on six critical issues: the consultation process, conservation objectives, risk management, relevance of data, the decision-making process and the department's fisheries management process.

[*English*]

I am especially glad that Mr. Williams is lending his considerable abilities to the task. He has a proven track record as a skilled negotiator, with vast experience in all forms of alternate dispute resolution, including mediation and arbitration. He has extensive involvement in a variety of boards and committees involving very diverse points of view. It is very clear that these skills will certainly be needed in this kind of an endeavour.

The number of diverse interests wanting access to this resource or a voice in its management is staggering. An independent and impartial chair is needed to ensure that all points of view are considered and factored into the final recommendations.

Similarly, his colleagues on the committee were all chosen for their expertise in the areas of science, ecology or traditional knowledge. Every stakeholder group in B.C.'s fishery is represented. Each member on the panel was chosen by his or her respective stakeholder group. That is a very important point that members opposite ought to take note of.

I look forward to receiving the committee's advice sooner rather than later. One of the reasons it is important to have this particular structure is that we need the committee's advice in time to plan for the 2005 season. I have given it until the end of March to provide its recommendations. I am confident that it will provide my department with the advice that we need to manage our salmon resources in the years to come.

I want to add that I am encouraging DFO employees, in fact urging them to speak their minds about what is working and what is not about this fishery. This is essential if we are to get all the facts on the table.

When we talk about consulting stakeholders and experts, clearly we need to talk about DFO employees too. These dedicated men and women work every day to manage stocks like salmon for the benefit of all Canadians. I value their opinion highly and I want them to make their voices heard through the various consultation processes in place.

[*Translation*]

As the parliamentary secretary said earlier, I especially want to renew fisheries in Canada in a comprehensive way. We are heading for a fisheries renewal process, that is, we are looking at a new approach to fisheries management. The instrument serving as our base, the Fisheries Act, is 136 years old and must be modernized.

We want to move beyond funding and access arguments so that we can focus on issues such as harvests, economic sustainability, sustainability of the resource, and consolidating a relatively stable and predictable industry.

Of course, the majority of the work done on the west coast will direct this process and serve as a guide as progress is made.

• (1625)

[*English*]

The implications of the Species at Risk Act also need to be examined. We need to ensure that the requirements for listed species are met while maintaining strong, sustainable fisheries.

In October the hon. Minister of the Environment and I recommended that Cultus Lake and Sakinaw Lake sockeye salmon should not be listed under the Species at Risk Act. It was not a recommendation we took lightly.

A species at risk listing would have spelled more than \$125 million in lost revenue to the sockeye fishery by 2008 and would have virtually shut down the commercial sockeye fishery in southern British Columbia. This would hit coastal communities like Nanaimo especially hard.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has invested nearly a million dollars to protect these populations and will continue to establish strong conservation measures under the Fisheries Act.

However, this does not mean that other species will not be listed in the future. We need to continue working closely with industry groups, other levels of government, and first nations to adapt to this new reality and to examine the implications of a species being listed.

Supply

Moving forward on the oceans action plan is another important goal. Using tools like integrated management, ecosystem and precautionary approaches, the plan will ensure that Canada continues to play a leadership role on the world stage. As we develop our ocean resources in an integrated and sustainable way, we promote the health of our oceans and advance ocean science and technology.

We are standing at the edge of a new approach in managing Pacific fishery resources with more cooperation and more coordination than ever before. That certainly does not mean that we do not have a lot of work in front of us. It does mean that we are identifying the challenges and taking action to face them.

I take the west coast fishery very seriously as does my department. I am confident that by moving forward the initiatives I have mentioned today and working with people throughout the industry, we can address a range of fisheries issues in British Columbia and indeed throughout the country.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about consultation and how important it was to talk to the stakeholders. A couple of weeks ago the minister went to the United Nations to sponsor, along with other countries, on Canada's behalf a resolution about destructive gear types. There had been absolutely and positively no consultation with the stakeholders. They were as surprised to find out about it as the minister's own staff.

In this case the minister has set up a controversial committee with a controversial chair. I wonder, in doing so, how much consultation took place with the stakeholders involved in the British Columbia fishery.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, when my hon. colleague talks about the UN resolution, this is the same member who said a couple of weeks ago that countries like Norway and Spain would not support that kind of a resolution. The fact of the matter is that there were 140 countries that did support the motion. Only one abstained.

Spain did support the motion contrary to what my hon. colleague expected and believed. Portugal and Japan supported it. It was a resolution that we had some concerns about as was expressed in my speech to the UN. I wanted to point out our policy. I made it very clear what our policy was about the bottom trawling.

I said that there was no particular kind of gear that could be described solely as destructive. All gear types can be destructive if used improperly and that is the question. Our interest in that resolution, and the primary meaning of that resolution, was all about irresponsible fishing practices. Canada would want an end to irresponsible fishing practices. I am sure my hon. colleague would want to be part of ending those kinds of practices. I know that he supports the efforts of our government to do that.

He knows that there are ongoing consultations on a variety of issues. I appreciate his concern about this issue. He understands how these processes work at the UN. There are countries that are involved in negotiations. In fact, we objected to that clause as it went forward. It turned out we could not change it. I think it is important to look at the whole resolution. The resolution itself was about irresponsible fishing.

Supply

Otherwise, if it had the kind of effect my hon. colleague says it had, we would never have had countries like Portugal, Spain, Norway and Japan, for example, supporting it the way they did. My hon. colleague needs to know the facts on issues like this.

• (1630)

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a nice speech that the minister read and just spent the last two or three minutes talking about an issue which is irrelevant to the discussion today. It goes to show just how much he knows about the issue at hand.

He suggested this review, that he has put in place, has been welcomed by the industry, but the integrated harvest planning committee was not happy, at least all members were not happy. As suggested earlier, the commercial salmon advisory board wrote Mr. Williams about this very fact. It was very upset that it was not consulted by the minister or the department regarding its view on how the review should be conducted prior to the minister making his announcement in assigning the integrated harvest planning committee the task. In addition the members of the board said that the minister's appointment and draft terms of reference were presented to the committee at the end of the inaugural meeting in which the committee was discussing its own structure, process, procedures and terms of reference. They are not happy with the way this has been handled. It is not what they signed on for.

This review is going to take a long time. It cannot be rushed. These folks signed on for a few days of meetings, maybe two or three times a year, not to get into the kind of in-depth review that is required.

Why did the minister not broadly consult before he embarked on this review? Why were fewer fisheries officers on the job this summer than there were in 1994?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is talking about a group that does not support or has not applauded this particular committee. He should consider the comments, in terms of the chair of this committee, from a number of other groups that he seems to want to ignore.

I have a letter from the Sport Fishing Institute of British Columbia, supporting the appointment of Bryan Williams as the independent chairperson to lead the integrated salmon harvest planning committee's 2004 salmon post-season review. It states that Mr. Williams' long experience as a barrister in British Columbia makes him well suited to the task of finding answers to many questions that surround management of the 2004 Fraser sockeye fishery.

Then there is a media release from the Sierra Club of Canada, an environmental organization that is very well known. Vicky Husband, conservation chair of Sierra Club of Canada, stated:

Sierra Club of Canada, B.C. Chapter is applauding Fisheries and Oceans Canada's appointment of former B.C. Chief Justice Bryan Williams as Chair of the 2004 salmon post-season review...We believe that Mr. Williams has the skills to work with the representatives of the Integrated Harvest Planning Committee to recommend meaningful changes in the future management of southern B.C.'s salmon fisheries.

We have the B.C. Aboriginal Fisheries Commission which put out a news release. The leader of the B.C. Aboriginal Fisheries Commission, Arnie Narcisse, says that his organization welcomes

the appointment of former justice Bryan Williams, Q.C., to lead the forthcoming investigation into fisheries management practices on B.C.'s south coast and the probable causes for the major shortfall in spawning populations of Fraser River sockeye in the summer of 2004. "In my opinion", he says, "Bryan Williams brings the breadth of experience and necessary impartiality British Columbians expect in someone charged with the task of getting to the bottom of fisheries management practices".

Let us consider Mr. Williams' credentials. We know that he is a former chief justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia. I know my colleagues do not have much appreciation for courts and judges. We know their views on the charter of rights, for example, and things like that. The fact is that this is a very distinguished, retired jurist. Not only does his experience extend to the courts, he has also been national president of the Canadian Bar Association. He has been the founding president of the Law for the Future Fund, a governor of The Law Foundation of British Columbia, chair of the Legal Services Society of British Columbia, a commissioner of the British Columbia Law Reform Commission, and former board member of the Canadian Institute for Administration of Justice. He has been a governor of The Canadian Unity Council, a member of the steering committee of the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund, director of the World Wildlife Fund Canada, and director of the British Columbia Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

I think those credentials, and there are many more, speak for themselves. The fact is that this committee, as I said before, is in response to one of the recommendations of the panel of an inquiry that was held in the summer of 2002. I have heard colleagues often say we have not responded to those recommendations. Here is an example of where we have, and they fail to recognize it. The integrated harvest planning committee is a response to one of those recommendations. It is an important group.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will ask a quick question since there is not much time left.

With respect to the Fraser River salmon fishery, there has been a decrease in human resources at Fisheries and Oceans Canada over the past few years. How can there be a decrease in human resources to enforce regulations? Is that the reason behind the problems there? Why does the minister not act immediately to bring back the human resources on site in order to improve regulation application?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. The issue of human resources in our department is one that I am certainly concerned about. My hon. colleague knows that my department is in the process of looking at all its resources and expenses.

If we determine that we need to improve resources in certain areas, we will find the means to do so. I appreciate his comments very much because I too am concerned about this need to have the necessary resources for the work my department does across Canada.

[English]

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to share my time with the member for Newton—North Delta.

I first would like to focus on the environmental aspects of the issues. Our fish and salmon stocks are a major part of our environment, and environmental issues go right to the heart of economy, the well-being and the vision of our country.

When it comes our environmental position in the world today, we can look at some of the reports see what the rest of the world is saying about us. The OECD rated 24 countries and rated us last. We could look at the Fraser Institute and the environmental issues that it has raised. The Conference Board of Canada rates us in the bottom quarter. The Environmental Commissioner has found many flaws in our environmental policy. She basically says that we are great talkers, but we do not do very much. This example today is the perfect one. Canadians have been totally misled Canadians about our great environmental conscience. We have failed in preserving another fish stock, for which should take responsibility.

On the ground, we have brownfields or contaminated sites in most all of our areas. Three cities are dumping raw sewage into the ocean. We have boil water warnings in over 300 of our locations in Canada. We have smog days in Toronto, Ottawa, Calgary and Vancouver. We have leaky landfills. In Ottawa we have a \$45 million lawsuit for a leaking landfill into adjacent property. That is starting to happen right across the country.

We are not the pristine wonderful environmental place that we like to think we are. We like to hide behind international agreements and say how wonderful that we signed them. Yet we have done nothing to live up to those kind of commitments.

Now we have DFO. The Department of Fisheries in my area and in parts of Alberta have a rather different connotation than they do in Atlantic or in B.C. To us, DFO represents a group of people who come out in flak jackets and guns on their hips. They say that because there are minnows in little ditch, we had better spend \$200,000 or \$400,000 to ensure they are protected. Lord knows, they might be part of our fisheries in the future.

In my constituency a bridge could not be used because it put shadows on the river and the fish might not swim through the shadow, even though it did not touch the bank.

DFO people burst into a provincial government office, guns in hand and flak jackets on, because they were collecting information. DFO does not have a very good reputation in many parts of the prairies, and now in British Columbia. What is it doing with a very important resource, the salmon fish stocks in British Columbia? I am afraid it is not a lot different. While the flak jackets and guns may not work in B.C., the mismanagement of the fish, particularly of salmon, certainly fits.

I have to go on the reports of the Environment Commissioner. In 1997 she identified the very fact that the salmon stocks were in crisis. She said that the science had to be put in place and that action needed to be taken immediately. That would be the only thing that would save these fish stocks. She again identified that same problem in 1999 and again in 2000. Again she said that action had to be taken and that the science was needed. The situation needed to be studied

Supply

to determine what was happening. We needed to have our ducks in a row, if we wanted to save the fish stocks.

Lo and behold, a wild salmon policy was put in place in 2000, but never implemented. That is again a lot of talk, a lot of posturing and a lot of “we care about the environment”, but no action.

Will we have to wait until there are no more salmon and then look back in a historical sense and say that if we would have had the science, if we would have done the studies, if we would have listened to the public, we could have saved the fish stock. That is not a very good record or process in terms of saving eco-systems.

I have to look again on page 4, in chapter 5. I have a lot respect for our Environment Commissioner. She is dedicated to the Canadian environment and what we should do for it. She said that in the past seven years her office conducted three audits on the management of Pacific salmon. In 1997 she reported that Pacific salmon stocks and habitat were under stress. Canada's ability to sustain Pacific salmon at the existing level and diversity was questionable, given the various factors influencing salmon survival, many of which were beyond its control, while Fisheries and Oceans Canada helped build up major salmon stocks, other stocks were declining. She said that habitat loss may have contributed and she went on to explain that.

● (1640)

In 1999 she reported that the Pacific salmon fishery was in serious trouble. Long term sustainability due to overfishing, habitat loss and many other factors were the reasons why this is not a sustainable fishery.

Then in 2000 she reported again that nothing had changed, that the Department of Fisheries had not reacted to these reports or to what the people were telling them on the ground, which implies that there is an awful lot of incompetence, unwillingness, laziness and sheer stupidity in terms of how the fish stock is being handled. When people care about the environment, when they have been involved in environmental movements for the last 30 some years, they get pretty upset when they read those kinds of damning statements by a government official.

She concludes that DFO has failed miserably in its actions in this whole area. I am sure if I knew more about the cod industry and Atlantic Canadian fish stocks, we might say the same. Maybe that is why we do not have a cod industry. I am sure there were local people crying out back then saying that the stock and habitat were in trouble. There are all kinds of reasons why and the government needs to manage it. Obviously, that is what we are pleading for today. We are asking that the government take notice of these reports and the situation and immediately do something about it.

Supply

Above all, the fisheries critic, the natural resources critic and certainly myself as environment critic want to emphasize that need to get the science in place. We need to understand the science of these fish stocks. I do not believe this is a massive study. I believe a lot of work has been done, but somebody needs to take notice of that science, put it together and look at such things as climate change and all the other things that have an impact. Then we need to have a management strategy. We need to be sure that it is managed efficiently, effectively and equally so everyone is treated equally in the fishery.

Above all, what I have learned in the entire environmental area, is that consultation is probably the number one heart of this. The former environment minister, for instance, would think of public consultation as having a select list of usually Liberals who live in a certain area come and consult with the public. It is not about that. It is about talking to the stakeholders, the environmental groups, the professors, the fishermen and the people who work on the ground. Those are the people who need to be consulted. When they are, we will get the answers as to what is wrong and what should be done immediately.

We ask for a full investigation. That is the least the government can do in an make an attempt at this eleventh hour to try to save this fish stock.

• (1645)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke has, and has had for quite some time, a great interest in the environment. This is not an issue of stakeholders blaming each other. That is what the government would like to pretend is happening. Nobody has said anything about who is at fault here, except for government, because its members are the ones at fault.

All the stakeholders have a part to play in what happens in the fishery, the same as in the east coast, whether it be foreign overfishing, overfishing ourselves, illegal gear or types of gear and I could go on and on. The environment plays an important role in our stocks. However, to what extent and to what degree our stocks will be decimated by the varying factors will be unknown unless we have proper science and a set of management individuals who can use that for the benefit of the resource.

From my learned colleagues' knowledge of this issue, does he think the department is making its decisions based upon the knowledge of what is really happening?

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, obviously the understanding of ecosystems is a definite science. It is something that biologists have spent years and years developing. We can put all the factors together, look at what the problems are and we can easily come up with what the solutions would be.

Instead of playing the political game, the name blaming game, as the member suggests, if we were to understand that science, in that science would be the solutions. I am certain those solutions could be put forward and I am certain as well that the local people know what it is without ever having taken a single biology course or a single course in ecological understanding.

The bottom line is, base it on science, talk to the people, get the professionals who are there and have them put forward the recommendation. I think what we will find when we do this is that DFO is to blame for not putting things together. In fact, it has played a bit of a shell game and in the process of this shell game, we have lost the salmon fishery of the Pacific coast.

• (1650)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the whole caveat is that we heard from the government that an inquiry would to be headed by an esteemed gentleman. We have a whole group of stakeholders involved in that. They have a short period of time to do this.

We heard previously from the Parliamentary Secretary of Fisheries and Oceans that this was a very difficult and very challenging aspect. One concern I have is the short timeframe and the number of questions that need to be answered. Because of that I am of the perception that a lot of things could have been missed. I am not sure why the government is afraid or concerned about a judicial inquiry when I believe we can have both.

We have the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans doing its report after the recent hearings they had on the west coast. The government has an independent review going on with the stakeholders to discuss what happened. A more indepth judicial inquiry could go into the management practices of what happened with the salmon stocks.

I am hoping that it would expand not just on what happened to the Fraser River, but on other issues within the DFO. Would the hon. gentleman comment on that?

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member put it very well. If this inquiry were genuine, we could say fine, this would be good. Too often we have seen inquiries that are rigged to take care of the turf wars of a particular department. They are set up by the department. The people are chosen by the department. I do not know these individuals, but they are there to protect the department. How often have we seen that, where the department can do no wrong. Yet I can give hon. members many examples in Alberta where they have done wrong.

Now, with the fish stocks the way they are, I think they have done things wrong there as well. I do not believe the Environment Commissioner is using a bunch of baffle-gab when she says that DFO has failed totally. She condemns them totally in her report. If she does that, the government will try to cover it up.

Let us have an independent judicial inquiry outside of politics. It can examine all aspects of it and come up with a report—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Newton—North Delta to participate in our supply day motion debate on the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery.

For the benefit of those who are watching, the Conservative Party motion states:

Supply

That the House recognize that the maintenance of the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River is crucial for conservation and for commercial, recreational and aboriginal users; that the Government's investigation into the collapse of this resource cannot be considered independent; that this resource has been mismanaged; that past decisions have been made without the proper science; and that, as a consequence, the House call on the Government to establish an independent judicial enquiry to determine the cause of the collapse of the sockeye salmon stocks on the Fraser River.

Let us consider for a moment what is at stake here. Salmon are an integral part of life for British Columbians. Not only are salmon a symbol of the province, but they have an important economic value as well, both in a commercial sense and a recreational sense.

Due to its superior taste, the sockeye is the most valuable species of the salmon harvest. The sockeye is the third most abundant salmon species and ranks second in commercial landings.

Last year the sockeye harvest totalled 6,300 tonnes, a total landed value of \$24 million, representing 16% by weight and 50% by landed value of the wild salmon harvest in British Columbia. Last year sockeye generated close to \$72 million in wholesale value, followed by chum at \$43 million, pinks at \$33 million, chinook at \$17 million and coho at about \$14 million.

The main spawning grounds of the sockeye are in the Fraser River system. As a result, this is where salmon fishermen gather each year, including commercial fishermen, aboriginals and recreational fishermen.

The loss of the sockeye in British Columbia equates to the loss of the cod for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The counts of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans show that only a small fraction of the predicted number of sockeye salmon reached their spawning grounds this summer. DFO officials predicted earlier this year a run of 4.5 million sockeye, of which about 2.25 million would survive to spawn. Now fewer than 400,000 are expected to make it to the spawning grounds. The failure of these salmon to reach their spawning grounds is a disaster that will likely result in no commercial sockeye fishery in four years from now.

Preliminary observations by fisheries officials found that the number of salmon arriving at the mouth of the Fraser corresponded to expectations. However, for some reason, huge numbers, much greater than expected, failed to reach their spawning grounds.

Federal fisheries scientists claim that record high water temperatures in the river, which weaken sockeye and make them susceptible to a number of diseases and parasites, were probably responsible for massive in-river mortality.

If it is true that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans knew by early July that high water temperatures and low water levels in the Fraser River could be lethal, then why did it allow the fishery to open despite those warning signs?

Warm water was blamed when populations crashed in 1992 and 1994, but subsequent inquiries indicated that nets in the river were really to blame.

There are also unanswered questions about the impact of legal and illegal net fisheries in the river this year. We know that illegal fishing is taking place on the river, but the impact on salmon stocks is unknown.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, under the auspices of the Fisheries Act, has the senior responsibility for managing all wild salmon, including allocation, inventories, escapement and habitat management.

The federal government is failing to meet its obligations to conserve and scientifically manage this fisheries resource. Attention to wild salmon is diminishing and it appears that the fisheries department as a whole is lacking in direction. The fisheries department failed to provide enforcement. In fact, it has reduced the number of enforcement officials and the equipment available for that purpose, and the illegal net fishing is continuing.

The Auditor General of Canada has conducted three reports dealing with the B.C. salmon industry: in 1997, 1999 and 2000.

In 1997, the Auditor General's office reported that Pacific salmon stocks and habitat were under stress. In 1999, it reported that the Pacific salmon fisheries were in trouble and their long term sustainability was also at risk because of overfishing, habitat loss and many other factors. In 2000, it reported that the fisheries department was not fully meeting its legislative obligations to protect wild salmon stocks.

After each report the fisheries department promised action, but little or nothing was done. Notably, the fisheries department has failed to finalize its wild salmon policy.

● (1655)

The Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery suffers from no clear objectives for the conservation of wild salmon. There are no goals for escapements and acceptable risks for managing the fishery. Concerns have been raised about the transparency, participation in and timeliness of consultations on pre-season management plans and in-season decision making.

There is also a lack of comprehensive information, which prevents a complete assessment of the status of Pacific salmon stocks. There are no formal assessments for the majority of Fraser River sockeye stocks. In addition, there are concerns about whether the in-season estimates of abundance, migration timing, route, stock composition and catch reporting of Fraser River sockeye are timely, adequate or accurate.

The fisheries department needs to develop a clear vision with goals and objectives for sustaining wild salmon and to provide public policy direction about what is an acceptable risk to salmon habitat and what is an acceptable loss of salmon run. Is there a plan to maintain our salmon stocks? I do not think so. Is it to rebuild to previous levels or is it to allow depletion?

Supply

That vision needs to be set out clearly to guide our actions, policies and programs. For too long, British Columbians have been waiting for this department to finalize a policy to clarify how conservation should be implemented and how the fisheries should be managed. Today we may be seeing the consequence of this department's and this weak government's inaction.

Following the 1994 salmon disaster, the fisheries department launched an investigation to uncover answers. The Hon. John Fraser, a former fisheries minister, headed the investigation. He warned the fisheries committee earlier this month that he was unable to get the whole story of what happened because he and his colleagues could not compel people to testify. Mr. Fraser thought the work of the commission was hindered as it was unable to obtain evidence to confirm strong suspicions.

The investigation announced last month by the fisheries minister is headed by a former B.C. chief justice with strong ties to the federal Liberal Party. It is not a judicial inquiry and it does not appear to be independent.

As I said in this House two weeks ago, we need a judicial inquiry to get to the bottom of what happened during the 2004 sockeye salmon harvest. Such an inquiry is essential to get to the real reasons for why salmon stocks are in such bad shape and to get the recommendations we need to deal with this disaster.

We need to discover what really happened on the Fraser River this summer. If we do not come up with answers, it will be almost impossible, even with appropriate resources and even with a proper management plan and strategy—if we ever get it—to come up with an effective response to ensure this disaster is not repeated.

The Fraser River sockeye salmon are in danger of being mismanaged into extinction. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been asleep at the wheel. It lacks a proper management plan for Pacific salmon. It knew by early July that high water temperatures and low water levels could be lethal but allowed the fisheries to open, particularly the illegal nets. Officials have done little to stop illegal net fisheries on the river, even returning confiscated nets to their owners.

Let us imagine this: enforcement officers going to the river, catching the illegal nets and in the evening returning those nets to the illegal fishermen so they can go back again the next day. It is shameful. It shows that the government does not have the backbone to control the illegal fisheries on the Fraser River. The enforcement officers were not doing their job and there were not enough enforcement officers because the government reduced the number of enforcement officers and even the number of helicopters, which were supposed to monitor to stop this theft. The more we need, the less we get.

• (1700)

To conclude, it is time to question how the Department of Fisheries and Oceans manages this vital public resource. My constituents want to avoid the disaster they saw in Atlantic Canada. They want solid and truthful information. They demand a full judicial inquiry into the mismanagement of the fishery by this weak—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Questions and comments? Resuming debate, the hon. member for Victoria.

Hon. David Anderson (Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate and to focus on the areas that I think are most important. To do that, I look back at some of the material that has come before us in the past.

First of all, I had a look at the letter to the Prime Minister of Canada from the Newfoundland member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, who has spoken and is sitting right here.

In his letter he correctly pointed out there had been a substantial loss to the cod stocks of Newfoundland and Atlantic Canada by reason of mistakes made in management. What better source, thought I, than the book by Mr. John Crosbie, the former minister of fisheries and prominent Newfoundland politician over the years, a man who I am sure everyone in the House is well aware of.

I looked at his book and what he said was perfectly clear. The title of the chapter is “Who Hears the Fishes When They Cry?” It is clear that he felt compelled to have a total allowable catch of virtually double what was being recommended by the DFO scientists. This was even before he became fisheries minister, when Mr. Siddon was fisheries minister under the Mulroney government. That continued over the years, as is well documented in his book.

He made it perfectly clear that it was political pressure and the concerns of his constituents—and I understand this, as I think everybody in the House would—that led him to ignore the scientific advice and to have a total allowable catch of double that what was recommended. I believe the recommended figure was 125,000 tonnes and the actual amount that took place was 235,000 tonnes, almost double.

I am not here to criticize decisions of the past. I think we should, however, learn from them. It is important to recognize that there was major pressure from interest groups which led to the decisions that ultimately led to the destruction of the cod stocks. That was at a particularly critical time, 1989 to 1991. Of course similar decisions had been taken in years previous to that which had led to the reduction in the stocks and indeed to the problem that Mr. Crosbie was faced with at the end of the decade. It is important to recognize that.

Mr. Crosbie made clear that it was political pressure in Newfoundland from fishing interests that led to the political decisions that ultimately destroyed the cod stocks. This is not a value judgment of mine. These are the words of the man who had to make the tough decisions at the time. He admits quite honestly in his book that he probably made the wrong ones from the point of view of the fish.

In the letter to the Prime Minister the hon. member correctly made clear that we do not want a similar situation to arrive on the west coast, which is certainly true. We want to make the correct decisions. The issue before us is fundamentally the issue of whether we have a commission of inquiry with all the trappings of lawyers and cross-examination, the whole nine yards of the legal process, as opposed to a former chief justice of the province adopting a less formal process which would be quicker.

Why do I think it is important to make this distinction? If we followed the procedure recommended by the Conservative Party opposite in this resolution, we likely would have some years of hearings of the commission. They would undoubtedly go into great detail. There undoubtedly would be many lawyers protecting the rights of their clients, quite properly, I am not criticizing that, but it would take a long time.

We had a few examples of this. In British Columbia we had the APEC commission. This was in fact under the RCMP legislation, but it is a good example of the type of judicial process that is being recommended here today. I believe it had to hear 139 witnesses and it took three months to hear the first nine. Why? Because there were 22 or 23 lawyers in the hearing room asking questions, cross-examining, defending the interests of various people, determined to make sure they did a good job as lawyers on behalf of their clients. I am not criticizing that. I am simply asking if that is what we want.

• (1705)

The APEC inquiry went on and on. It took three years. It cost close to \$5 million. I cannot quite remember what was said at the end of it. I am not sure many people here do either because it took so long and ultimately got lost in the mists of history.

The Krever inquiry on tainted blood went on and on. I checked on that one. I have a press report here on the cost of it. The press were only able to determine that it cost somewhere between \$10 million and \$30 million, according to the story I have here, and indeed it took years.

The Somalia inquiry went on for a couple of years. I think it cost \$10 million and was finally terminated. The commission was instructed to write a report because Parliament and the government simply got tired of waiting and waiting on the process that it in fact had put in place.

This is not to be critical of any individuals or indeed the commissioners of these inquiries. I am sure they all did a good job. However for us, concerned about a problem with fish this year, and very concerned about what might happen next year, to set up a process that may not report until 2006 or 2007 does not make a great deal of sense to me.

We need information fairly quickly. We do not need to have every single Indian band that fishes on the Fraser River with legal representation; we do not need every single commercial interest with legal representation; we do not need every sports organization with legal representation at this judicial inquiry as is proposed. We know that is what is going to happen. We know there is no way that under that judicial process we can in any way anticipate an early decision.

That means the minister, the department, ourselves as members of Parliament will be going into next year without the best information we can get.

It is true that if we have this judicialized process we may get a little extra after enormous expenditures. We would get 90% of the information in the first 10% of the expenditure and the last 10% of the information would come with 90% of the expenditure, and similarly with time. We would get 90% of the information in the first few weeks and we would spend years getting that last 10%.

Supply

That is why lawyers do so well. Of course my wife is a professor of law and she obviously wants her former students to be employed, but as a parliamentarian I do not think it is necessarily the best way to go, to create such a system to look into a matter of fact: what happened in the river. We know certain things happened in the river, and I will speculate in a moment, but I think it is really important.

The second point is the issue of the aboriginal fishery. Once again I was interested in Mr. Crosbie's book. Mr. Crosbie is a very engaging writer. I recommend his book. It is cheap at the price. I think it cost \$39. It is *No Holds Barred* by John Crosbie. Christmas is coming. Buying a couple of dozen copies for friends would do the former minister a lot of good. I certainly believe that former ministers' books should be bought and read.

Mr. Peter Adams: Why not borrow them from the public library?

Hon. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague says to borrow it from the public library. That may not be what Mr. Crosbie would like best, but I will point out the suggestion by the hon. member for Peterborough.

In any event, on the issue of the aboriginal fishery, it was Mr. Crosbie who started the aboriginal sales on the Fraser River, the legalization of the sales of what was previously considered to be poached salmon. It was 1991, and he said at page 390 of his book:

I decided to allow B.C. natives to sell salmon legally.

He went on to say:

Massive military style patrols of the three vast river systems in British Columbia would be necessary if we were to stop the illegal sale of salmon by natives.

Then he went on to say, a little bit critical here:

But all the media attention was focused...[on] the relentless, racist bullying of the Native communities by some spokesmen for the commercial industry.

It is worth reading his book to get the history and background. The problem we are facing today with respect to fishing on the Fraser was the direct decision of a Conservative government and a Conservative minister then on the cod, as well as of course on the Fraser River. It would be worthwhile for the hon. members opposite to look at that carefully because that is where the problems have arisen from. That is what we are dealing with today.

• (1710)

I have suggested that we get the process chosen by the minister. It is the best one in terms of the best balance between speed and cost effectiveness.

Whom has he chosen? He has chosen an outstanding British Columbian, a chief justice of our appeal court. As a British Columbian, I do not like the patronizing way this man has been characterized in the House by the opposition. He is a first-class jurist with an international reputation. The attempt to denigrate him really was not very respectful and it certainly did not do any honour to the House of Commons. I regret that as a British Columbian.

Supply

We have someone who can do the job and do it well. The process chosen can do the job and do it well. The proposals of the opposition to turn this into a judicial inquiry would simply be the wrong way to go because it would not provide the minister with the information he needs and in the timeframe that he needs that information.

The situation is fairly clear to me. On one hand, we have a proposal which is unrealistic, expensive and cumbersome. On the other hand, we have the minister's proposal which is efficient. Of course the fisheries committee will be looking at some aspects as well. To say that we should go the route suggested by the opposition is simply wrong. There is my suggestion.

The question is, what are we dealing with on the Fraser River? This is not the first time this has happened. We have had problems in the Fraser with sockeye before. The problems are temperature and poaching.

The party opposite should understand that we are getting more years of high temperatures, i.e., 22°C and 23°C because of changes in precipitation, an increase in terms of elevation of the snow line, and less snow pack to keep the river cooler in the summer. It is not possible to prove this of course, but these are all the indications that scientists have suggested are likely to occur because of climate change.

It seems to me that if we are going down to fundamentals, we should recognize that there are major conditions changing on the west coast. It is detrimental. We should look carefully at some of the less rational approaches to climate change that have been adopted by the official opposition. It is happening there just as it is happening on the east slope of the Rockies as well, which is going to dramatically affect agriculture in Alberta.

We have to take measures now across the country to deal with this fundamental issue. If we do not, the predictions are that Pacific salmon will wind up in the Bering Sea and probably not on the British Columbia coast at all.

Whether those predictions will materialize, I do not know. But I do know that we cannot simply pretend that there is no connection between those higher river temperatures and the loss of fish. That is the problem. We need to wake up to that fact in the House and be a little more realistic about saying that by having more judges, more lawyers, more judicial processes, we can deal with a problem as fundamental as climate change.

I commend the minister for starting the process. My candid opinion is that I think in British Columbia we have far too many consultation processes and we do not have enough clear direction. The minister knows my views on this point. He might strip down some of the consultation processes and increase perhaps the value of the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, which could do more and some of the others could do less.

This is not a question of lack of consultation. It is a problem that we are facing with consultation, which perhaps is now leading to a certain amount of, I would not say rigor mortis, but let me say slowness, in decision making on important issues, and of course, this constant effort by particular interest groups to advance their particular interests over those of other groups.

●(1715)

My view is that the process should be allowed to work, the committee should be allowed to work—I have a pun here—and the red herring in the Fraser River, which is this idea of a judicial inquiry, should be put to rest.

●(1720)

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am amazed at the comments of my friend and colleague across the way. This is not a political issue. I have read Mr. Crosbie's book and I reject many of his premises and the conclusions he reached on this particular issue. He is not accurate, in a word, and I think anybody who is familiar with the circumstances when Mr. Crosbie initiated the separate commercial fishery knows that he is inaccurate.

I have stated publicly before that this is not a political issue and that the first disaster we talk about happened in 1992 on the watch of a Conservative government. I am not denying that. In 1994, it happened under a Liberal government. And we had better inquiries then than the one the minister is proposing now.

Let us look at the people who supported Mr. Fraser in 1994. They were outstanding academics, people who were well recognized in their fields, not only nationally but internationally. In fact, one American, Lee Alverson, was on that particular committee. They looked at it and did the best job they could, as Mr. Fraser admitted to the committee the other day when he said, "We did the best job we could. We couldn't answer all the questions because we didn't hear the testimony".

That is a problem. This issue is not an aboriginal issue, as members across the way would have us believe. This issue is about the management capabilities of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and we have said so every year since 1992. People in the commercial fishing industry talk about the department's ability to manage their fishery; it is the department's responsibility to ensure that sufficient spawners get to the gravel and it has not done it.

Why do we want a judicial inquiry? We want it because the other inquiries were unable to expose the management problems of the fishery. It is not a higher temperature issue. Mr. Fraser was able to address that issue and so was Dr. Pearse in 1992. They dismissed this notion that higher temperatures were responsible.

The issue is a management issue. The only way we will get to the bottom of it is through a judicial inquiry. The judge has the right to limit the number of interveners. We are not going to end up with 99 aboriginal interveners and an intervener for every commercial and sport group in the province. The judge has the right to limit it. He will do that. There would be agreement among those interveners to move this issue quickly because it is in the best interests of the resource.

That is what this is about. Let us forget the red herrings that the minister talks about in saying that somehow it will just go on like the Somali inquiry and another minister like Doug Young will come along and kill it. We want answers. That is what we want.

Supply

Hon. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I will try to find the question in that, but I assume the hon. member is saying that the question is this: how can we expect a judicial inquiry on this issue to be like the other ones? Well, because that is how they work. That is what they are for. They are to allow people whose interests may be affected to have full legal rights of representation. They are to allow full cross-examination. That is what they do, and as for saying that there is going to be agreement, all he is arguing is that they can have equal agreement under the proposal of the minister.

It is just not logical to say this one will be different from the others because people would like to see an end to it. If that is the case, let them work under the inquiry set up by the minister, because people do have the right for legal representation. These are judicial inquiries. They are judicialized. That is what the member is asking for.

You do not seem to understand what you are asking for.

An hon. member: You don't understand.

Hon. David Anderson: That is why we are telling him to think well before he asks for it, because he is not going to get any real happiness out of what he is asking for. He will get the reverse.

You will get delay, high costs and a system that will not provide answers that will assist fishermen.

An hon. member: You just don't care.

• (1725)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): May I remind members that they are to address their remarks through the Speaker, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly this debate raises the ire and passions in the House like few others. In my riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, this is the most despised federal agency we have, the one that has the least amount of credibility on the ground and the one that has managed its file most poorly, and that is saying something when we get to federal agencies.

I have a question for the hon. member. We have a case before us right now with the Tlingit First Nation, which has gone through a consultation with this particular department. The nation has stood out very strongly in objecting to a proposed mine that is going to have a 160 kilometre road.

DFO appears to be ready to sign off on this certificate for a mining project that it knows very well will last for decades, not for the proposed eight years. If there is too much consultation in B.C., is it not the effectiveness of the consultation of this agency which would be studied through this inquiry? Would it not be looked at through this inquiry in an effective, oath-bound way to see that this department has no legitimacy on the ground when it comes to the point of consulting with local communities and local first nations groups, as in the case of the Tlingit?

I wonder if he could speculate on the legitimacy of the department and whether that would not be alleviated somewhat by having a full inquiry into the mismanagement of the Tlingit file.

Hon. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has referred to a report, which will be a report of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and which is not yet out. Neither he nor I know what the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is going to come up with, so we cannot really comment on a report that is non-existent.

He may be right in his suspicions. I cannot judge that, but as far as the fundamental thrust of his argument goes, let me say flatly on the floor of the House that our people who work for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as scientists are among the very best in the world.

The problem is that the science is extraordinarily difficult. It is not easy. If one is watching birds, observation systems can be set up quite easily. How can one do that 1,000 feet under the water? It is not the same. It is difficult. They have to rely on secondary sources such as catch data. They are first class people.

The problem comes, as is described by Mr. Crosbie well in his book, when we start listening and we get the political interference into the science, because our interests are for fishermen who vote, not for the fish that do not. That is the fundamental difference. Who speaks up for the fish? I went to the fisheries committee this morning. I have listened to debate here this afternoon. There is next to no speaking up for the fish. It is all about catch quotas for fishermen.

An hon. member: That is just outright garbage.

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the fish, it does seem to me that all animal life cycles are very complicated, but salmon is the most extreme case.

My colleague mentioned the question of temperatures in the river. It seems to me that in a life cycle as complicated as the salmon's, at least one important trigger at various stages of that life cycle must be temperature. He has mentioned the temperature of the rivers, which has been disputed here and I know this is a matter of science. However, he also mentioned the oceans. In climate change at the moment it is becoming increasingly clear that critical changes in temperature in various parts of the oceans are partly triggers and partly a result of climate change. A very significant feature of the current change in climate is changes in the temperature of the oceans.

I wondered, and I know it is science, if the hon. member has any thoughts about the effect of changes in temperature in the ocean part of the cycle of these fish.

• (1730)

Hon. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I am at a disadvantage because my hon. questioner is a Ph.D. of considerable scientific distinction in glaciology, but nevertheless a man of great scientific ability. I can only say as a person whose graduate work was in the Institute of Oriental Studies at the University of Hong Kong, I am not a scientist. I can suggest, however, having listened to many scientists, that the issue of ocean temperature is going to be a very important factor, not only for the stress level of the fish itself, but also of course with respect to feed and the current changes that may take place.

Supply

Fish go on a gyre. Salmon on their time out a sea are in a gyre. They are in that great sort of swirling of ocean currents. When those currents are affected, they can simply disappear. That is why we have had such uneven success on reintroducing chinook or coho in rivers in New Zealand or other parts of the world. The current system does not suit the fish that we put out there.

All I can say is that this is another major factor. Overall, based on the reading I have done and the consultation and discussion with scientists that I have had, we are facing a gloomy future for Pacific salmon unless we are able to do something more effective about climate change, and obviously that is global, not only in Canada.

It seems to me that those of us concerned about salmon, and I think everyone in this room that has spoken has concerns of one sort and another, should recognize that this is perhaps one of the key—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be a part of this debate. The encouraging presence of many members in the House is admirable and shows the passion that arises from this important debate.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

It is most remarkable to hear the Liberal government members talking about their admiration and respect for the DFO frontline workers and what excellent quality of science is being performed in the field. It is remarkable in the sense that there are 1,600 supposedly very fine people working here in Ottawa.

While I suppose the Ottawa River is a very important river and the fish stocks in it are very important, we on the west coast find it rather strange and perturbing that the DFO consistently finds the funds available to make sure that the staffing requirements here in Ottawa are exceptional, while it also finds room in its budget to cut 55 seasonal workers on the west coast. These are the same seasonal workers, who they find of such excellent calibre, who simply do not have the resources to really understand what is happening in the water. They say that fish swim deep and that they are very hard to count. I find this excuse specious, with no pun intended.

We are talking about a judicial inquiry at this point. The government has come forward with the excellent notion of setting up its own committee, appointing certain members and telling us not to worry about any patronage appointments because the committee will be unbiased and very clear and prescient in its arguments.

What we find difficult in the far stretches of the Skeena—Bulkley Valley in the northwest of British Columbia is that we have had these reports and these studies. I would suggest that we could almost fill this chamber with the number of studies on what is wrong with particular aspects of the DFO.

Now we stand in support of the motion that has come forward today from the Conservative Party but with a couple of cautions, which we presented and I will present again. With all of the studies available and all that we know is wrong with particular aspects of the DFO, we still have a ministry operating in such a way that the fish are depleting, with several million of them missing this year. It is

blamed on the fact that it was a warm season or even that the waters might have been a touch low.

It is funny that in 1992 and 1994, in all seasons that we find these stocks off, the DFO is very quick to find another reason why it is not its fault. The government finds a reason to suggest that it is others, such as the first nations, or the gillnetters, or the Alaskans.

What this inquiry needs to look into is what is wrong with DFO as an agency. When we have an agency that is meant to protect fish, that is meant to protect the communities that rely upon these fish for food source, for ceremony, for commercial use, how can our fish be under such threat.

The lack of credibility has become so fundamental in the communities that I represent that to put a DFO sticker on one's car is to take one's life into one's own hands in my riding. The animosity and lack of fundamental respect for this agency has come to such a point that the credibility is lost. The agency no longer holds the position of an honest broker. It no longer holds the position of an agency that is able to defend the interests of those communities, to defend the interests of those fish that the hon. member mentioned before.

For example, this past summer a crabfest was held in a very small Nisga'a community in the Nass Valley in northwestern B.C. Residents notified officials at DFO several months before that they would be selling crabs. Everything was kosher until the moment of the day. I arrived just after officials from DFO had arrived in their large trucks wearing flak jackets, carrying large weapons and ready to bust the place up. They told everyone that they had to shut down immediately. They went after grandmothers and grandfathers who were selling these fish and told them they had to stop and that they were shutting the place down, batons in hand.

This is a community of 200 people on the far north coast of British Columbia. We had grandmothers in tears and grandfathers furious and ready to get their shotguns. This was an attitude brought forward by the department, completely disjointed from the local community. The department completely misunderstood and misrepresented the interests of this country and failed to represent the interests of that local community.

The department needs to go through this review because it has lost its way. We have the reports and the studies. We know the department has screwed up on the east coast. If we are looking to replicate DFO's performance on the east coast fishery on the west coast, I, and I hope every member in this House, will stand in the way of that action. What we have seen on the east coast is community after community dying because the fish have not been managed well.

I think it is wrong for anyone to suggest that we should simply sit back and trust a Liberal appointed committee to go through the processes, to look at DFO and to come up with a list of recommendations that we know full well will be ignored, and that the fishery will then rest in the hands of DFO, and we should not worry about it. I represent communities that rely heavily on these fish stocks.

For the last three months I have listened over and over again to the Gomery inquiry and to the revelations that have been coming out. While the government refuses to comment until it is over, what I have learned is that what we heard prior to the election being called was not all that the House needed to hear, that witnesses were not entirely forthcoming in the panel that was presented. The inquiry has allowed us to look further into the sponsorship scandal which pales in comparison to the travesty and the scandal that is happening within our fisheries and oceans.

• (1735)

If we lost \$100 million through the sponsorship program, then we are losing tens and hundreds of millions of dollars more through a fishery that has the potential of collapsing under DFO mismanagement.

What is the problem with DFO? Some concerns have been expressed in the House that this will become a witch hunt against first nations. This is a concern that I must express forcefully to the members promoting this motion. We need to look at this situation from the view of all the players who are involved in the fisheries on the west coast on the Fraser River.

We in the north look at the Fraser as a canary in the mine and that river is in trouble. The Skeena, the Stikine, all of the rivers in the northwest face similar difficulty. If I were to go back to my constituents and tell them not to worry, to relax because DFO has it under control, I would never be able to keep a straight face. I also would never survive at any town meeting if I were to make such a suggestion. The people in my riding have had those face to face interactions with DFO. They realize that, while there are many competent frontline officers, when decisions head up the pipe to the 1,600 people working in Ottawa, they get skewed around and politicized and we would have what happened on the east coast. People do not trust this department in a fundamental way.

I mentioned the first nations that I am dealing with in the northwest of my riding right now who have talked to DFO. DFO made its initial assessment of the area and said that since there were no fish bearing streams in the area that it would allow the 160 kilometre road for the mining project to go ahead. The first nations then brought in their own fish biologists and stood over the streams as the fish came up spawning. It is either a lack of will, a lack of intelligence or human power on the ground on the part of DFO to not simply recognize what a salmon looks like when it is going up a stream. To suddenly be issuing certificates or to be considering issuing certificates for such projects, shows that the consultation process that DFO now has is not working.

On the latest trip to Vancouver, which I happened to be on, we heard that the commercial, sport and native fishers who are on the river 200 to 220 days of the year have no credibility with the department. The department does not seem to think that they have any viability or that their arguments make any sense and it needs to rely on the 6, 7, 8, 10 officers that it has on the entire Fraser River.

It is a complete joke if the DFO actually expects those few people on the ground to understand. There is a fundamental understanding that DFO does not get. People who work on the river every day, rely on the river and live by the river need to be consulted and the consultation needs to be acted upon, not simply paid lip service to.

Supply

The Cultis Lake and Sakinaw salmon are now at the point of extinction. We heard from many interest groups that said that we cannot allow this to happen and others who said that it would harm too much of the fishery. I stayed silent on that. I wanted the House to understand in that moment that the federal government was making a decision that would allow species to become extinct due to the mismanagement of the agency.

Here we are at the end of the pipe saying that we are in a crisis and that we simply cannot do anything about it because it will threaten the industry. The decisions had to be made months and years prior to not end up at the point where we are losing entire species of fish. We were forced between the industries that needed to be able to fish and two species that are now sentenced to extinction.

Some weeks ago I asked officials at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans how much we were spending on fish farms in B.C. It is a simple question. I just wanted to know the dollar figure. I am still waiting on the answer.

• (1740)

If this was a parliamentarian asking this question in committee and this was the response time from department officials, I only hesitate to think how long it takes them to answer to communities' interests and concerns.

While the DFO promotes wild salmon stocks, supposedly, it is also promoting fish farms which threaten those stocks.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the east coast, I would like to remind my colleague from the west, some people call the DFO the department for oil because it has allowed a lot of seismic testing to go on in the Cape Breton area where there are very fragile fish stocks. We asked the government if it had done the environmental work and it said that it had not and that it was the responsibility of the Canada-Nova Scotia Off-shore Petroleum Board.

A scientist within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans said that seismic testing within the in-shore waters of Cape Breton may harm stocks. The Canada-Nova Scotia Off-shore Petroleum Board said that was fine, but that it would proceed anyway.

I was under the assumption that the Constitution of Canada states very clearly that DFO's only responsibility is the protection of fish and fish habitat.

Whether it is the west coast, the east coast or within our central waters, the premise of my hon. colleague's speech here today was that nobody trusts the DFO. Nobody has any confidence in the DFO.

Supply

The hon. minister, who is a good friend of mine from Nova Scotia, says that he is encouraging DFO employees to come before the independent review to state what is going on. However, unless we have valid, in law, legislated whistleblower protection and unless these people can be guaranteed that their futures will not be crippled in any way, then I would say that simply will not happen. Any member of the DFO who appears before a committee and actually tells the truth about what is going on, will find it to be a very limiting career move.

I would just like the hon. member's comments on that, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, we are at the point now where I receive e-mails and letters from people from inside the department asking that they be subpoenaed and asking if they can be put under oath. The hon. member is correct when he says that it is a career limiting move to actually go ahead and speak the truth about what is happening within the department.

With respect to fish farms, we are hearing the same thing. DFO officials are sliding me reports and saying that they are not permitted to release them. They want to know if they can do anything about it. These are DFO people working and understanding the issues on the ground, but because of the politics of the day and the politics here, they are unable to perform their duty which, as my hon. colleagues has said, is to defend the interests of fish, period. Their job is not to worry about the oil and gas industry. It will take care of itself. Their job is not to worry about the fish farm industry, which can somewhat take care of itself. Their job is to defend the interests of wild fish.

My belief is that this inquiry needs to look at the entire structure and functioning of the DFO. For a department to have lost this much credibility with the people, the constituents whose interests it was meant to represent, needs a full and complete overhaul. It does not need a committee appointed by the government. It needs a full and complete overhaul, and this inquiry, I believe, will do that.

• (1745)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really want to draw attention to my colleague's statement about the change in staffing and the huge increase in staffing in the DFO in Ottawa, while at the same time staffing for local inspections has been reduced out in the field. It is really hard to understand how a 23% increase in the departmental bureaucracy is appropriate, given the kinds of problems that we are experiencing on the ground in British Columbia.

I understand that some members in the debate this afternoon raised concerns about jurisdictional disputes and that somehow this inquiry might encroach on the authority or the independence of the provinces. I want to ask him to comment on that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent point. Some reservations have been expressed by certain members in the House that somehow this judicial inquiry would impede upon the rights and privileges of certain provinces, but that is not our belief. Certainly we are seeing through the Gomery inquiry that there are no such concerns or reservations.

The hon. member also mentioned the deplorable 23% increase in federal staff since 1990 here in Ottawa. It is an absolute shocking figure when we get out to the west coast and realize how limited DFO staff is.

We had a constituent from another riding actually phone the DFO to report some bad management on the river. Someone was fishing where they were not supposed to fish. The DFO official replied that they simply could not go out on the river because they did not have the boats. The DFO official then asked the person on the phone if he wanted a job and maybe get in a boat and go out and look on behalf of DFO. It was a serious request. This is simply because the DFO does not have the people on the ground.

If we cannot measure, we cannot manage. This department cannot manage because it does not measure.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for sharing his time with me.

I am rising today to support the motion calling for a judicial inquiry into the 2004 Fraser River sockeye run. I wish we did not have to do this. If DFO had followed through on its promises, if it had not cut back on its science researchers, if it had fulfilled its obligations to protect our precious marine resources, we would not need to call for an inquiry. Unfortunately, that is not what happened. This government and previous governments have had plenty of opportunity to fix the problem. Talk is cheap. It is time for action.

I want to begin across the Strait of Georgia from the Fraser River, in my own riding Nanaimo—Cowichan at the Cowichan River. It is recognized both as a British Columbia heritage river and a Canadian heritage river. It has some of the best runs of coho, chum and chinook salmon on Vancouver Island as well as prime steelhead, rainbow and brown trout fishing.

Oral histories from the Cowichan elders talk about a time when the Cowichan River was so full of salmon that one could walk across the river on the backs of the salmon. Sadly, the salmon are not nearly as plentiful today.

Part of the reason the Cowichan was declared a heritage river was due to the commitment and cooperation of the communities along the river who committed to its restoration. Unfortunately, there is not enough funding to do this, but the community support is crucial to maintaining the river as one of the premier fishing rivers in North America. It brought together the Cowichan tribes, environmental groups, industrial operations like the Crofton pulp mill, Norske Skog, and private landowners.

Although it cannot compare to the Fraser in its size the watershed that feeds the Cowichan River is 900 square kilometres in total, including wilderness, urban areas, farming operations and cut timberlands. The Cowichan River supports a variety of economic, environmental and resource interests. These multiple and sometimes conflicting resource pressures on the river are now confounded by drought, climate change and increasing population growth. Many rivers in British Columbia face similar pressures, particularly the Fraser.

Supply

I would like to briefly describe one of the many projects that have been worked on to conserve the river. This can be an example of what could happen on the Fraser River under competent DFO management.

In 1997-98 the Cowichan freshwater stewardship project provided stewardship assistance to landowners with riparian land, with special emphasis on those lands near the 12 fish bearing streams in the district. A total of 81 landowners, including 10 corporate owners, agreed to a voluntary stewardship pledge. Despite the claim of the hon. member for Victoria about too much consultation, this is an example where effective consultation actually worked.

Historical and ecological stream information has been collected from government databases and long time residents. This information was used to develop stream specific information pamphlets. At the request of landowners and other community members, community education events have been set up throughout the district.

I am not suggesting that the work of groups to conserve and restore the Cowichan River would necessarily translate into work on the Fraser River, but it is an example of how a restoration project will work and how the ability to consult meaningfully and to implement an action plan can actually work. They need to be integrated with community input.

Communities along the Fraser River need to be considered in a meaningful way that develops timeframes and an action plan. This needs to include: timber companies, hydro-electric companies, municipalities, aboriginal and food fisheries, commercial fisheries, the whole gamut. All activities that have an impact on the river have to be considered as part of a meaningful fishery plan.

For many people, the 2004 Fraser sockeye run is only one example of problems with the Pacific fishery. The main fisheries union, the United Fishers and Allied Workers' Union, has called for a judicial inquiry into the actions of DFO in the whole Pacific region, just as was done by my colleague from Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore.

Garth Mirau, the vice-president of the union, thinks there are many reasons why a judicial inquiry is necessary. He said:

We need to get to the bottom of how DFO manages the resource. We need a person with the authority to call for evidence and have that respected. Without a judicial inquiry you don't come to any clear resolution. We've had many reports but nothing has changed. The loss of the fish this season is a symptom of what is wrong in the DFO.

The UFAWU brief on the Pearse-McRae report in 2003 stated:

In recent years the federal government through its agency, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), has abandoned the previous policy of making decisions regarding fishing and licensing of fisheries after taking into consideration the socio-economic consequences of such action. In fact, DFO says that they understand that some of these decisions will cause hardship and unemployment and may have huge effects on communities. They say that negative consequences to people and communities who depend on fish are none of their affair. We think, and we believe most Canadians will agree, that this is not only unfair, it is simply wrong.

At one time DFO analyzed and reported on nearly every facet of fish and fish management. There was a real effort by those who worked in the DFO to understand what happened on the grounds around fish and fisheries. In our research we found interesting position papers and policies that were abandoned with the advent of policy that ignores socio-economic benefits regarding fisheries policy.

● (1750)

We agree that many decisions that have an impact on conservation and the overall health of the resource sometimes carry with them consequences that have an overall negative effect on communities. If those tough decisions are made in the interests of the common good, they will be beneficial in the long run. DFO long ago decided to abandon any pretext of concern for the common good regarding their actions.

This shameful policy has had the impact of shutting down our communities all along the coast of British Columbia.

The department does not have the confidence of the people whose livelihoods and futures depend on the proper management of this fisheries resource. That is another reason why this judicial inquiry is absolutely essential.

The 2004 report of the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development examined DFO and its management of salmon stocks, habitat and aquaculture. I want to focus on some of the findings and conclusions of that report. The information is all there on how DFO did not meet its obligations to manage the Pacific salmon resource. The report said:

In previous years, we conducted three audits on the management of Pacific salmon. In 1997, we reported that Pacific salmon stocks and habitat were under stress. In 1999, we found that Pacific salmon fisheries were in trouble. The long term sustainability of the fisheries was at risk because of overfishing, habitat loss and other factors. In 2000, we reported that Fisheries and Oceans Canada was not fully meeting its legislative obligations to protect wild Pacific salmon stocks and their habitat from the effects of salmon aquaculture operations.

How many more reports does DFO need to be subjected to before it actually does something about preserving the salmon stocks?

In 1997 the commissioner asked the department to clarify how it intended to apply practices in sustainability and genetic diversity to the management of individual Pacific salmon stocks and their habitats. In 1999 the commissioner recommended that DFO apply the precautionary principle to managing salmon fisheries by establishing catch levels and conservation units by one or more populations. There has been little action on these recommendations.

It is tiring to have to continuously talk about reports that have come forward and to talk about the dismal state of the fisheries in the Pacific region. We are not going to be too far along before we are facing the same thing that happened on the east coast in the shameful management of the cod stock.

Most damning of all are the following conclusions regarding the 2002 post-season review of the Fraser River sockeye fishery conducted by DFO:

The review identified that there were no clear or conservatobjectives for thion of wild salmon. There was no consensus over conservation units, goals for escapement, the number of fish returning to their rivers of origin to spawn, and acceptable risks for managing the fishery. We also noted that the department's 2003 integrated fishery management plan did not include a framework to manage risks that is based on science or a detailed risk analysis of management options. Nor did the plan include socio-economic benefits or long term goals of escapement.

The commissioner goes on to say:

Supply

At the time of this follow-up the department was still working on developing principles and operational guidelines on resource management, habitat management, and salmon enhancement, as well as establishing conservation units.

I would love to talk about climate change. The member from Victoria talked about how climate change was a factor. My question to DFO would be: Where is the DFO integrated management plan that talks about how we are addressing climate change?

This summer the Cowichan River was down by 70%. We were actually transporting coho fry in our river by hand to try to save them because of climate change. Where is DFO on this issue?

It is essential that we move forward with this judicial inquiry to ensure that our children's children can see the salmon run on the Fraser River.

• (1755)

Hon. Paddy Torsney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan has raised concerns about the number of studies that have been done. She believes that they have not been acted upon, and that is possibly the case. By advocating for a judicial inquiry, I am concerned that it would delay action and would just be another study. Where is the priority?

The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley suggested that there was no money for enforcement, yet he advocated a multi-million dollar *gasillage* of money toward a judicial inquiry rather than money for enforcement, or maybe he is not.

I would ask the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan: What is the position, money for a judicial inquiry, or money for enforcement, or action now or at some future date?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, we are in a desperate situation which requires desperate measures. I am sure the House would not like to think that a judicial inquiry would be the way to go. However, we have had so many studies that have talked about the problem. We are now in crisis on the west coast with our salmon. It seems that the only way that we can get DFO to behave in a responsible manner is to ask for a judicial inquiry.

We are talking about people's livelihoods. We are talking about communities that are collapsing as a result of poor fisheries management. It seems convenient that a judicial inquiry from the government's perspective would not be necessary. Yet, it is fine to spend millions of dollars on the sponsorship scandal and the Gomery inquiry. I am talking about people's livelihoods. I am talking about people who are losing their homes in our communities. We need to spend this money to get some action out of DFO.

• (1800)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned a local river in her riding. It brought to mind Stoney Creek in my riding of Burnaby—Douglas. A neighbourhood came together, and cleaned up and restored a local creek and stream. They reintroduced salmon into the stream. Every year they send off salmon fry at the Great Salmon Send-Off, and this year for the first time, the salmon returned.

This was a cause for great celebration in our neighbourhood. It was also a way of linking to the incredible history and life cycle of the salmon which has been so important to the people who have lived in British Columbia over many centuries. It was a real sense of celebration and a spiritual connection to the land in British Columbia in respect to the whole life cycle of the salmon.

I was moved when I visited the fish camp of the Lil'wat First Nation near Lillooet, B.C. on the Fraser River. This fish camp is near where the Bridge River enters the Fraser River. I was moved by the fact that people had fished for thousands of years at this place. It was probably one of the most ancient places in North America where people have gathered. I was moved by the incredible connection of spirituality, of cultural and economic values that came together in that place through the salmon fishery in British Columbia.

Salmon is a crucial resource and that is why I believe a judicial inquiry is necessary. We need to get to the bottom of the mismanagement of this resource in our province. We have seen many reports and little action on them. I wonder if the member might comment on why she believes there has been no action on the previous reports that we have seen on this important issue.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the member raised a good point. There were reports in 1997 and 1999. The recent Auditor General's report keeps talking about the fact that we still do not have a wild salmon policy in British Columbia.

I would suggest that there is a lack of focus and attention in DFO and a lack of accountability on how it is managing those fish resources. We need to hold that department accountable for the number of reports and the number of recommendations that it has failed to implement.

I would like DFO to come to our communities and face the people in our communities. I would like DFO to see what is happening with their livelihoods. It is not just the fishers. It is the marine operators and all the supply people who work with our fishers. It is not an isolated case. We need to look at a broad comprehensive plan and we need to move on it before we lose our next salmon run.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to stand to enter this debate tonight. It is an important issue we are discussing here tonight. It is the Fraser River. It is an important resource to British Columbia and an important resource to many hundreds of families and thousands of people on the west coast, and it is reflective of the mismanagement in DFO that affects people from coast to coast.

This is a matter of great concern to the B.C. caucus of the Conservative Party of Canada. We have been concerned about this issue since the fishery this year resulted in such disastrous outcomes, but sadly it is not the first time. This is a problem that has been cycling around and around. It has gone on from year to year and there have been reports on it. There have been reports from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Supply

I was on the committee myself in 2001 and 2002. We had hearings on these matters of the Fraser River fishery. Back then we heard about the problems from commercial fishermen, aboriginals and others affected by this fishery. We tabled an excellent report in 2003, as the fisheries committee before us did in 2001, and as others did before that, going back to 1992.

We heard the member from Delta talking about this. He probably knows more about the Fraser River fishery than anyone in the House, including the minister, I would suggest, because his career has been based in that area for many years. He knows fish probably better than anyone. We heard him talking about problems going back to 1987 and 1988.

So when we talk about the need for a judicial inquiry, it is not because this is a new problem. It is because we have had committees looking at it and we have had inquiries in the past, but we want to get some action on this problem while we still have a fishery to protect.

The debate has been going on for a while, but in case someone has just tuned in, I want to review the motion that we are addressing today. It is a Conservative Party motion and reads as follows:

That the House recognize that the maintenance of the sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River is crucial for conservation and for commercial, recreational and aboriginal users; that the Government's investigation into the collapse of this resource cannot be considered independent; that this resource has been mismanaged; that past decisions have been made without the proper science; and that, as a consequence, the House call on the Government to establish an independent judicial enquiry to determine the cause of the collapse of the sockeye salmon stocks on the Fraser River.

We have heard the words of member for Victoria, who stood up just a short time ago. I was surprised to hear him, a former environment minister, talking about the cost of a judicial inquiry. He talked about other inquiries like the Krever inquiry into hepatitis C, which we were just talking about in the health committee today, the APEC inquiry and the Somalia inquiry.

He talked about the cost of these inquiries, but I think we need to consider that with the collapse of this fishery there may not be a fishery at all four years from now in 2008. The cost to the fishing industry, to the people who depend on that resource and to British Columbia will be in the neighbourhood of some \$150 million, compared to maybe a \$10 million cost for an inquiry. Maybe it will cost some money to do a judicial inquiry, but I can tell the House that the members on this side, the B.C. caucus and other members of the House, I know, share the concern about the mismanagement of this fishery.

I want to address some of the same problems that occur in my own riding. I will do that in a minute. They relate to the same type of mismanagement issues, but that is not even unique to the west coast. When I served on the fisheries and oceans committee a couple of years ago, we travelled to the east coast, one of the most prolific fishing grounds in the world, the Grand Banks off Newfoundland, which Newfoundland brought into Confederation. It is one of the greatest fishing resources on the entire planet and we saw how we have mismanaged that resource, at a great cost to the people of Newfoundland who depended on it and to other Atlantic provinces as well.

To this day mismanagement goes on under the guise of NAFO because we lack the tools for proper enforcement and because we

have a 200 mile limit but the Grand Banks go beyond that. Our continental shelf goes beyond that 200 mile limit and we continue to allow overfishing on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks.

The people in Newfoundland and the fisheries committee recommended that we take custodial management of that resource so that we could protect what remains of the stocks and allow them to have an opportunity to recover, yet the government has failed to act on the committee's reports just as it failed to act on the committee's reports from 2003 and from 2001.

And the problems have continued on the Fraser River as they continue in my own riding. The issue with the Fraser, just to summarize, is that in this past year, 2004, the reason for this discussion tonight or what has brought it to a boil here, we had an estimated run of some 4.4 million fish, but if we look at the catch, including the U.S. allocation, the test fisheries, the Canadian commercial catch, the aboriginal catch, and the recreational catch, it amounts to some 2.25 million fish.

Arriving at Mission upriver were some 2.6 million fish. They were reported as making it at least that far. It is believed that between there and further upriver some half million were reported caught, but there are some missing fish there. Some 1.9 million fish that should have arrived at spawning grounds did not and of course that is the subject that has brought this matter to a boil today.

• (1805)

Where are these fish? What happened with this fishery and what has gone wrong?

I want to suggest that this government has so mismanaged the fishery, by creating conflict. Our aboriginal people, and God bless them, traditionally have used these fish and we respect that. They have had access to fish for cultural and ceremonial reasons and for food. However, a number of years ago the government decided to go with a pilot sales program that would allow them to enter the commercial fishery. The wisdom of that program is to be determined, but it was not managed well.

Was it constitutional? A provincial court judge decided it was not constitutional. That created some problems. Then a Supreme Court judge overturned that decision. That created a whole range of confusion about who is allowed to fish and who is not. Then we have a problem with DFO officers who are supposed to be supervising this. They are over-regulating one sector of the fishery and turning a blind eye to another sector of the fishery.

It is such a mess that it is hard to say where the fish went. It is a real problem. In order to determine that and untangle this thing, we feel at this stage that we want action. We wish we could sort this out.

Supply

The fisheries committee recently went out to the coast. Our caucus pushed for that. Our B.C. caucus wanted to get the fisheries committee out there right away. I commend the chair of that committee, the member for Scarborough Southwest. He is a man of integrity. He has done a good job as the chair of that committee. I know the members of that committee have the concerns of fisheries at heart. No matter whether the issues involve Newfoundland or the Great Lakes or our west coast fisheries, the members of that committee do care. The 2003 report of that committee, which the member from Scarborough was chairing at that time, was a good report. Sadly, the recommendations of that report have not been honoured or respected by the minister.

I will briefly reflect on similar issues in my own riding. We have a huge sockeye run in the Alberni Inlet. We have a huge chinook run. They are chinook, the big ones, the king salmon, the 50-pounders. I caught one the last time I was out. It weighed 22 pounds. I was proud of that. The guy next door caught one that was 46 pounds. These are huge salmon. They are king salmon. They are the best.

We have a huge sockeye river run there, but I am saying that this fishery has been mismanaged. There are problems in the fishery because there are misguided closures. The department will move in and suddenly decide to close the sports fishery at midnight on a Friday. Basically what happens then is that all the campgrounds full of Americans and others who have come here to fish this fishery are suddenly told that the fishery is closed. The next day, the campgrounds are empty. A couple of days later the fisheries people decide that the run is bigger than they thought, so they open it up again. In the meantime, the people are gone and the economy of the region suffers. This was a huge issue a few years ago.

We have a chinook closure in the Barclay Sound. We have complex regulations that no one can understand and decisions that are made without any scientific basis. The timing of fisheries announcements does not make sense in many cases.

Now we have proposed cuts to the SEP, the salmon enhancement program. We are trying to see these stocks supported and the runs maintained, but the funding is being cut. Much of the work in salmon enhancement is done by volunteers and the little bit of money that has gone into the salmon enhancement program is now being cut. I suppose that is so that they can arm fisheries officers to go out into Saskatchewan where they are really needed.

Frankly, I do not understand why we have armed fisheries officers running around rural Saskatchewan and Alberta and yet on the coast where the big fisheries are we have places that are under-watched. The resources on the coast have been cut while they hire more here at 200 Kent Street. Why do we need an inflated enforcement or fisheries management crew here at 200 Kent Street in Ottawa where they have not seen a fish for a long time except what arrives on a plate if someone is lucky enough to catch it?

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind you that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

I want to say that the fisheries have been mismanaged. We want to see proper fisheries management restored. We need an inquiry to sort out this mess. I hope all members will take this matter seriously.

● (1810)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the learned member for the presentation. I actually listened all day to the debate and I think there is agreement on a lot of things that have been said today in the House. It is certainly a major issue, it has been a major problem on the Fraser River, and we all hope that it will be resolved.

The biggest disagreement, of course, is on the whole request for a judicial inquiry at this point in time. It is my submission that such an inquiry, as others have stated today, would be lengthy and costly, would pit one group against the other and be very divisive, and at the end of the day I am not sure it would solve anything.

Perhaps I am wrong on that last point, but the timeliness is very important. We have ongoing, and just getting started up, an independent commission chaired by a retired chief justice of the appeal division of the British Columbia Supreme Court, Bryan Williams.

This commission is going to be open, public and transparent and is going to be completed on a very timely basis. It should report within a couple of months and if there are members in the House who are not satisfied, of course they could revisit this whole notion of a judicial inquiry.

Would the learned member, given the fact that the Williams commission is getting up and running, not agree with me that it is the proper approach at this point in time?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, we have had so much opportunity to address these issues in the past. We had the standing committee out there on the coast with members from all sides of the House. We had an excellent chair. I note that the former chair of the fisheries committee is here as well, the member from Prince Edward Island.

We have reported on these problems in times past. We made recommendations to the government, yet the recommendations have been ignored. In times past we had John Fraser, who did an excellent report. He was a man who knew a lot about this fishery and was a former Speaker. Those recommendations were ignored.

With all due respect, I am sure that Mr. Bryan Williams, the former B.C. chief justice, is going to want to do his best, but we have problems. People's confidence in the DFO is at an all-time low and that is hard to beat; it has been down for a long time. It seems that it is lower than ever now. Public confidence is at an all time low, frankly, when the department appoints people to investigate; we on this side of the House of course know that the members would never use partiality or patronage to choose who might be investigating this matter.

Supply

Frankly, where I come from people have a hard time accepting that the department will appoint people to investigate itself and will come up with real answers when the department has ignored the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for numerous years. It has ignored our previous reports. That is why people are mad. We know it is going to cost money. We know it is going to take time. That is the level of the frustration that people are experiencing over the mismanagement of these resources.

I fail to have a high level of confidence that the measures the minister is taking in response to this crisis are sufficient to satisfy the level of public concern and the crisis in public confidence about the importance of this resource to British Columbia for many years to come. If we do not address these problems now, the whole fishery in 2008 is in question, and then there is the fishery in 2012. We do not know how many years it will take to recover, if it will recover at all, and frankly we have a great concern.

If this is not bad enough, in my own riding we now have Parks Canada wanting to get in on the act and ban fishing within parks. That is a big concern, because part of one of our great national parks, Pacific Rim National Park, includes Barclay Sound. That is right at the opening of the Alberni Inlet where all the fish come in for those great million sockeye runs that come into Port Alberni. Now Parks Canada wants to shut down all fisheries passing through Barclay Sound. As if it is not bad enough with DFO mismanaging things, now Parks Canada wants to step in and add more confusion to the mix.

Fisheries management is seriously out of control. We need to have a proper investigation into this. We know it is going to cost money and we know it is going to take time. We are frustrated. We would like to see some real solutions come forward more quickly. I think the minister has an opportunity to bring in some real enforcement, to do some proper supervision, and to make some significant changes, even without an inquiry, but people are not satisfied with those actions alone.

● (1820)

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells on the Conservative Party's motion concerning the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery.

We are calling upon the government to launch a judicial inquiry into the 2004 Fraser River sockeye salmon harvest to determine why only 10% of the salmon reached their spawning grounds this year.

Sockeye salmon have been a mainstay in the B.C. economy for more than a century. Dwellings thousands of years old are testimony that the Fraser River salmon runs supported aboriginal communities for generations.

Fort Langley, built 50 kilometres upstream from the mouth of the Fraser River by the Hudson's Bay Company, began a salt salmon market in 1827. Native harvesters provided the tens of thousands of fish exported annually, and native women cleaned, cured and packed the catch. The barrels were shipped to Hawaii, a transfer point for trading ships to Asia and South America.

The B.C. canning industry was launched in 1871. Nine years later, Fraser River canned salmon was being eaten out of tins by thousands

of factory workers in England. Forty-two thousand cases left the cannery and the following year that number tripled. At first it was the least numerous of the five species of salmon. Chinook was harvested for canning. By 1876 sockeye was deemed the tastiest in a can.

Last year the B.C. wild salmon harvest had a wholesale value of \$183 million. Sockeye salmon, primarily harvested on the Fraser River, accounted for \$71.8 million of that total. It will, however, be a different story in 2008 because of the disaster that struck the Fraser River sockeye salmon harvest this summer.

Initial federal fisheries counts showed only a small fraction of the predicted number of sockeye salmon reached their spawning grounds in northern B.C. this summer. Early counts on the spawning beds indicate up to 90% of those stocks vanished in the Fraser after passing a counting station on the lower river. As many as two million salmon could be unaccounted for.

The Department of Fisheries predicted earlier this year a run of 4.5 million sockeye, of which 2.2 million would survive to spawn. Now fewer than 400,000, perhaps 200,000, are expected to make it to the spawning grounds.

Whatever happened to these fish happened on the Fraser itself, as preliminary observations by fisheries officials found that the number of salmon arriving at the mouth of the Fraser River corresponded to expectations.

Federal fisheries scientists believe record high water temperature in the Fraser, which weakens sockeye and makes them susceptible to a number of diseases and parasites, were probably responsible for massive river mortality.

Due to hot, dry weather, the Fraser River was about four degrees warmer than the normal temperature of 16° Celsius. In mid-August, DFO closed commercial fisheries directed at Fraser sockeye to conserve true late run sockeye. However, this was too little too late.

Another explanation for the disappearance of so many salmon is the impact of legal and illegal net fisheries in the river.

We know illegal fishing is taking place on the river. Aboriginal fishermen have access to out of province fish processing plants, commercial freezing operations and transportation. Therefore, taking into account overfishing by natives and illegal sales by poachers, the impact on salmon stocks is unknown.

Warm water was blamed when the sockeye salmon populations crashed in 1992 and 1994, but subsequent inquiries indicated nets in the river were really to blame.

Supply

In July the up river Tsilhqot'in band accused natives at the base of the Fraser of an undisciplined harvest of salmon. Evidence suggests aboriginal fishing occurred almost non-stop throughout migration periods. Further, aboriginals have conducted large scale illegal fishing operations before, netting 890,000 salmon in 1990. The potential for massive poaching clearly exists.

Whatever the explanation for this year's disaster, it is clear the management models and run predictions tools used by DFO did not measure up this season. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has the senior responsibility for managing all wild salmon, including allocation, inventories, escapement and habitat management.

This Liberal government is failing to meet its obligations to conserve and manage this vital fisheries resource. It appears that the fisheries department, much like the government as a whole, is lacking in direction.

The Auditor General of Canada conducted reports dealing with the B.C. salmon industry in 1997, 1999 and 2000.

•(1825)

In 1997 the Auditor General's Office reported that Pacific salmon stocks and habitat were under stress. In 1999 it reported that the Pacific salmon fisheries were in trouble and their long term sustainability was also at risk because of overfishing, habitat loss and other factors. In 2000 it reported the fisheries department was not fully meeting its legislative obligations to protect wild salmon stocks.

In November of this year the B.C. auditor general, backing up the findings of his federal counterpart, questioned the management practices of the federal fisheries department. In the face of this criticism, the fisheries department has promised action, but these have been empty promises. British Columbians are still waiting for the department to finalize a wild salmon policy.

The Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery suffers from no clear objectives for the conservation of wild salmon. There are no goals for escapement and acceptable risks for managing the fishery. Concerns have been raised about the transparency, participation and timeliness of consultations on pre-season management plans and in-season decision-making.

There is also a lack of comprehensive information which prevents a complete assessment of the status of Pacific salmon stocks. There are no formal assessments for the majority of Fraser River sockeye stocks. In addition, there are concerns whether the in-season estimates of abundance, migration timing, route, stock composition and catch reporting of Fraser River sockeye are timely, adequate or accurate.

The fisheries department needs to develop a clear vision with goals and objectives for sustaining wild salmon and provide public policy direction about what is an acceptable risk to salmon habitat, and what is an acceptable loss of salmon run. That vision needs to be set out clearly to guide our actions, policies and programs.

For too long British Columbians have been waiting for this department to finalize a policy to clarify how conservation should be implemented and how the fisheries should be managed. Today we

may be seeing the consequence of the department and this government's inaction.

The investigation, which was announced last month by the fisheries minister, is headed by a former B.C. chief justice with strong ties to the federal Liberal party. It is not a judicial inquiry and it does not appear independent.

We need a judicial inquiry to get to the bottom of what happened during the 2004 sockeye salmon harvest. Such an inquiry is essential to get to the real reason why salmon stocks are in such bad shape and to get the recommendations we need to deal with this disaster.

We need to discover what really happened on the Fraser River this summer. If we do not come up with answers, it will be almost impossible, even with appropriate resources and even with a proper management plan and strategy, to come up with an effective response to ensure this disaster is not repeated.

For British Columbians, including my constituents, sockeye salmon is a vital public resource. The Fraser River fishery provides vital employment and spinoffs to a region still reeling from softwood lumber tariffs.

We deserve answers for what happened this summer. How did we allow millions of salmon to die? There must be a judicial inquiry. Only then will my constituents be able to rest assured they are receiving the information and solutions that will protect Fraser River sockeye salmon for this and future generations.

•(1830)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): It being 6:30 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Pursuant to Standing Order 81(18), the division stands deferred until 10 p.m. tonight.

[*For continuation of proceedings see Part B*]

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CANADA

House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, December 9, 2004
(Part B)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 9, 2004

[Continuation of proceedings from Part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION — SOCKEYE SALMON STOCKS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

* * *

● (1830)

[English]

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2004-05

RESTORATION OF VOTE 1—GOVERNOR GENERAL

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved:

That Vote 1, in the amount of \$16,684,000, under GOVERNOR GENERAL, in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, less the amount voted in Interim Supply, be restored.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me some pleasure tonight to rise and begin this debate.

This occasion provides an opportunity for me to highlight the government's enhancements to the estimates process, which are designed to ensure greater accountability to Parliament. It also gives me a chance to reinforce the significance of the motion which I have just made to restore funding to certain votes. Overall, this is a very important piece of legislation for all parliamentarians, many of whom have been closely involved in the main estimates process at some point along this journey.

For the benefit of those who might not be familiar with this process, the estimates support the government's annual request to Parliament for authority to spend public funds. They also provide information to Parliament about adjustments made to projected statutory spending which has been previously authorized by Parliament.

The main estimates are published in three parts. Part I situates the main estimates in the context of the government's overall expenditure plan as presented in the most recent budget. Part II is the traditional blue book that provides details on the statutory and voted items within each department and agency program. Finally, part III highlights individual department and agency spending plans which, since April 1997, have been split into two components. These

two components include the departmental performance reports, commonly known around here as the DPRs, which are normally tabled in the fall and which report individual departmental results measured against performance objectives. The other is the report on plans and priorities, the RPPs, which provide detailed multi-year expenditure plans and are normally tabled in the spring.

As part of the standard main estimates process in a typical year, the President of the Treasury Board introduces four bills: interim supply in March to provide spending authority until Parliament approves full supply; full supply in June for spending detailed in the main estimates; first supplementary supply in December supported by the supplementary estimates; and second supplementary supply in March.

This year, as we know, the process unfolded a bit differently than in the past. The 2004-05 main estimates were originally tabled last February, as per normal, when the government requested permission to spend \$65.1 billion under program authorities. In addition, the government forecasted \$121 billion in statutory spending, for a total expenditure plan of \$186.1 billion. Last March, Parliament approved approximately three-quarters of the 2004-05 main estimates.

I offered to table the estimates documents again this fall, in an amended form at that time because I, newly arrived in this position, was looking at restructuring them to reflect greater clarity. However, an objection was raised by members, and quite rightly so, that in one fiscal year we would have had two sets of estimates documents. I agreed that rather than do that—and we had the dissolution of Parliament and an election in the interim—we re-tabled exactly the same set of estimates that we tabled last March, and we tabled the reports on plans and priorities at that time. However we had had lengthy discussions with parliamentarians about ways to improve the estimates reporting to provide greater clarity and greater detail, and we decided to work on some of that in the supplementary estimates.

Today we are seeking Parliament's approval for the remainder of the government's expenditure plan that was originally set out in these main estimates. We are all very aware that Canadians want to see their tax dollars well spent. They want to know where their money is going and how it is being used. I think we all want greater openness and transparency in all of the activities in government, and citizens want to be able to hold Parliament, their government, and public sector officials to account. These estimates and the related supply bills I am putting before the House today are a testament to the government's commitment to improve transparency and accountability.

Supply

Over the last few weeks parliamentarians have spent many hours reviewing the estimates through parliamentary committees, both in the House and the Senate. Many ministers were invited to present to those committees and to respond to questions about their departmental budgets, plans and expenditures. Parliamentarians have taken these opportunities to voice their support or their concerns for the government's expenditure plan, which is what we are talking about tonight.

In various ways through this process, they have voiced their opinion on how the government should spend taxpayers' dollars. On October 27 I had the opportunity to appear before the Senate national finance committee to discuss the main estimates. I returned to the same committee on November 30 to address these issues related to supplementary estimates and to the way Treasury Board reports to parliamentary committees. I also appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on November 23.

At this point I want to congratulate the committees. There has been a concern raised by many that for a variety of reasons the House has lost its way in the review of estimates. There are many theories about why this has happened, but I would argue, and I have always argued, that prior to the second world war government became enormous. It grew very rapidly and became very large, very information rich, and very difficult to deal with, given the systems that were available for review at that time. The world also began to speed up. Decisions were made much more quickly.

• (1835)

In response to those pressures, Parliament made a decision in 1968-69 to allow the estimates to be passed or deemed to have passed committee review even if committees had not reviewed them by a certain date.

Since that time there has been a steady erosion in the amount of time and energy that parliamentarians have put in through the annual review of estimates. I think we have all suffered from that. There is a legitimate effort in the House led by, if I may congratulate the committee on government ops and estimates, but not solely that committee. Others have been quite active to revitalize that process. It is something that we at the Treasury Board see as very important. We are constantly seeking advice from committees as to how we can better improve the information we put forward.

There is something else that is important to note in the context of the debate tonight. We are in a minority government in this House. The committees have a majority of opposition members on virtually every committee. The committees, if they had wanted to, could have done a great many things to these estimates. I have argued that one of the magical things about a minority is that everyone is responsible for the decisions that they make and people have taken it seriously.

The fact that we have two amendments coming out of committee and they are strategic and I think they will be argued, is a testimony to all members of the House who have resisted the urge to play with this and have focused on it seriously. I very much appreciate that. I look forward to more of that kind of debate as the years pass.

The appropriation of funds is part of a cycle that lasts the entire year. By the time we get to this point in the expenditure plan, we

have had the chance to review the government's fiscal plan, the demands of Canadian taxpayers, and the departmental submissions that are made to Treasury Board. In one sense Parliament almost receives too much information.

Parliament receives hundreds of statutory reports from over 200 government organizations on matters as diverse as privacy, sustainable development, employment equity, alternate fuels and others. The list of reports alone that parliamentarians are expected to digest, understand and react to, exceeds 100 pages. Each and every year we receive hundreds of departmental submissions which provide the basis for the main estimates and the direct program spending that is part of the government's expenditure plan.

As I said earlier, we have been talking about this for some time and there are some themes in what parliamentarians are asking for. We have been trying to figure out what information we could provide in what form that would allow them, with the tremendous pressures that each one of us has on our time, to get the answers to the questions that one might have. There is so much information available, we have been looking for instruments that allow people to identify their particular interest and then drill down into that.

This is not a new topic. In 1994, shortly after I was first elected to the House, I was asked to participate with the Auditor General's office and the then Treasury Board on a review of the estimates process because the documents that were provided at that time filled a case that I could barely lift. It was very cumbersome, very difficult for members to use. The result of that exercise led to the creation of the DPRs and the RPPs, but in a sense it has gone the other way, where they are at a higher level and members have expressed concerns about not having enough detail.

We are one more time into a series of consultations. What we are hearing is that members would like simpler, more integrated information, along with a body of contextual information and then the ability to drill down to the detail that they require in the areas that they choose. They also want information to be integrated. They want performance reports to be linked to plans and they expect to see more balanced reporting, not just good news stories in the DPRs. We should be frank about it. We should say what worked and what did not work.

It is going to be a challenge to this place because of one of the things that I think has occurred, and members have heard me talk about this many times in the House. If the highly partisan and combative atmosphere that exists here in question period gets carried over into committees, it tends to make it very difficult to have the kind of substantive conversation that we need to have on important issues.

The fact is this is the largest organization in Canada. It has 453,000 employees. It has 441 lines of business. It is immense and there will always be issues. I do not think there is a lot of ideological ground here among the members on what the outcome should be. I think we all want good management, high quality management and good delivery of services. The more we can focus on the realities of management, I think we can find solutions that will represent the best thinking of this place.

Supply

●(1840)

There were a number of discussions as I went to the various committees and met with members of the House, particularly some of the newer members, about how MPs are supposed to discharge their responsibilities given the enormous amount of information and resources they have available. I know there have been some discussions here in some of the committees, among the House leaders and with the Board of Internal Economy about strengthening some of the resources that members have available to them to provide proper oversight for these estimates. I think this is all to the good.

At the end of the day, the committees having reviewed the estimates, make recommendations to the House. That comes forward, as it has done in the case of two votes tonight, with reductions. The government then has to examine what the committee has done, as it would do if it was a piece of legislation. When a piece of legislation comes back from committee with amendments, the government examines it, makes a decision as to whether or not it can accept those amendments and then we may or may not move changes at report stage. In a sense that is what we are doing here.

Before I get to the substance of the specific vote line that has changed, I would like to make one other comment about the information.

We are in the midst of a major overhaul in government led by the Treasury Board. It is an overhaul of how we hold information. Members again will have heard me talk about this many times in the House.

We have this enormous organization, the largest organization in Canada by a factor of four in terms of the number of employees and the most complex organization in Canada by a considerable factor. However, we have not had the information systems that bring together the management information across this organization in a way that allows us to either get the whole government approach or to focus on outcomes and results.

We are implementing, and this was reported in the budget, a new management results and reporting structure with the goal of developing a comprehensive picture of departmental spending and results to improve ministerial decision making and to improve the understanding of the House as to where the money members are voting for ends up in terms of outcomes for Canadians. Throughout all of this we are moving as quickly as we can to improve the transparency so that members can see quickly and easily what has gone on in any particular question.

There is a lot of talk here about horizontal issues. Simply stated, that means in an organization as large as this there may be more than one department delivering services to a particular recipient group. The Auditor General reported on this recently relative to the aboriginal community. She identified a very large number of departments providing services to one very small aboriginal community and demanding an outlandish number of accountability reporting requirements that were so onerous that the community was not able to respond. There was a concern about whether the information that was gathered was used in any useful way.

We have been working hard and the staff at Treasury Board have done a fantastic job, frankly, in some very creative ways in mapping that activity across a whole range of departments and laying it out so that we can begin to make decisions across a portfolio of activities rather than just down traditional vertical lines. To do this, we have been developing new information systems, the one I mentioned, and the expenditure management information system, which is designed to collect financial and performance data. It will play a role in integrating government-wide data and provide a common database for departments, agencies and for the secretariat.

In addition, we have the reports on plans and priorities and the departmental performance reports online and searchable by key word to make it easier for members and taxpayers to go through part III of the estimates.

●(1845)

I tabled a fourth report. It has been in progress for four years now. It was an innovation of my predecessor. It is the Canada performance report. What we are trying to do with that document is tie all of this activity together in a simple form as we can for such a complex organization, and report to Canadians and report to the House on what we are actually doing. What are the outcomes? We have spent all of this time and energy trying improve conditions in first nations communities. Have they improved? Are there objective standards we can set to know whether we are doing better or worse?

It is an incredibly interesting initiative and one which I strongly support. I hope the committees will work with me as we attempt to refine those indicators, and get better and better reporting.

The series of changes that we have made to supplementary documents were initiated by discussions with the public accounts committee over the years, the Auditor General, and with the Senate finance committee. There is a particular way in which we present information in the supplementary estimates.

In the supplementary estimates that I tabled in the House on November 4, we made changes in the format to increase transparency and to improve the consistent treatment of information across the estimates documents. Incremental spending items are being displayed with explicit identification of where offsets are being used to provide the parliamentary spending authority. There is a full summary reflecting the changes since the main estimates.

There is a new summary of changes devoted to appropriations which highlights all adjustments being proposed by individual departments in their supplementary estimates. In addition, we now have a summary of the supplementary estimates by standard object of expenditure which will tie them back into the public accounts.

A recent report tabled in the Senate stated:

The Committee was pleased to see that a number of changes to the format of the supplementary estimates have been introduced with the Supplementary Estimates (A), 2004-2005 to provide greater transparency and consistency...The committee commends the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Supply

Let me deal with the issue of the Governor General. I was the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations when we first called the Governor General. There had been concerns expressed by members here about profligate spending and an attitude that did not respect the taxpayers. There was a concern as to whether or not House committees were accountable. I wanted to establish the principle that they were, which of course they were.

While the Governor General does not appear by convention, and should not appear, her staff were there immediately. They provided detailed information and responded very openly and frankly to members of the committee. There has never been a question in their minds nor in the minds of the House about whether or not they should do this.

This time the committee called them again and moved to make this cut. I must reflect on this in two ways. We put forward the estimates of the government. We do not put them forward casually. They are not made up randomly. We go through these very carefully. The estimates, if put forward, are the estimates I believe are the amounts of money that departments require. The committee is quite free, and has the right and responsibility to differ with that, and put forward different amounts.

However, I want to caution the committee on this. If members look at the Governor General's budget, the incident the people were concerned about took place a whole budget cycle ago. This is a different budget year. The increase the Governor General's office received this year was effectively zero and travel has been curtailed. Therefore, a lot of the issues that members were concerned about were addressed in this budget.

There is an ideological debate about whether we should have a Governor General or not. That is not an issue I deal with. I personally believe we should. I personally believe she provides a valuable role. However, the issue is that the office requires a certain amount of money to do the task that it has been assigned. We are confident that the amount of money that has been put forward in these estimates is the amount of money, and that there are difficulties and consequences that arise from making such a large cut in the final quarter of the year. That is a fact.

Therefore, I have moved to have that cut restored. It is the correct and responsible thing to do. I hope the House will see the wisdom in that recommendation.

•(1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech by the President of the Treasury Board and I noticed that he congratulated the members of the committees. There seems to be a certain lack of logic: he congratulates them on their work and then asks for a decision by the committee on the Governor General's budget to be reversed.

It is important, for the purposes of this debate, that we are clear about the proposal, which is to cut 10% of the budget for the last three months of the year. Accordingly, this is simply 0.1 of three twelfths of the year, which is 2.5% of the budget for the whole year.

As for the Governor General, it is true that in years past we have noticed some needless expenses. I think the committee wanted to send a clear message that even in the current work for the current year a bigger effort needs to be made.

I am having a little difficulty understanding the attitude of the government and the Treasury Board when they say they are going to reverse the committee decision. This attitude fuels the democratic deficit that this government said it wanted to eliminate. The majority of committee members, including members of the government, voted in favour of this cut—a cut that is not draconian. It is essentially a warning we want to send to say that there is room for more cuts to the Governor General's overall budget. I think a special effort could be made.

Why has the government not decided to accept the proposal presented by the members and the committee and cut the yearly budget by 2.5%?

I think that the Governor General could find ways to save money not when she is handing out medals and things of that nature, but in her daily operations and administration. I have a really hard time understanding why the government did not receive this amendment as constructive and as an indication that MPs can have a measure of control over defining the budget.

•(1855)

[*English*]

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the first part. I congratulate all committees in the House for being quite responsible in the approach to the estimates. They had an opportunity to deal with all of the estimates and chose to go into this area.

There are two parts to my concern. When I put forward the estimates, I did it after a great deal of work and diligence. They represent the most accurate and best estimates of the government for the work that it needs to do. It should not be a surprise that I would want to defend that. I would not have put them forward if I did not believe that in the first instance.

If we were to run through the math in our heads on this first estimate, it sounds like 10% represents a pretty big cut overall. However, one could argue it is only 10% in the last quarter. The problem is that in any kind of management situation a very large quantity of money is tied up in staff. Had we been in the normal estimates cycle, talking about this in June and we had three-quarters left to adjust, a 10% cut would be a different thing, but when we are doing it in the last quarter, we cannot turn around for a contractual reason and just fire everybody tomorrow.

Even if staff is reduced to take it out, it is going to take a bit of time to do that. In the meantime, given that there are only three months to implement this cut, an awful lot of activity is going to be cut. It sounds simple, but it plays out in a more complicated way. Am I adverse to the government accepting the advice of a committee? No. I moved cuts, as everyone knows, when I was chair of the committee and the government in fact accepted that.

Supply

There are two things involved here. I was not given the privilege of an opportunity to debate this at the committee level. I was not aware this was going to happen in committee. It was not arranged with me, otherwise I would have made some of these arguments then. The logic of doing it relates to activities that took place some time ago. I believe the Governor General and the government have responded in a very positive way regarding the concerns that were made.

The nature and size of the cut, and the timing of the year is a problem. I think a smaller, more symbolic cut might have done the job. I think this one is going to create legitimate problems in the operation of that office in the last three months.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my concern is twofold. Part of the issue that troubled most Canadians was the travel that the Governor General undertook as she saw it to do her job. Most Canadians were offended by some of that. They saw it as extravagant. The other part of the Governor General's job involves ceremonial duties and the maintenance of her residence, which is a historical site. I understand they are part of the budget as well.

I do not want to see the Governor General's ability to perform the sort of ceremonial duties that are expected of her undercut or impacted. I want to ensure that the kind of travel that was undertaken, which I understand was not in her budget but came out of foreign affairs, is stopped. I want to see that sort of nonsense stopped.

Let us get the personalities out of the way and take a look at the facts. I would like to know from the President of the Treasury Board, what are the facts here? What is being cut?

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, there are two things that have happened. This Governor General happens to be a lot more active than the previous one in all of the positive ways: opening up the grounds at Rideau Hall, inviting Canadians in, and travelling back and forth across the country, including the north, representing the government. She plays the role as commander-in-chief in visiting the armed forces in different parts of the world.

There is not a lot of criticism with most of those activities or I have not heard a lot of criticism. In fairness to the concern that members feel, and I would have to say that I share this concern, there was an attitude that was expressed relative to a particular trip that was taken. It was the circumpolar one where they took along 50 most eminent Canadians, and that did offend many members. It offended many Canadians.

The committee was right to do two things. It called the office before the committee because if it spends public money it is accountable to the House. The committee had the right and the responsibility to do exactly what it did. The action the committee took was not somehow inappropriate, but two things have happened. The budget year in which that occurred was a previous budget year, not this one. In looking at the budget document, the Governor General received no increase this year. Looking at the travel plans, they have been reduced and we will not see another trip of that sort.

The Governor General is a very intelligent woman. She got the message loud and clear from Canadians and from the House, and she moderated her behaviour. The precipitating incident has been

corrected. The travel costs of the Governor General are often covered if she is travelling on behalf of the government, DFAIT might cover it or defence might cover it if she is travelling in her capacity as commander-in-chief. Has the total amount of travel been reduced? The answer is yes. Are there any more trips of the kind where the concerns came out? The answer is no.

Her core budget had grown quite a bit because of all these activities and restraint was exercised there. I would argue that the government has responded to the very concerns that the House has made. Regarding the size of the cut in the last quarter, she has three months to adjust to this and very limited ability to lay off staff given public sector contracts. It takes a little bit longer than three months to actually realize those savings. The only choice she has is to shut down other activities.

I do not say that as any kind of threat. It is a reality. I would encourage any member who wants to sit down with me to go through the numbers. It is very real, and that is the problem. If members think she has not addressed the concerns, that she is still being profligate, it is legitimate for members of the House to send a message. This particular message is just poorly sent. It has not considered that part of it.

Mr. Speaker, would there be unanimous consent to prolong question and comments by five minutes?

● (1900)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to prolong his question and comment time by five minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Question and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my observation and the point I want to make is that it is clear to me at this end of the House that the democratic deficit is alive and well in Parliament.

Contrary to all the romantic ideals that were referred to in the Speech from the Throne under the new Prime Minister, the will of the MPs in the government operations committee have been disregarded, reversed and, I believe, treated very shabbily in the fact that the President of the Treasury Board is now seeking to reverse the very clear will of the committee as expressed in a democratic process where members of four political parties accurately reflected the will of Canadians to have the Governor General's budget reduced.

The only argument I have heard so far from the Liberals has been that to reduce the Governor General's budget, to ask her to tighten her belt and sharpen her pencil, would be inconvenient. It would inconvenience the Governor General for us to impose these conditions at this time.

This comes from a government that had no qualms whatsoever cutting, hacking and slashing virtually every social program in the country that we value and inconveniencing millions of people by reducing the benefits they may enjoy from those programs. Yet, by some class issue, it will not apply the same logic to Rideau Hall.

Supply

We believe the government operations committee was listening and had its finger on the pulse of Canadians when Canadians were expressing outrage about the fact that when every other budget in the country was being reduced, the Governor General's budget was spiralling out of control, growing exponentially year after year after year.

For the President of the Treasury Board to stand up now and give us an 18 minute civics lesson on the budget and estimates process and then a 2 minute defence of the Governor General's budget does not wash with me.

He also did not even mention that he was trying to put the money back into the PCO budget as well, when this was clearly a partisan use of public funds to buy a polling company to give advice on damage control coming out of the sponsorship program. That was an abuse of taxpayer money for Liberal Party partisan purposes and he is seeking to reverse that reduction today too.

Would he explain why he did not comment on that?

• (1905)

Hon. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the three part question that the hon. member proposed.

The first is the question of the democratic deficit. I think he just misunderstands it. The reality is that committees are, as we always call them, creatures of the House. Committees provide advice to the House but it is the House that makes the decision, not the committee. It has always been thus. It is this way with legislation and it is this way with estimates. There is no diminution of democratic rights. In fact, there is a substantial enhancement of them given the fact that this is a minority government. It comes back to a minority House to make the decision. I think it is an unfortunate mischaracterization of what is going on here.

Think of the reverse. It is not uncommon in the House for a committee to make a report on a piece of legislation and for members of the House to stand and say that they disagree and to put further amendments forward. This is exactly what is happening in this case.

There is another piece to this, frankly. We might have had some of this debate in the committee if the committee had chosen to invite me back to talk about it. I could have put the same concerns on the table. The reality is that one couches this in the language of a cost saving-cost cutting exercise, the same as everybody else has been subjected to, but the reality is that it is a 10% cut in the last quarter of the year. It is simply a difficult thing to do. We do not do that with anything else around here. This would cause serious problems in a very short period of time.

The committee may be satisfied with that being an acceptable solution but I do not think it is. I believe the House has a right to debate that and in the end make a decision. I think the message that was sent was poorly constructed. Another time we might want to debate that.

As far as the other item regarding the PCO money, as soon as that motion comes up I will stand and argue that one also.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak tonight to this motion put forward by the

President of the Treasury Board that would reverse the decision of the government operations and estimates committee which was to reduce the budget of the Governor General by 2%.

I want to talk about four main issues. The first issue has to do with what the government operations and estimates committee is all about? The second issue has to do with why the committee decided to recommend to Parliament a reduction in the Governor General's budget by \$416,000 out of a budget of \$19.3 million? The total Governor General's spending is something like \$42 million.

The third thing I want to do is look at the decision of the Liberal government and at the impact it will have on the credibility of this committee and other committees.

The fourth thing I want to look at is the government's credibility when it attempts to reverse the decision of my committee.

I want to do all that in 10 minutes because I will be splitting my time with the member for Medicine Hat.

First: What is the government operations and estimates committee all about. It was established about two years ago to provide better scrutiny of government budgets and government spending of taxpayer money. One of the main roles of Parliament is, of course, to do just that, to provide appropriate scrutiny to the spending of taxpayer dollars.

The government operations and estimates committee was set up not only to provide this better scrutiny through its committee but through other committees of the House as well. The government operations and estimates committee was to look at the process used and to give advice to other committees as to how they might in fact improve their process and provide better scrutiny. This was done because there were a lot of complaints, and somewhat justified complaints, that proper scrutiny simply was not being provided. Therefore two years ago this committee was established. I think those were legitimate complaints that proper scrutiny was not being provided, but let us look at why proper scrutiny was not being provided. There were three main reasons for this.

The first reason was that in the past these committees were chaired and controlled by government MPs. The chair was from the government side and a majority of the committee members were from the government side. What they did was to make sure that whatever happened was what the government wanted to happen. Therefore the objectivity of the committees was very limited indeed.

The second reason there simply was not appropriate scrutiny was that the estimates and the budgets for spending taxpayer money were presented in such a complex way that no one could understand them. Even the people who were involved in putting the numbers together could not understand what the numbers really meant.

It seems like the estimates were, and still are, presented in a way where rather than give information to the public about government spending, they were hiding information on government spending. That is part of the reason that I think proper scrutiny was not given.

The third reason for the committee was that it would make recommendations. They would have good discussions in committees quite often. They would make recommendations but these recommendations were routinely ignored by the government. Why would we go to all the work of doing a good job of examining spending, just to have it ignored by government?

Those were the three main reasons why I believe appropriate scrutiny was not provided by members of the House of Commons.

The establishment of the government operations and estimates committee changed that to some extent I think. It is a less partisan committee than most other committees when it comes to looking at spending.

The committee was first chaired by the member for Winnipeg South, the President of the Treasury Board. To be fair, I think he was a good chair. A lot of non-partisan work went on until it came time to put the reports together. Interestingly, he stressed that the government should respect the work done by this committee. However, that was then and this is now.

• (1910)

The committee at that time was controlled by Liberals members who had a majority government and it was chaired by the member for Winnipeg South.

I, a member of the Conservative Party, now chair the committee and seven out of twelve members of the committee are from opposition parties. We see quite a different situation.

Now, the same MP who stressed how important it was for the government to respect the work done by the government operations committee, has put a motion before this House to completely ignore the recommendations of the government operations committee. What a change from then until now.

That is extremely unfortunate and it is very two faced on the part of the member to have these two different positions on how Parliament and how the government should respect the committee's work, depending upon whether he is the chair of the committee or President of the Treasury Board.

The second thing I want to discuss has to do with why the committee decided to trim \$416,000 from the Governor General's budget, which is 2% of the Governor General's budget but less than 1% of her total spending. About another \$22 million is spent on the Governor General by other departments. However we are not talking about that tonight.

The committee did that with a great deal of thought. It was not done on a whim, as the minister has said.

First, the Governor General increased her spending over her term by almost 100%. The increase in spending was 11% per year on average. That is unacceptable. How many Canadians can afford to increase their spending at that rate? I would suggest that there are very few.

Second, the committee requested in a report about a year ago that the Governor General report on her spending and on her plans for spending in a much more complete way. To be fair, the Office of the

Supply

Governor General has moved on that and is doing a better job now, but there is still a long way to go.

The committee expected more and this spending cut was partly to send a message that she will provide a better accounting of spending, better budgeting or a better explanation of the effectiveness of the spending or she simply would not get the money. I think that message was sent loud and clear.

This was a responsible decision made by the committee with a great deal of thought by committee members and supported by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board. She voted in favour of this cut, the same cut that the President of the Treasury Board is now saying that we should reverse and ignore the committee.

The committee's decision was a responsible decision and the committee knew what it was doing. I am proud of the committee for making that decision.

Where do we go from here? All the members of this House will be voting on this attempt on the part of the government to reverse the decision of the government operations committee. I encourage all members, especially from the government side and especially those two government members who are members of the committee and voted in support of these cuts, to uphold the power given to the committee. We can all do something to help improve this democratic deficit that the government always talks about and does so little to improve by rejecting the motion of the President of the Treasury Board and supporting the decision made by the government operations committee.

That is what I am proposing tonight and that is what I encourage members to do tonight. I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate on this issue.

• (1915)

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to respond to one thing the member said. I began my remarks by congratulating the committee. I thought it took the estimates process seriously and spent time on them. There is no disrespect here whatsoever. I simply disagree with the decision that was made.

We made a cut when I was chair of the committee, but we did it in a timeframe. We made it to send the same message that the member wants to send, but we made it in a way that did not create chaos in the department. The government accepted that one.

When we play with the numbers, and this is only 1% or 2% of the whole portfolio, the reality is we are cutting a given budget line that is for the last quarter of the year. The \$400,000 out \$19 million sounds like a small cut, but is being taken out of the last quarter because the rest of that has already been appropriated and spent. We cannot escape that. We can play with the numbers, but that is not the reality. The reality is it is the implementation of a very large cut, 10%, in the last quarter. That is the problem.

Supply

•(1920)

Mr. Leon Benoit: Madam Speaker, the minister's comment is really quite shocking. He said that the reason he brought forth the motion to reverse the decision made by the committee was because he did not agree with it. If we are going to have everything committee's do reversed because a minister does not agree with it, why do we bother having committees? Why do we bother doing the work? That is an absurd reason, and he knows it.

The spending cut is less than 1% of the total spending on the Governor General. That is the spending in her budget, \$19.3 million, and in other departments. It is a little over 2% of her budget. It is 10% of the remaining portion of her budget. Will she feel it? Yes, but that is the intent. There are a lot of salaries to be paid. There are things that have to be done. However, it is supposed to make it difficult so she will be more careful in her spending, so she will reduce her spending, so she will respect the wishes of Canadians for more responsible spending and so she will report in a much more complete fashion to the House and to Canadians.

It is meant to be felt and it will be felt, but it can be managed. There will be no need to lay off members of staff. With respect to the issue of staff, however, she has increased the number of people who work for her by a large number, and she better have a serious look as to whether there may not be a few too many people on her staff.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to participate in the debate. One thing I find troubling about the presentation of the President of the Treasury Board is that his logic, as was pointed out by my colleague, seems a little perverse. He suggested that because the overspending took place in the previous budget year that somehow this would bar this Parliament from paring back or calling for greater responsibility and accountability in her budget, something for which he himself, at a previous incarnation as chair of the committee, called.

It is important to put into perspective just how much this amount is. What it represents is 2.2% of her current budget. We are talking about a little over \$400,000 out of a budget currently of \$19.2 million. That is up from \$10.7 million just over seven or eight years ago. What needs to be put forward in the debate is that there is accountability for our actions.

When the Governor General took 59 of her friends and colleagues from the arts community to circumnavigate the globe, a trip which was exorbitant by any standard, costing over \$5 million to the Canadian taxpayer, there was a price to pay for that. That price to pay is coming from the pockets of hard-working Canadian taxpayers. To that end a very strong message is being sent, a strong message that addresses concerns that the Prime Minister used to hold over the democratic deficit, concerns that Canadians should have over the way in which the government and the Governor General have spent their money. Let us not forget, there is one taxpayer in the country. No matter how many levels of government may be at them, there is one taxpayer.

To simply reiterate the point that was made by my colleague, a strong message should be sent and should be received by the President of the Treasury Board. Yet he is trying to, as has been pointed out, reverse the democratic decision that was taken by all members of Parliament who sat on that committee, including

government members. We hope we will not see a repeat of hypocrisy in this.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Madam Speaker, I know it was the spending of \$5 million on a particular trip about a year ago that really brought this issue to the attention of Canadians in the greatest way.

However, these cuts have nothing to do with that. The spending on the trip was out of the foreign affairs budget. These cuts have to do with the Governor General's budget. We did think it through. We do understand the impact. It is absolutely absurd that the President of the Treasury Board would not respect that.

•(1925)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is such a pleasure to rise tonight and address this issue. This is the reason why parliaments were formed in the first place. The whole idea, when parliaments were formed, is to have a check on the ability of the Crown to tax and spend.

Tonight, as we go through the votes this evening, the government will be proposing tens of billions of dollars in expenditures. It is only appropriate that opposition parties, in particular, and all members take the time to scrutinize the government's estimates and ensure that every single penny is being spent as wisely as it can possibly be spent.

At this point we are addressing one issue, the Governor General's expenditures, but there are many other issues. As a way of symbolizing the tremendous amount of waste that goes on in government today, my colleagues from all parties have moved motions in committee to trim back the firearms registry by \$82 million because it has proven to be a disaster. It has proven to be not only a tremendous waste of money, but also a waste of money that initially gave Canadians false hope about its ability to deal with the issue of crime.

My friend, the member for Central Nova, the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, will be talking about that tonight. I also want to point to my friend from Yorkton—Melville who has done an outstanding job drawing attention to the tremendous waste in the firearms registry. It was supposed to cost \$2 million when it was put into place, today we are approaching \$2 billion with no end in sight. The government continues to pour money down that black hole.

What a pleasure to stand tonight and talk about the necessity for the government to be responsible when it comes to spending.

Another issue we would like to debate tonight, if we have time, is the waste on things like government polling. The government is using polling for clearly partisan ends, as it did last spring when it commissioned a poll that was designed to help it deal with the damage caused by the sponsorship scandal. Clearly, that is polling for a very partisan reason. The member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam moved a motion in committee and reduced estimates to deal with that issue. It is a good move and it is designed to tell the government that we will not allow that to happen with taxpayer money.

Supply

I want to specifically talk about the issue of the reduction in estimates for the Governor General. As I pointed out at the outset, parliaments were formed to control the power of the Crown to tax and spend. In this case it is literally the power of the Crown to spend, when we are dealing with the Governor General and some of the lavish spending that has occurred under her watch.

I want to point out that we support the office of the Governor General. We need a head of state. However, the Governor General has an obligation to be responsible with how she spends taxpayer money. Following up on what my friend said, when we have had expenditure increases in the Governor General's office, from \$10.7 million in 1996-97 to \$19.2 million last year, clearly the spending is out of hand.

Many Canadians today are being forced to cut back to find ways to deal with paying for the basics. They have suffered years of cutbacks. Many people, 1.2 million Canadians, are unemployed today. As one of my colleagues from the NDP pointed out when we went through a period of retrenching in government, millions of Canadians had to do with less when it came to health care services and all kinds of things.

What we are asking of the Governor General is that she restrain her spending in the same way that ordinary Canadians have to do all the time. I do not think that is too much to ask. What we are asking for is a very modest decrease, a cut of \$417,000 in her budget of \$19.2 million.

A minute ago we heard the Treasury Board President say that because this cut would have to occur in the last three months of the budget year, it really was unfair to propose it. That means we cannot propose any cuts to any of the estimates at this time of year because there are only three months left in the budget year. That just does not make any sense. Of course we have to propose reductions in estimates when certain departments are profligate and unwise in their spending of taxpayer money. That is why we are here. Some people think we are here to sit on committees and talk about every issue under the sun.

• (1930)

The first reason, the primary reason, we are here is to ensure proper expenditure of taxpayers' money. That is exactly what we are proposing to do tonight when it comes to this vote on whether or not we reinstate \$417,000 for the Governor General as the President of the Treasury Board would like us to do and as the Liberal government would like us to do.

In my eyes, and I think in the eyes of many Canadians who are frankly offended by how the Governor General has spent in the last number of years, I think it is unacceptable. We simply cannot reinstate that money which was effectively removed by the government operations and estimates committee, money removed by all members of all parties on that committee because I think they understand that there has to be some limit on how governments spend.

It is unconscionable, I think, for government members to roll over on this and say they are going to back the Treasury Board president on this issue. It is unconscionable.

Again, putting this into perspective, given what Canadians have gone through, given the cuts we have seen to the Canadian Forces, for instance, we are talking about a very minor decrease in a very bloated budget that the Governor General now has as a result of years and years of increases. I do not think we are asking too much.

I want to point out, too, that the fact we are having a discussion like this tonight has been made possible by the fact that we now have a minority government. For years we have had a majority Liberal government and for years we have been unable to bring about these types of motions, get them passed and get to the point where we come to the main estimates and actually have a chance to reduce spending.

It has only been because the government has been basically forced into this position that we now have this option. Even with that, the government is threatening to take that away from us through the President of the Treasury Board, who used to favour these kinds of cuts. When he was the chair of the government operations and estimates committee he used to favour these things, but suddenly when he is the Treasury Board president it is just not going to happen under his watch. It is amazing how people do a complete about-face when they get into cabinet. It is very regrettable too.

I am simply pointing out that this is not some sign of democracy breaking out among the Liberal ranks. This is the Liberal ranks being forced to accept democracy because we are in a minority government situation today.

I simply want to wrap up by saying that this is a chance for Parliament to really send a message to the government, a government that has seen its expenditures grow and grow. If I remember correctly, a few years ago in 1998-99 government spending was \$106.5 billion. It is going to hit \$150 billion next year. It has gone up by an average of about 5.7% a year over the last number of years. It is growing exponentially.

I want to argue that it is time to send a message that Canadians are not going to allow their hard-earned tax dollars to be spent willy-nilly by these government members in whatever way they deem is important to them, keeping in mind that they have their own partisan reasons for spending money in these ways, and sometimes they are extraordinarily wasteful.

I am urging members on all sides to be mindful of this primary role that Parliament has, which is to keep a check on the power of the Crown to spend. Tonight we have a chance to do that.

I am urging members to be mindful of this primary responsibility, to stand with members of the Conservative Party when we oppose the reinstatement of this money going back to the Governor General, to stand with the Conservative Party when we propose that we strip spending away from the firearms registry, which is clearly a black hole of taxpayers' money, and to stand with us in opposing the reinstatement of money to the Privy Council Office for partisan polling. This is our chance to send a message on behalf of taxpayers that we are simply not going to take it anymore.

Supply

•(1935)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of working with the member for Medicine Hat on the finance committee when he was the finance critic. I have always valued and respected his opinion.

We are here right now to debate the estimates of the Governor General, but I noticed he mentioned something about the gun registry. I am surprised he would reach the conclusion he did when the facts speak about a totally different case. Let me give the House some examples.

Since 1975, the rate of firearms homicides has decreased by more than half. The number of rifle and shotgun homicides has consistently dropped. It has been a very steep slope since 1995. If we look at firearms homicides in 2002 and compare them with the United States, the numbers are not even close. In Canada in 2002, the rate of firearms homicides was .48 per 100,000 population. In the United States, the rate was 4.0 per 100,000 population. We know the United States has much more relaxed rules with respect to firearms.

If we compare Canada and the United States with respect to female spousal homicides, we will see female spousal homicides on a very steep decline. The comparison between Canada and the United States is not even close. There are fewer female spousal homicides in Canada than in the United States.

The member said the gun registry and the firearms program are not useful at all. This flies right in the face of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, which has endorsed the firearms registry and firearms program. Not only that, but Canadian front line police officers have now endorsed the gun registry.

Those experts over there are denying the views of front line police officers and police chiefs who are accessing this system—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Order, please. The member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Madam Speaker, that was a very selective use of statistics by the member. I want to point out from a StatsCan survey I have in my hand that between 1997 and 2003, of all the homicides that were committed, 86% of the weapons that were used were not registered. That is 86%, so rather obviously the firearms registry does not work for criminals who refuse to register firearms.

I want to point out that in the last dozen years handgun deaths in Canada have doubled. We have had a registry for handguns in Canada for 70 years. Julian Fantino, the police chief of Canada's largest city, has changed his mind. He has said we should scrap the firearms registry and put that money into front line policing.

If the member does not believe me, I ask him to ask the member for Sarnia—Lambton, a Liberal member who was going to move the same motion that my friend from Central Nova has moved but was talked out of it by the Prime Minister.

Liberal members do not even support that Liberal member who just spoke.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to make the point that these cuts in the estimates that were put forward by the opposition were very specific cuts. The combined opposition parties worked in committee to authorize certain cuts. They are specific cuts and this really is a test for the Liberal Party and a test for this Parliament.

There are three crystal clear issues.

One is the gun registry. If we did a poll of Canadians with regard to the gun registry, the overwhelming majority of them would tell us that the gun registry is an absolute abuse of taxpayers' money and it has not done any good for public safety at all, none whatsoever, certainly not commensurate with the amount of money that is being spent on it.

Next is the Governor General. When the Liberals came into power the budget of the Office of the Governor General went from \$10 million to \$20 million. Cutting it by \$400,000 to send a message that we are tired of her wasting money is a message that taxpayers want sent.

Last, stopping the Liberals from spending taxpayers' money on partisan polls is precisely what should be done, because these Liberals need to stop abusing taxpayers.

•(1940)

Mr. Monte Solberg: Madam Speaker, I want to say to my hon. friend it is pretty clear that when the government has a budget of \$200 billion and it runs around and says it cannot find what really ultimately amounts to a few million dollars in cuts, I think that is crazy. I think taxpayers think that is crazy too.

Too often we see example after example of wasteful spending. Even the government is undertaking an expenditure review where it says it could find \$3 billion in waste. We are talking about nothing compared to that. When is the government going to wake up and support common sense measures like cutting \$400,000—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has presented a motion that changes the one I presented last week, November 25, 2004, to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, one which, I repeat, was adopted by the majority of the committee members.

That motion, I must point out immediately, did not in any way question the legitimacy of the role of the Governor General. Primarily for the benefit of the taxpayers who are watching so they will know exactly what is involved, I will reiterate and explain as clearly as possible what it is all about, because much has been said.

The motion I presented, which the majority of the committee adopted, involved a 10% reduction in the \$4,171,000 that had not yet been authorized by the government with respect to the Governor General's budget, in other words the modest sum of \$417,000. Let us make it clear, the budget of the Governor General's secretariat is \$19.1 million for the current fiscal year, but taxpayers need to know that the total budget allocated to the Governor General's mandate is far more than the \$19.1 million figure. When all the budgets of all the other government bodies that provide her with services are added it, the figure totals—a conservative estimate—between \$35 million and \$42 million. We can never get accurate figures. This is an important point, because it demonstrates that the real costs, the total costs, are not consolidated but spread among a number of federal bodies.

On the other hand, I must tell the public, prompted by that same desire for clarity, that the Governor General's budget has, according to all the data known, gone up 90% in the past 10 years. It made a jump worthy of an Olympic record in 2002-03, with a dizzying 102% increase.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates was able to hear from two representatives of the Office of the Governor General, to question them on the budget and the way in which the Office of the Governor General undertook its responsibilities to streamline expenditures, to optimize expected and achieved results, to review this streamlining exercise and the reporting, accountability, and transparency expected by Canadians and Quebecers. I will come back to this testimony in a moment.

First, I want to say that it is normal to expect a Governor General, the head of state, not only to lead the way in cutting government expenditures, but also to set the tone and to lead by example. She is a head of state. However, nothing could be further from the truth. The motion that was adopted seeks to rectify this. This requirement to cut expenditures is not new. The Liberal government has made it into a theme song, and we are well-placed to hear it in the House.

To give an extremely simple but very relevant example, I refer hon. members to the Speech from the Throne, and I do not need to remind anyone that it was the Governor General herself who read that speech.

On page 2, the government announced, with regard to its seven commitments:

To aim for tangible, practical results for Canadians and report to them so that they can hold their governments to account;

A little later, on page 3, the government said, through the Governor General:

—we will not be complacent. The Government will not spend itself into deficit ... It will provide transparent, accountable management, treating every tax dollar with respect. The Government will make the difficult decisions among competing priorities and systematically review all expenditures, reallocating from old to new, from past to future.

I want to digress, here, because I allow myself to hope that the Governor General will not go from past to future with a 90% increase.

Now, I will detail the testimony given by the Governor General's representatives so that everyone can see that the goals of reducing expenditures, optimizing anticipated results and being financially

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transparent have not really been taken into consideration by the senior officials and the head of state herself, and that progress, as such, has been more than mitigated and very minimal.

• (1945)

To do this, I refer to the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates of Tuesday, November 23. Let us recall, first, that in the spring of 2004, this committee undertook a review of the budget of the Office of the Governor General. I need only point to three recommendations that are especially relevant to what I have to say in support of it.

The third recommendation reads as follows:

That the Parliament of Canada ensure that the necessary measures are taken to improve the financial transparency and accountability of the Office of the Governor General (Head of State).

The fifth recommendation reads as follows:

That the Office of the Governor General report on its annual projected plans and priorities and the anticipated results of its activities. In that report, the Office of the Governor General should state the expenses borne by the federal departments and agencies supporting its activities.

Finally, the sixth recommendation reads as follows:

That the Office of the Governor General prepare an annual report on its activities, including its financial statements—

In reference to these recommendations, the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, a committee member, asked what had been done in this regard, and I quote:

The purpose of the reports requested at that time was transparency, letting Canadians know how money was being spent and what activities were being done. Also, I guess whenever we look at budgets or main estimates or a report of this type, it's to try to find savings.

Addressing the two representatives, he asked the following question:

At the point you're at in the preparation of this plan, have you found savings?

This is the answer of the Director General, Corporate Services, Office of the Governor General:

We participated in the government's reallocation exercise in the current year and we did find savings. We found about \$150,000... We are also participating in the 2005-06 expenditure review committee initiative.

And the Governor General's secretary added:

I might just add that it is part of our regular management practices; in our program planning and in looking at all the events that the Governor General does, it is a critical part of our planning to always look at the most cost-effective ways of doing business.

I am very pleased because that is exactly what was proposed and requested in the motion that I introduced and that was adopted.

I then had an opportunity to ask a question of the two representatives along the line taken by the hon. member. I therefore asked these two representatives:

—how the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General measures the return on investment Canadians get from the Governor General's activities. How is this return measured?

I think that the answer is of interest to everyone, and taxpayers in particular:

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For example, with respect to the Visitor Services Program, we do an evaluation based first on the number of visitors to the sites and their level of satisfaction. We have carried out surveys to determine their level of satisfaction as well as the recognition of information provided during the visits. This is one of the types of evaluations we do.

To which I replied:

So according to your logic, the budget could go on increasing, since it would always be possible to provide activities or services that would attract more and more people.

I used these examples to show that, for 2004-05, on a budget of \$19.1 million, only a microscopic cut of \$150,000 was made. This should answer the argument put forward a moment ago by the President of the Treasury Board. One might even argue that, by extrapolation, it is but a speck of dust, as compared to a total budget of \$35 million to \$42 million.

In response to my questions on the Governor General's total budget, for all services, I was basically told that there was no desire to be transparent in providing taxpayers with the big picture, that is, all the costs associated with the mandate of the Governor General.

There was no indication from the representatives of the Governor General that the Office of the Governor General had any concern for any analysis or real, significant reduction in spending, or even for recommendation 5 mentioned earlier.

• (1950)

And yet, the President of the Treasury Board himself, in response to a question I asked him last week concerning the need to add up all the various expenses relating to the Governor General's mandate, gave this answer, and I quote:

—the public service modernization process that we are engaged in and which was announced in the budget is to do exactly what the member is requesting. It is to put in place a modern expenditure management information system that allows us to answer these questions quickly and easily and make it entirely transparent for the members of the House and the citizens of Canada.

I would like to add that the President of the Treasury Board began his answer to my question with, I quote, “—the member raises a very interesting and important question”.

In all modesty, that is not surprising, because when the President of the Treasury Board testified—the same day—at the Standing Committee on Governmental Operations and Estimates, he said that the government's strategic initiatives plan would have to involve:

—rigorous stewardship of public resources to achieve the results that Canadians demand, making sure that Canadian's tax dollars are invested in their priorities and managed in a manner that is effective, efficient, and accountable, is part of any government's most fundamental responsibilities.

In conclusion, we are firmly and resolutely opposed to the motion by the President of the Treasury Board, since it is high time we put the brakes on the Governor General's spending. The people of Canada and Quebec have every right to expect that the Governor General's expenses are rationalized, subject to analysis for their cost-effectiveness, transparent, and accounted for absolutely rigorously.

Finally, I want to refute the argument advanced by some hon. members that a reduction of \$400,000 or so would have negative effects on the activities and mandate of the Governor General. There is no reason for the general public to be penalized in any way by such a cut. It is simply about doing things differently, as is happening in a number of departments and agencies. One telling example, if I

may say so, is the initiative and savings undertaken by my counterpart, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, about which he speaks so eloquently.

It is up to the Governor General and her senior officials to use their creativity and their undoubted sense of innovation, to do things differently and reduce costs. Moreover, the Governor General herself said, in the preamble to the throne speech, and I quote:

I recently concluded extended visits to six cities of varying size ... In them, I found remarkable, innovative projects for social renewal and individual commitment. They express the confidence and love that we all hold for this country. This is the spirit of Canada I see as Governor General.

I hope she will be inspired by the words she spoke in the throne speech.

I am sure we can all remember the slogan—one I heard more often in a previous life—that was widely used in the government: “Do more with less”. It is high time for the head of state, the Governor General, to lead the way.

• (1955)

[English]

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, there are two issues here tonight. First, there is an erosion of democracy. Something that has been running rampant here a way too long and a way too fast, and the Liberals do not seem to care or recognize that at all. By not accepting the committee's recommendation, it is totally unacceptable. This is the way democracy is set up. We have the committee structure. It is meant to work. I do not think the minister should do anything but accept that.

Second, it is a continued waste of large volumes of Canadian taxpayer dollars, \$400,000 alone by the Governor General. This is not an argument tonight about whether the Governor General should exist or not, although that is an argument that a lot of people in Canada are talking about, it is a waste of dollars that we are talking about.

I relate back to a comment from my colleague across the floor on the gun registry. There has never been a bigger financial lie told to the country than the gun law. My question to the hon. member from the Bloc is on the value and quantities of these dollars, and how we could have spent them. It is a figure that is fast approaching \$2 billion, and as my colleague said earlier, we have not saved any lives.

We have taken the dollars and wasted them. There are items about which I would like to ask my Bloc colleague. How many MRIs does she think the dollars, between the Governor General and the money wasted in the gun registry, could have bought? How many nurses salaries could it have paid for? How many students could have had their tuitions paid?

I know that doctor shortages in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound are atrocious, as bad as any place in the country. Just think how many doctors could have been hired for rural Canada. Dare I say, rural Canada? After all, we know that rural Canada means nothing to this government.

Does the hon. member think that the money we could save here, the \$400,000 and the money wasted in the gun registry, could have been spent in much better ways?

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Thibault: Madam Speaker, in replying to my colleague, I would like to say to him that I do not believe it is up to me or to any member to decide how the funds will be used.

As a first step, we ask the Governor General to amend the present motion, about which I made a speech, that is, over the next three months, to reduce the amount of \$4,171,000 by \$417,000. It is certainly not for me or any member of the Bloc to tell the Governor General, or any other person, how to do that. The accountability rests with her.

Concerning the fact that obviously many Canadians, including many Quebecers, are experiencing real hardship; when we make a connection between the “effort” that we are asking the Governor General to make, in contrast to the victims of the system, we recognize that the differences in how people live cannot be compared.

● (2000)

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's remarks. Before asking a question of my colleague, I would like to respond to the hon. member opposite, the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, and the others I have heard this evening, who rail against the erosion of democracy by the Liberals.

I do not know what could be more anti-democratic. To reconsider a resolution from a committee is the essence of democracy. That is what we are doing this evening. We are debating it. There will be a vote, and that is what democracy is all about.

The fact that a committee has decided something does not mean we have no right to talk about it. I am sorry, but that is not my idea of democracy.

Having said that, I would like to ask my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, really out of professional curiosity, whether, before moving her motion in committee, she asked the Governor General what effect this reduction would have on her responsibilities.

Am I to understand that this proposal means the Bloc agrees that in future we will make budget cuts strictly as a matter of percentage, without regard for the consequences?

Ms. Louise Thibault: Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows full well, we cannot question the Governor General. I believe she means the Governor General's representatives.

I would like to reply to this question in the same way I did earlier regarding spending cuts during three-quarters of the year, from the beginning of April until now. I cited only a few, but all members of the committee raised excellent and relevant questions. We were told they had found \$150,000 out of a budget of \$19.1 million.

We repeatedly asked how performance was evaluated. I am sure the hon. member would agree with me that activities must be evaluated in terms of performance and human resources as well as in terms of financial investment. They told us they had saved up to \$150,000 out of \$19 million. It should be out of \$16 million, if you subtract the \$4 million remaining, which is the number at issue in the motion.

No further information was given on what steps were taken, in relation to the spring 2004 report of which I spoke, to systematically implement, like all other federal government agencies, spending cuts and streamline funding granted to it up to now. No light was shed on this matter. We were told that, in the future, they would do their work and give consideration to our requests, but could not give us figures.

I am replying in this manner, because to me, the level of the answers does not bode well for the future. In considering a cut of some \$400,000, as I said in my speech, it is up to the Office of the Governor General to decide where it is to occur. Obviously, everyone can have ideas, but it is not up to me to transmit them.

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I very much enjoyed the remarks of the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques. I too was on the parliamentary committee where representatives of the Governor General answered our questions. I would like to ask my colleague if she was satisfied with the answer to the question, among others, about the spreading of expenditures among the various government agencies. We have tried to estimate an amount on the basis of the answers we got, but were never able to come up with an exact amount.

Later, we asked the President of the Treasury Board to review the information and provide us with a more accurate answer. I am wondering if my hon. colleague received this answer. If so, I would be curious to know what it was and what her assessment was.

I just have a brief comment for the hon. member who just spoke and expressed outrage at the 0.5% cut in the Governor General's budget, wondering if this could put the country in difficulty. I am a little surprised that a party that made all sorts of cuts in health, education and transfers to the provinces without asking itself too many questions would worry about that. This was painful to hear.

I look forward to my colleague's response.

● (2005)

Ms. Louise Thibault: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I am able to give him an answer, since it is in the minutes of the meeting at which the Governor General's two representatives testified.

I had asked the two representatives the following question:

—can you tell us how much the structure surrounding the Governor General costs and how much the other departments pay for that? Could you give us something understandable and accessible for the average person?

The answer that I and the other committee members were given is as follows:

I think it would be up to the other departments to give you a full report. We expect to give you the figure for our department. I cannot tell you whether, generally speaking, our costs can be compared to those offered by other departments.

I will close by repeating exactly what I said earlier, and that will be my answer to my colleague opposite. That was the very aim of one of the committee's recommendations in the spring 2004, but they did nothing about it. The answer we received is proof.

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[English]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to participate in the debate tonight. This gives us a chance to address the fundamental issue of democracy, as so many have said tonight, as part of the budgetary process.

Some of us were recently in Ukraine and had a chance to see the determination and courage of an entire nation standing up to be counted, standing up to ensure that their democratic rights were not trampled upon, determined to have their voices heard, and determined to have their votes count.

Surely in this context, the government can hear the voices of opposition representing Canadians from coast to coast to coast. They are concerned about whether or not their rights, opinions and feelings are reflected in the budget, the road map of government from start to finish. We are dealing tonight with a critical part of that road map, a critical element of a process that must reflect the democratic rights of Canadians and their feelings about accountability and transparency.

We have heard over and over again tonight just how much democracy has been eroded in this process. In the context of what is happening worldwide, when we see democracy being so fragile, we must do everything possible to respect the wishes of Canadians, and to stand up and demand a process that is full of integrity, honesty and truthfulness.

We have an obligation in the House to ensure that the voices of Canadians are mirrored in this place and that their concerns about accountability, transparency, responsibility, honesty and integrity are all integrated into the budgetary process from start to finish.

The estimates process is a critical part of this whole public policy arena. Tonight we have an opportunity to shed some light on just how effective our government has been with respect to the budgetary process, including the accuracy of the information presented in the estimates. There are a number of critical questions that have to be asked tonight, questions that the President of the Treasury Board did not really address in his rather pedantic lecturing style tonight.

We are dealing with some fundamental issues that have been identified as problem areas for the government, by the Auditor General, by outside observers, and by many in the House. Members have had to sit through and try to influence a position or an approach that has been so rigid, so autocratic, and so arbitrary that we have felt unable to represent the concerns of the people back in our respective constituencies.

There are several key questions that must be asked in this context. The first critical question is: Is the information that is at the beginning of the budget process accurate? Are we able, as Parliamentarians and Canadians, to draw on truthful information and make decisions based on that, or are we starting from a place where there are real questions about the accuracy and the truthfulness of the information provided to us and to all Canadians?

The answer should be readily apparent to members this evening if they were to reflect on the past couple of months in the House. We have dealt with a very serious issue, an issue now identified and recognized by many around the country. It was the deliberate decision on the part of the government to present inaccurate statistics

to this place and to the people of Canada. It deliberately lowballed the surplus so that we were denied an opportunity to debate and choose priorities.

Whatever side of the issue we are on, I am talking about the ability to make decisions based on accurate information. If we do not have accurate information, it is pretty darned difficult to have a serious, intelligent debate about choices and priorities.

● (2010)

We now know that year after year over the past decade the Liberal government has chosen to present inaccurate information. We know that the government has chosen to lowball the surplus to the tune of \$86 billion. Some people will ask, what is so bad about having a surplus? We are not saying there is anything wrong with having a surplus. We are saying it is a crime to have that information hidden from Canadians because we cannot choose where that money should be spent.

We know, by the very process that the government has chosen, that the money that comes our way, by way of surplus, disappears and is put against the debt regardless of whether or not it makes a significant dent in the debt to GDP ratio. For 10 years now this trend has occurred because of a deliberate decision by the government of the day. We are left trying to deal with serious priorities among Canadians and without the wherewithal to do it.

The first critical aspect of this whole budget process and the estimates must be a plea and a recognition on the part of the government that it must change its ways. In the spirit of democracy and addressing the democratic deficit, we must receive accurate information. Canadians are entitled to the facts. We are all invited to participate in a process in the interests of democracy.

When we raised this matter in the House and in committee, the government feigned ignorance, like it really did not know this was happening. It said that it is hard to predict budgets, that there are so many different forecasts, and so many different predictions and it was hard to do.

I want to point to two developments in response to that argument. First, despite the fact that the government has hired all these private sector forecasters from the banks and all these so-called smart economists, who have not produced one single accurate forecast in all these years, there is a group of learned economists in our society who have made accurate forecasts. Every single year the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has done just that. It has come within tiny percentage points of being in line with the actual reality.

The government members will not listen to the Jim Stanfords and John Loxleys of the world. They spend their time studying the figures and making accurate forecasts so we could make proper decisions in this place. If the government is interested in being accurate, it would turn to those people who have provided those enlightened analyses of the budget prospects for the future.

Second, is the interesting fact that the government actually did recognize that there was a problem in its budget forecasts. Lo and behold, there was an actual study done in 1994 by the then minister of finance who is now our Prime Minister. He recognized that there was enough of a problem that he hired Ernst & Young to study the forecasting methods of the Department of Finance. It is fascinating. It is even more fascinating because that report recommended that:

An independent forecasting agency could be established. The mandate of this agency would be to provide the "no policy change" economic and fiscal forecasts, and to forecast the impact of the Government's fiscal plans.

● (2015)

Imagine if the government had only acted in 1994 on the recommendations of its own study, which was initiated because it knew there was a problem. Then the government conveniently chose to ignore the study, the problem that it had created and to perpetuate this untruth, an inaccurate forecasting of the money available to parliamentarians and Canadians for public policy decision making.

We have to resolve that. We have to resolve this soon. It is not good enough for the government to suddenly say it has hired another banker to study this and make recommendations. Parliament has sent a message to the government through the Speech from the Throne that there shall be a serious study by an independent budget forecaster and there shall be steps taken to resolve this issue.

It is absolutely imperative that we let Canadians know tonight that at least those of us in the opposition who believe in the need for action in this area will work to make it happen regardless of the obstacles and roadblocks the government of the day puts in our path. That is the first issue that we have to deal with and why we have such doubts here tonight.

The second, even more than in terms of the forecasting, is whether the government is truthful in terms of its stated objectives. Can we trust the word of the government? Is it possible to take the words from a speech from the throne or a budget and for Canadians to feel confident that will be the road map?

An hon. member: Yes.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, a Liberal member is yelling yes. I have to tell him that Canadians do not believe the Liberals when they say that because the reality is the opposite. The reality is that we cannot trust the Liberal words even when they appear to be addressing the concerns of Canadians.

Let me reference the most egregious example of this kind of untruthful presentation to Canadians. It has to do with the so-called fifty-fifty splitting of any budgetary surplus promised by the Liberals in previous election documents, speeches from the throne, and budgets. Fifty-fifty they told us back in 1997. They said that if there was any budgetary surplus, it would be split. Fifty per cent would go toward program spending to deal with the fact that the Liberal government had cut the heck out of our social programs and national infrastructure, and the other 50% would go toward tax cuts and debt reduction. That was going to be the recipe from the Liberal government.

Some of us had concerns with that fifty-fifty proposition as it was because we had seen since 1993 Canadians take the brunt of the government's cuts to social programs, health care, education,

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housing, the environment, just name it. We felt that when there was a surplus it was time for the government to balance out the situation and ensure that we were able to take the benefits accrued to Canadians because of our tightening of the belt and put it toward those programs.

We expected a slightly different balance, but even if one accepted the fifty-fifty proposition, we did not get it. What did we get? We got 10%, if we were lucky, toward program spending and dealing with the deep cuts that the Liberals had engineered, and 90% for debt reduction and tax cuts. We are dealing with a double whammy here, inaccurate forecasting of information to begin with and then broken promises and empty rhetoric by the Liberal government itself.

Those are the first two questions we have to ask in the estimates debate. The third is, have Canadians been consulted? Is the budget process and the estimates that we are dealing with today a culmination of Canadians' expectations and feelings?

An hon. member: No.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Does it mirror what Canadians want?

An hon. member: No.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: As my colleagues are all saying, the answer is no, of course not. If they had been consulted, the government by now would have started to recognize that workers and families in this country deserve a break, not just the corporations and wealthy individuals who had the benefit of the \$200 billion tax cuts over the last five years and over the money lost against the debt, even though it has hardly changed our debt to GDP ratio one iota.

● (2020)

On that point, it would only be helpful to the debate if a Liberal or maybe even a Conservative would stand and actually acknowledge the fact that we can achieve a 25% debt to GDP ratio at almost the same rate by putting that money into programs and having Canadians contribute to the economy and grow the economy, rather than putting all that money against the debt while Canadians continue to suffer in terms of poverty, unemployment, job insecurity and economic difficulties.

Have Canadians been consulted? Will they see their wishes mirrored in the next budget as a result of the consultation process we have just been through? If the past is any example, I would guess that probably Canadians will be disappointed. They will not see their concerns mirrored in the budget. I would say, based on what we heard from Canadians over the last several weeks, there does not seem to be any kind of acknowledgement of those feelings and those aspirations.

We are reading now in the newspapers about a government that seems to be still determined to go forward on tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy while Canadians continue to suffer. Is it not interesting that we heard from several hundred organizations in the course of a few weeks in terms of our budget consultations, most of whom wanted to see government start to invest in Canada and in Canadians, in housing, in the environment, in health care, in education, in a living wage for families.

Supply

They did not call for tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy. They did not call for all of our surplus money to go against the debt. They know from personal experience that there is not much point in paying off one's house if the roof is going to leak. There is not much point in making sure there are no more payments on the car if the wheels fall off. They know that it is important to balance the needs of one's family with the requirement to pay down one's debts on a reasoned, rational basis without sacrificing the health and well-being of one's own loved ones.

The same situation applies when it comes to this budget, when it comes to this country. We have to acknowledge that we will have no country at the end of the day if we ignore the needs of Canadians, if we do not ensure that there is a comprehensive child care program where kids can get quality care in a non-profit setting. We have to acknowledge the fact that if our children cannot get an education without being hit with a debt for the rest of their lives, we are no further ahead in terms of using the talents of this nation to better this country and to grow the economy.

We have to understand that if people are homeless in our inner cities, then we are no further ahead in terms of ensuring that everyone can contribute to our society. We have to acknowledge that if farmers are struggling because the government will not recognize the difficulties the family farms are facing, we have nothing in terms of being able to feed our nation. We have to acknowledge that if half the nation is not reflected in this budget, the points of view of women who struggle and work daily to try to juggle family and work responsibilities, to care for their kids and make a contribution, if those contributions are not recognized, we are no further ahead.

The government has a terrible record for actually consulting Canadians and ensuring that their wishes are reflected in the budget. I fear for what the budget will bring, unless we can make the government wake up and see that it is imperative that the needs of Canadians are taken into account, and not those of the select few, those with the money interests in our society today having all the benefits.

● (2025)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is on the finance committee and I thought she had a better familiarity with the economic numbers of the government.

It is interesting that only the NDP would turn a good news story into a bad news story, where we have had seven years of surpluses which have contributed close to \$50 billion to paying down the debt. This saves taxpayers every year about \$4 billion, which is an annuity into the future. It is money that can be redeployed into social programs and economic programs.

I remember that the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot one day at the finance committee made the case that he could predict the numbers better on his laptop computer. He brought his laptop computer to the finance committee and tried to make the case that his laptop could produce better stats than eight of the leading economists in Canada. I found that amusing to say the least.

Here we have a situation where the government gets eight of Canada's leading economists and they produce an estimate based on the trends, the economic forecasts and they come up with a consensus view. Now can we improve the system? Perhaps we can, and that is why the government has agreed to look at it.

Let me just cite one example. If the Minister of Finance, in predicting his revenues, is out by 1% and at the same time he is out by 1% on the expenditures, just a 1% error on the revenues and the expenditures would produce a differential in the surplus of about \$3.8 billion. In other words, if the government predicted no surplus, it could be a \$3.8 billion difference either way. So that is what we are talking about, these margins for error. A 1% difference in the expenditures and the revenues can produce a gap of \$3.8 billion.

The member had some other numbers wrong as well. The member for Winnipeg North contended that we have not really achieved our fifty-fifty goal. That is not correct. I know it is absolutely true we have not made the fifty-fifty goal in terms of allocating between social and economic programs on one hand and tax cuts and paying down the debt on the other. The numbers are something like 45-55, but they are not even close to the numbers that the member for Winnipeg North threw out of 90% and 10%. I would love to see the math on that. I would love to see the numbers because they are patently wrong.

In fact if we look at the government expenditures in the last two or three years, about 80% of them have gone toward transfers to the provinces for health care and for social programs.

My question for the member for Winnipeg North is, what is the source of her numbers? Because they do not make any sense.

● (2030)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, I had hoped we had at least accomplished the task of convincing the Liberal government that its numbers were out. I thought that was a given. Obviously, I have to start all over again.

Let me give—

Hon. Bill Blaikie: They're slow.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: As my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona said, the Liberals are a little slow, so let me go over the numbers again.

Let us just go back to this current fiscal year when we heard the government had predicted \$1.9 in surplus. It turned out to be \$9.1 billion. He sort of reversed the numbers, but it was just a little change. For one year, one could excuse it and say that it was an oversight. However, let us go back over the last decade. I will give the following statistics to the member.

Over the last 10 fiscal years, the government has been in error an average of 203.9% a year. I do not think that is 1% or 2% but rather it is an over 200% error. Expressed as a percentage of the total budgetary projection, the Liberals have been off on their projections by 67% over the last 10 fiscal years.

Supply

The government has been out \$86 billion. That money has been automatically put against the debt as opposed to being spent according to a formula on which Parliament agrees on and into which Canadians have had some input. That is exactly what we are asking for today, a chance to have a democratic participatory process around the money that is available, not to have the government play games and hide the money that belongs to Canadians.

The member claims that all the money went to important issues like health and education, et cetera. Why, for the first time since the 1950s, are workers taking home less than half of the economic pie they produce? That compares to a historical peak of 57% in 1976. "More than any other single indicator, this epochal decline in labour's share of GDP describes the cumulative impact of a quarter-century of neo-conservatism". That comes from Jim Stanford, who by the way the Minister of Finance has acknowledged as someone quite credible when it comes to accurate forecasting. Jim Stanford, the CCPA and the alternative federal budget folks, have been the only group of economists who have been accurate in their forecasting. I would suggest that if the member wants to have more accurate forecasting, he should rely on the people who have been producing accurate numbers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jean Augustine): The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, you are very kind to recognize me, especially as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has attacked the credibility of the Bloc Québécois in regard to these forecasts.

It can be checked. Anyone can check it, even the hon. member for Winnipeg-North could do it, or even more so the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Every year since 1997, one year to the day before the next budget, the Bloc Québécois has published its forecasts of the surplus. We have done it in front of the press, television, journalists from the press, and year after year, we have come within 3%.

Contrary to what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness claims, we did not do it on my computer. We used a little \$1.79 calculator. Watching the economic parameters move and with some intelligence and judgment, we are able to come within 3%.

I would like to ask a question of the hon. member for Winnipeg-North, who was very eloquent and always is, and who does a very good job on the Standing Committee on Finance. I have the good fortune of working with her on a daily basis. She knows the numbers and the situation better than the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

How is it that the Liberals, with a phalanx of experts, managed to be out by 500% in their forecasts of the surplus, while we and the organization that she mentioned a little while ago were able to come within 3% of the actual figure.

Is this not a way of hiding from Quebec and Canadian taxpayers some of the funds that are available to help them with priorities such

as health, education and fighting poverty? Is it not a denial of democracy to hide this money while telling us fibs and saying that the greatest economists have been consulted and these great economists say that there will not be a surplus. The forecasts of all these economists have never been published, we should point out in passing, except this year with the new minister of finance.

I ask this question of the eminent hon. member, who knows the figures quite a bit better than the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

● (2035)

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my esteemed colleague, the finance critic for the Bloc. I am as mystified by this 10 year record of inaccurate forecasting as he is.

One would think that after a few years the government would get the hang of it and start to produce more accurate forecasting. It either has to be incompetence or deliberate mischievous low-balling in order to control where it wants the money to go. I think it is the latter.

The real question for us today is, what will happen in the next year or in the next couple of years? Already the Minister of Finance is downplaying the numbers available, trying to suggest that next year we will only have a \$500 million with which surplus to work. According to the alternative federal budget folks, who have been accurate all these years, we are looking at about \$24.1 billion over the next three years.

Will Canadians have a right to discuss what to do with that money? Will we as parliamentarians be able to make some meaningful suggestions that will be taken into consideration by the government? Will the government finally start to recognize that Canadians who suffered as a result of a decade of cutbacks ought to feel the benefits of this surplus? Will we see some spending to deal with the infrastructure deficit, early learning and child care, housing, post-secondary education, the Kyoto agreement obligations and aboriginal needs? Will the government finally address the real needs of Canadians and start to invest in this country?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): The things I am hearing this evening, Madam Speaker.

From what I heard the Conservatives say, cuts are being made because cuts have to be made in just about every program. According to the Bloc Québécois, all the money should go to the provinces. As for the NDP, its position is that everything, or 90% of the budget, should go to social and other programs.

This may be commendable, but the funny thing is that the purpose of this debate, this evening, was to explain and justify to Canadians a \$417,000 cut in the budget of the Governor General.

That is terrible. It is a disgrace. We are not even able to get an answer to the question, "What impact will this cut have on the organization in question?"

Supply

Still, members make political hay and enjoy making statements to the effect that the government does not know how to govern. Apparently, they could do better, but cannot even agree on the rationale for their actions.

• (2040)

[*English*]

I rise in support of the motion to fully reinstate the budget of the office of the Governor General as presented in the government's main estimates.

[*Translation*]

For the benefit of those listening, we should remind ourselves that this is not a debate on the relevance or pertinence of the function of Governor General.

[*English*]

In doing so, I would like to focus on the central question. How does the institution serve Canada, Canadians and Canadian public life? What makes it different today than at Confederation?

[*Translation*]

This is at the heart of any debate when making cuts and taking items out of budgets. One has to know what they are doing and why.

Obviously, the Governor General's role is largely symbolic. Many will agree with me on that. But that does not mean that this role should be considered as static.

Laugh as we may, the fact remains that I get many calls to my office from people asking for this or that from the Governor General. When she goes on tours and so on, we are very proud of our institution of Governor General.

[*English*]

The Governor General has a responsibility to bring Canadians together and to engage them in a non-partisan, dialogue qu'on ne retrouve pas ici, en cette Chambre, on issues of importance to them, to know what their preoccupations are, to know what their values are and to reflect those to other Canadians across the country.

[*Translation*]

We are talking about values such as citizenship, community, shared history, diversity, volunteerism and so on. Such are the values the Governor General takes it upon herself to communicate and spread from coast to coast to coast, as well as around the world.

[*English*]

It tells the modern story of Canada and how Canada can be a model in the world for the ways in which we live these values. Being free of partisan influence and uniquely positioned to see the country in its full spectrum, the Governor General holds up a mirror for all of us to see ourselves reflected in our social and cultural diversity and complexity.

[*Translation*]

The institution of Governor General is intrinsically tied to the Canadian way of life and heritage.

[*English*]

How is this done? Let me give the House some examples. It is done by articulating a vision of Canada that is very contemporary and future oriented and that comes to grips with the Canada we have become, not what we once were. That vision, however, does not dispense with Canada's past, but builds on it through emphasis on our enduring values as a society.

[*Translation*]

She has an in depth knowledge of the country and its people. She has a deep understanding of Canada from her knowledge of the land, its regions, its communities and the people who live there.

[*English*]

It is done by communicating a fundamental message to Canadians, which is that we share much in common in our daily lives that transcends local or regional differences. That is way beyond \$417,000 just to make a point to the government. That is sad.

It is done by recognizing how the increasing diversity and pluralism of the country is good for Canada, culturally and not just in economic terms. It is done by interpreting Canada's unique ability to integrate newcomers, making the connection between citizenship and successful diversity by combining the Caring Canadian Award with citizenship ceremonies.

[*Translation*]

You have to see the look on people's faces when they receive this honour from the hands of the Governor General.

[*English*]

It is done by providing a continuing role model for those acquiring their citizenship.

[*Translation*]

I must not forget to say that I am sharing my time with the hon. Minister of National Defence. I swore I would not forget.

[*English*]

It is done by articulating the importance of the north in the Canadian psyche, its reality and its imaginative influence on us and by having a knowledge of aboriginal cultures, thus according the aboriginal peoples the respect and dignity they are due.

[*Translation*]

By describing Canada as a helpful and compassionate society.

[*English*]

It is done by speaking extensively of the need and place of reconciliation in our society, whether in the treatment of peoples of aboriginal or of other ethnic descent. It is done by understanding the motivations, ambitions and inner feelings of those who have been accorded Canada's honours, and thus articulate what makes these Canadians so special and so important to the rest of Canada.

[*Translation*]

That too is the Governor General. She promotes Canada, its values and its identity and receives various heads of state and visits other countries.

*Supply**[English]*

It is done by placing important social issues into historical context, showing how issues that affect almost every Canadian, for example, public education, have a fundamental importance in underpinning Canadian values and identity.

[Translation]

We must not just take the headlines from a newspaper and say we are going to cut the gun registry because it is not popular in a certain region of Canada the Governor General's activities because she upset us by going on a trip with so many people. It would be irresponsible to make cuts for those reasons.

● (2045)

[English]

It is done by connecting the Office of the Governor General to the cultural and artistic achievements of individual Canadians and to the nation, thus making those achievements and works Canadian in every respect.

This is what is meant by saying that the Governor Generalship is “constitutionally conceived but culturally lived”.

[Translation]

Culture may not be important to some parties in this house, but it is extremely important to this government.

[English]

It comes to life through the activities of the Governor General and the intensity and vigour of these activities in helping to interpret Canadian values and Canadian identity, not only to the nation but also to the world.

[Translation]

Allow me to give this House a few examples of these activities.

[English]

The year 2002 was the 50th anniversary of Canadian Governors General, and the year of the Queen's Golden Jubilee and her visit to Canada.

[Translation]

The Governor General attended 800 events, traveled 150,000 km across the country, visited between 80 and 90 communities, big and small, not to mention three visits up north to Nahanni, the Northwest Passage and Nunavik.

[English]

It included a “walking home initiative”, where people in their various communities were invited to join the Governor General in walking, talking and enjoying each other's company in the natural local setting.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Some people might laugh at that, but the people who walked with the Governor General, if they laughed it was from happiness, not from contempt like we can hear sometimes in this room.

[Translation]

These walks were held in the Forillon National Park in Gaspé.

[English]

Along the seashore in Newfoundland, between Repulse Bay, Naujaat, and the Arctic Circle, and I could go on and on.

[Translation]

This gave the Governor General a chance to speak .

[English]

It permitted the Governor General to speak with Canadians and this is what we have to look into when we take such a decision.

I came into the House tonight and I was not even seated when I heard speeches about democracy from the other side. Believe me, I will not tell hon. members what effect it has on me, because democracy is coming here, having our say and being able to vote because we heard the arguments.

Believe me, tonight I heard no arguments for the other side. Members on the other side do not even know why they are cutting. If they know, they cut because they want to cut for different reasons. That is the opposition, ladies and gentlemen from Canada.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to make some comments now based on what I have just heard, because I find it incredible. My hon. colleague from Medicine Hat earlier this evening used terms like “offensive” and “unconscionable” and let me say that those words are so appropriate for what I have just heard.

That member for Gatineau is standing in this assembly trying to tell Canadians that they have to overturn a decision made by a committee to slash only \$400,000 from the Governor General's budget.

I want to say something. I would invite that member to my riding of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre where farmers and cattle producers are losing their land and losing their jobs because of the government's failure to provide adequate safety net programs and have that member tell my cattle producers why the Governor General needs \$400,000.

That is unconscionable. That is offensive. Canadians are angry and they have a right to be angry. How can that member stand in the House and say that with a \$19.3 million annual budget, a reduction of \$400,000 is going to negatively impact that?

● (2050)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I will answer quite gladly, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

What rubs Canadians the wrong way is a comparison of things incomparable. Everyone knows that. Take health or education as examples. Harsh cuts are justified with some irrelevant statement. It is evidence of the lack of faith in what we are doing this evening. That is what gets my back up, and then they have the nerve to pretend to be outraged on behalf of their taxpayers.

An hon. member: Just come to my riding.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Yes, I will go to the member's riding.

*Supply**[English]*

Anytime I will convince the people of Calgary that cattle ranchers have their say and they are important, but there are also other important matters in this country.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member who has just spoken about the reasons why we should maintain the amounts allocated to the Governor General has not really given the matter much thought.

When she speaks of the people who are so pleased to receive medals from the Governor General and to spend time in her presence, I can tell the hon. member that last year I received one of the most prestigious medals from the Governor General.

I would, however, have had no objection to eating ham sandwiches and drinking Seven-Up, instead of savouring wine and other things, if it meant the people of my riding could get enough to eat.

When we know that there are one million children who do not get enough to eat, that there are single parents without social housing, seniors not getting the guaranteed income supplement they are entitled to, I wonder how this member can think that \$450,000 can make such a difference.

Will this mean the Governor General will not have a place to sleep? That she will not have enough to eat? That her aides will be able to travel only once instead of three times? No, every time the Governor General takes a trip, they get two or three, because they have to go there ahead of time to look into security matters.

The Governor General does not need that money. It can be put to better use, and I guarantee that, if the hon. member can look me straight in the eye and tell me that the people in her riding would rather see the Governor General have \$450,000 more, rather than see it put into social housing, or—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the hon. member for Gatineau must have time in which to respond to the question.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, there is no question. Once again, it is petty politics. That is no question—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We must be able to hear the hon. member from Gatineau, who has the floor, give her answer.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has missed the point. We will not compare, because, in this instance, we end up talking about spending in one place rather than another. That is not the issue. When we ask the committee members why they want to cut and if they are aware of the consequences, the answer is, “No, we did it like this, because we were not too satisfied with certain answers”. What effect will this have? When people make decisions that way, it worries me.

However, as for playing petty politics in saying, “I am going to tell the people in my riding that they will not be able to eat, because we gave the money to the Governor General”, I hope that no member in this House will go before their constituents and speak so

unreasonably. There are a number of expenses with which I do not necessarily agree. But, if we cut them, we must know why.

[English]

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell from hon. members opposite that they regret a great deal that we have to part from the plane of emotion we are on. Allow me to offer some personal comments on this debate. I would like to make three points with members of the House.

I think the proposition to cut the budget of the Governor General is unwise, I think it is unjustified and I think it is misdirected. It is first and foremost an attack on the institution of the Governor General and as such it is unwise. It is also a personal attack, as we have heard in the House tonight, on the present Governor General and as such it is unjustified. It will punish Canadians who otherwise would benefit from the programs that will have to be cancelled and as a result it is misdirected.

We rarely reflect on the role of the Crown in Canada and its importance to our Constitution and democracy. It is ironic, I suggest to colleagues, that we are called upon to do so in this debate.

Personally I consider the Governor General a uniquely Canadian institution, which, with Parliament and the judiciary, I consider to be a pillar of our democratic and constitutional system. We should not attack it lightly. Its roots are our roots, going back not just to British colonial times but even to Samuel de Champlain.

Since our first Canadian Governor General, Vincent Massey, it has evolved under the leadership of great men and women like General Vanier, who was a World War I and World War II hero, Roland Michener, a great parliamentarian and a Conservative, I remind my colleagues, Ed Schreyer, who represented the west, and others.

I believe that this institution is important to us. It is the symbol of what we are as a nation and it serves to differentiate us in important ways from our culturally powerful neighbour to the south and thus to craft our unique Canadian identity.

Its present incumbent—and here is where I say this is a personal attack—incarnates, in my view, the modern Canadian experience, as the member for Gatineau so well expressed tonight: integrating newcomers. The present incumbent came here as a refugee from China. She came here as a refugee during the war in Hong Kong, and I am proud when I go to Asia representing our country to be able to say we are one of the rare institutions in the world that has chosen as our head of state someone who is an immigrant and has come to our shores as a refugee. We should be proud of that.

She made her way to the top of what Canada is about by personal qualities, by drive, determination and professionalism. She takes her role personally and seriously. She works hard and has brought increased respect to the institution. We are lucky to have her husband, an internationally recognized author and scholar, who brings his contribution to our national life.

I would like to tell the House tonight about my experience as its defence minister.

Supply

[*Translation*]

The Governor General is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Forces. As such, she plays a significant role, by recognizing the contribution of our military and by providing a great deal of moral support to our troops in active service.

The Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada provides support to the Canadian Forces by playing a ceremonial and symbolic role. She encourages excellence and dedication from our forces. She visits our military bases throughout Canada. She attends the funerals of soldiers who have fallen in combat. She welcomes our troops upon their return home and upholds the morale of those who serve to maintain peace and security around the world.

[*English*]

The Governor General, as commander in chief, has travelled extensively to visit Canadian troops throughout her mandate, ensuring an unprecedented presence on behalf of all Canadians.

Let the record show that the members opposite are making a mockery of this statement.

Let the members opposite speak to our troops and ask them what they think about the Governor General when she visited them in Kosovo in 2002, in Bosnia in 2001, spending her Christmas aboard our naval ships in the gulf in 2002, and in Kabul, Afghanistan, for New Year's in 2003. No doubt the opposition would like to cut her trip to Kabul this year.

This is an attack on the Governor General. This is an attack on the commander in chief of our forces, who is very much appreciated by our troops. It is an attack on the ability of our troops to be able to benefit from the presence of our Governor General.

• (2055)

I totally agree with her. She has comforted the wounded around the world and the families of deceased soldiers killed in active duty and I have been there to see it. She has paid tribute on countless occasions to our veterans and those who have died in defence of Canada, Canadian values and freedom and justice.

I was proud the other day to attend an awards ceremony of medals at Rideau Hall. I saw the Governor General personally comforting widows of those who had served for our country, people who had died.

I ask the opposition to ask those widows, ask those members of our forces who received decorations from the Governor General. They appreciate it. They appreciate her service. They appreciated her when she went to Juno Beach, when she attended in June 2004 for D-day. They appreciated it when she returned subsequently on their behalf to Italy to celebrate the sacrifices they had made.

Since the hon. members do not wish to accept my words, let them listen to the words of Cliff Chatterton, who has not necessarily been a great friend of the government, but he is a prominent advocate for Canada's veterans. He said of the current Governor General that:

She takes her role as commander in chief of the armed forces very seriously. I have been dealing with governors-general going back to 1945 and in my estimation she is the first one who has decided that is a real role.

That is the role that the troops of our country have for her. All I ask of the opposition is to ask our troops. I have asked them and they stand behind their Governor General and their commander in chief.

A lot of the origins of this motion result from trips that the Governor General has organized on behalf of Canada. Let us recognize that the Governor General, when she travels on state visits at the formal request of the Government of Canada through the Prime Minister and on the advice of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, is acting on behalf of Canadians.

I had the privilege, as did some members of the opposition some time ago, when I was chair of the foreign affairs committee, to go with her on a trip to Argentina. With her she took a general. She took aboriginal leaders. She took politicians. She took cultural and university leaders and she took representatives of industry.

This unprecedented team Canada approach at diplomacy has been an unqualified success for Canada. It has given us a new image of ourselves. She has adopted that approach on other trips, garnering enormous attention for Canada. In the media of foreign countries and countries she visits, that attention is of direct benefit to us and our profile and our commercial prospects in those countries.

These cuts will not punish the Governor General. They will punish Canadians, ordinary Canadians who look forward to participating in activities that will now have to be cancelled, and whereby their contributions to their country will not be able to be recognized. That is the object of this resolution.

An hon. member: That's her fault.

Hon. Bill Graham: That is her fault, says a member of the opposition. That sums it all up. It is that meanspirited nature of this measure. It is meanspirited, it is misdirected, it is undeserved and, in my view, it is not worthy of this Parliament.

I recommend that we reconsider this and restore the budget of a Governor General who has chosen to work hard, do her job honestly, try to elevate the nature of how we see ourselves as a country and is respected and admired by her fellow citizens.

• (2100)

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think what the speech of the Minister of National Defence demonstrates is the old adage that "If you have the truth argue the truth, if you have the facts argue the facts, if you have neither pound the table". That is what we saw from the minister just now.

This is not an attack on the Governor General. When this cut to her budget passed, it passed with the support of Liberal members of Parliament, including the Liberal member of Parliament from Thunder Bay, sitting right behind the Minister of National Defence. It also included the member for Sudbury and the member for Ottawa—Orléans. This had the support of all parties in the House, including Liberal members of Parliament, because all Canadians are concerned with fiscal responsibility.

Supply

Ray Hnatyshyn, George Vanier and a number of other Governors General have served this country marvellously. The argument can be made by some, as the minister did, that this Governor General has done a good job. However she has not done a good job of being a good steward of taxpayers dollars.

All we are talking about is a reduction of less than 3% of her overall budget as a message that taxpayer dollars should be treated with respect and care and that she had not done that so far. We are sending that message with the support of Liberal members of Parliament, and we want to send that message tonight.

• (2105)

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Speaker, I am quite happy to bring the debate down to a more rational level. I quite agree with that. However since the hon. member chooses to say that, I would say to the member that perhaps the hon. members who were on the committee have had a chance to reflect on their decision and might choose to reflect on that and decide that perhaps that was not the wisest course. That is what we are here to debate tonight.

Since he wants to give us an opportunity to reflect, I would ask him respectfully to consider the words of the President of the Treasury Board who was here this evening and who pointed out to hon. members opposite that the \$400,000 cut that would be taken out of the Governor General's budget would be taken out this quarter. While they constantly talk about it as if it were going to be spread somehow retroactively backwards, it would not be. It would affect the ability of the representative of the crown, the representative of the Canadian people to do her job for the rest of the year.

The hon. member says that it is not their concern. I go back to what I said. It is misdirected. It is vicious and it is a complete desire to just cause trouble without any respect.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening closely to the minister and I am flabbergasted when he says that this motion is not worthy of this Parliament; that it is mean, ill-advised and misdirected and constitutes a personal attack on the Governor General.

I would like to ask him a question. What is mean or ill-advised? Is it to grab money from the employment insurance surplus, for example, or to cut \$400,000 from the Governor General's overblown budget? What is ill-advised: to cut \$38 billion from social programs over the past eight years, or to cut \$400,000 from the Governor General's budget? What is more ill-advised or mean: having the Prime Minister, previously the minister of finance, table a bill to enrich himself with his shipping company in Barbados, or cutting the Governor General's budget?

Would it not be wiser to cut into the "fat", as we say, to help the 1.2 million poor children that this government has helped to push into poverty, especially in terms of employment insurance, where 60% of parents of poor children are excluded? What is mean, ill-advised and what constitutes a collective attack on these people?

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Speaker, since my colleague asks what is mean, I will give him this answer. What is more mean-spirited than having members of this House who want to destroy a country and its

history; who want to cut it in two? That is mean-spiritedness. That is disgusting.

He is talking about things that have nothing to do with this motion. The real shame is to have someone in this House who makes all sorts of accusations that have nothing to do with this motion.

This motion deals with the budget of the Governor General. If the member wants to talk about other matters, I will talk about other matters. I will speak about my country, Canada, and about the mean-spiritedness of his country, which seeks to destroy ours. That is what I will talk about.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us go back to the point of why we are here today.

I came to the House under direction from the people of Elgin—Middlesex—London to help control spending and to have a more accountable government.

As a member of this committee, I studied the process and learned how to read the estimates, which is not an easy thing. I attended the committee and I interviewed witnesses, some of them from the Governor General's office.

We did our homework and we looked at the estimates. We looked at the spending. We looked at where the spending had gone from \$10 million in 1995 up to over \$20 million. The Governor General's budget has exploded. When we asked for answers as to why the Governor General's budget had to explode to that level, we were told that there were a few more visitors visiting Rideau Hall now.

Therefore we did the only thing that a good committee could do and that was to say that we would have to take some of that money away.

If this is not a deficit of democracy, trying to put this back, then I do not know what is.

Could the hon. member opposite help me bring a more accountable government?

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Speaker, that is a very reasonable approach. However, if we are going to take that approach I would ask that the hon. members opposite listen to what the President of the Treasury Board said and look at the effect of these cuts in the budget of the Governor General.

I would respectfully suggest to the hon. member that if he is going to look at increases in the Governor General's budget he should look at increases in what the Governor General does. We are getting value for money. It is not fair to compare \$10 million in 1995 and activities today. If the hon. member wishes to discuss that then that is another thing.

Let us also not forget that some of the expenses of the household of the Governor General are made by decisions of the commission here in Ottawa and others for repairs to the house that she has nothing to do with.

If the members are going to go through this exercise, all I ask is that they at least make it an honest exercise and make honest comparisons.

Supply

• (2110)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Central Nova.

We just heard the phrase “value for money”, and that is exactly what I will be zeroing in on as I make some remarks about one of the biggest areas of misspending that the Liberal government has ever endeavoured upon. It is an area in which we would like to have a modest reduction of about \$20 million, or \$24 million if we take in both motions, that we would like to see in the vote that will take place later today.

The issue I am talking about is the gun registry. The government wants to portray this as gun control but it has gone 500 times over budget at this point and it could even be more than that. It is unbelievable that we would have the government portray this as wise spending and a good investment.

I want to begin with a statement that was made by the Auditor General in December 2002 when she brought down her report on the gun registry. She said, “Parliament is being kept in the dark”. I assert today and I want to impress upon the members of the House of Commons that Parliament is still being kept in the dark. I believe that the minister and the bureaucrats are still deceiving MPs and Parliament.

I have put in over 500 access to information requests on this issue trying to find out what this government is doing. It hides the information, not just from me, but by extension Parliament and all Canadians. It is one of the hugest boondoggles ever and we as Conservatives would like to reduce the spending in this area a little bit.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety sent out an e-mail a couple of days ago. In that e-mail he made 17 claims that I am going to point out are blatantly false. They are at variance with the truth and I will take them one by one and go through them.

Twenty minutes ago a Liberal, who has since disappeared, came in here and said that she wants to hear some rational arguments. I am going to give some and I wish she would be listening because I do not think they can vote to support the ridiculous spending that is still going on with the gun registry.

The following is the first claim that was made by the parliamentary secretary. He said, “important client service and public safety results are being achieved by the gun registry”. Nothing could be further from the truth. The entire premise of the gun registry defies all logic. Let us think about this. We have a firearm and beside it is a registration certificate. How can laying this piece of paper beside this gun prevent anyone from pulling the trigger or doing something with that firearm? It defies logic that it would ever work and yet that is the entire premise of the gun control measure that the government has portrayed as being an important client service and public safety results being achieved. That is why we do not see anything being accomplished by this.

The following is the second claim the parliamentary secretary makes. He says, “An Environics survey taken in January 2003 found that 74% of Canadians support the current gun control legislation”. The questions that were asked in that survey were: Do you support gun registration? Do you support safe storage of firearms? Do you

support background checks before people buy a firearm? Do you support safety courses being taken by firearms owners? If they had asked me those questions I would have forgotten they were even talking about gun registry by the time they went through the whole list and I probably would have said that I support those things, which I do, but the registry is the biggest boondoggle. Therefore to say that 74% of Canadians support the registry is misleading at best.

I want to tell members about another survey that was taken in April, 2004 by JMCK. The question it asked was whether we would want the gun registry scrapped and put that money into fighting violent crime and devoting it to other areas such as frontline policing. The results, which I think were a very accurate indication of where Canadians were at, were that 76.7% of the people said to scrap the registry and put the money into places like frontline policing where it will do some good. That is what we are asking.

It is very misleading for the Liberals to say that the public is on side. They are not.

Another claim that the Liberals make is that the Canadian firearms program is much more than gun registry. It comprises safe storage, handling and transportation of firearms, safety, training and education, effective border controls, in addition to the licensing of firearms owners.

• (2115)

Before the government passed Bill C-68 we had all of those things and it was done for approximately \$10 million a year. Now the government is saying it will try to get the costs down to \$85 million per year. It has been way above that at the present time.

We had all of those things prior to 1995. Now the Liberals are starting to make the claim, “Oh, this is what it is all about”. That is extremely misleading and Canadians had better take a closer look when they begin to support the Liberals on this because it is not true.

Let me talk about another Liberal claim. The government says that there are about two million firearms licence holders and about seven million firearms registered, a true success story in just over five years.

I gasp when I hear the Liberals make this kind of a claim. They know and I have revealed to them the information that I have garnered through my access to information request. The government says five years. The Liberals cannot even count. The bill was passed in 1995. They cannot count years.

The Liberals claim it was a success, when according to academic studies that have been done on this, more than 400,000 firearms owners are still unlicensed. Some 400,000 are unlicensed. According to the government's own import and export records, there are still at least eight million guns in this country that are unregistered.

The government claims this is a success story. If there are less than half of the firearms registered, how can that be a success?

Supply

That begs the question, even if the firearms were registered, how does that piece of paper affect what the criminal does with his firearm? It does not. He is probably not even in the registry.

Here is another Liberal claim. Approximately 12,000 individual firearms licences have been refused or revoked to date by the chief firearms officers across Canada. What does that amount to? It is a 0.6% success rate. Canada had a 20 year licensing program previous to this which had over twice that rate and we did not have to spend over \$100 million per year.

What does that \$2 billion firearms centre do with the 12,000 newly identified criminals, the 12,000 who have not been approved to buy a licence? They are taken off the list and they are never checked again.

In fact, there are 176,000 people in this country who have been prohibited by the courts from owning firearms. There are 176,000 people who do not have to report their change of address, but if they are licensed firearms owners they do.

If a person does not report their change of address within one month, that person could end up in prison for up to two years. However, if a person does not have a licence and the person is one of those 176,000 that should not own a firearm, that person does not have to report a change of address and no one will check.

If I were cynical I would say that if a person wanted the government to stop hassling him, he should apply for a licence and be rejected and then he would not have to worry any more. Then he would not be hassled by the government.

I have counted 17 claims that the parliamentary secretary made that are blatantly false. I would like to deal with more of them, but my time is running out.

I will read something that was said in reply to the Liberal claim that there are 6,000 firearms that have been traced in gun crimes and firearms trafficking cases within Canada and internationally. Here is what the police chief of the largest police force in Canada said:

We have an ongoing gun crisis including firearms related homicides lately in Toronto, and a law registering firearms has neither deterred these crimes nor helped us solve any of them. None of the guns we know to have been used were registered, although we believe that more than half of them were smuggled into Canada from the United States. The firearms registry is long on philosophy and short on practical results considering the money could be more effectively used for security against terrorism as well as a host of other public safety.

That sums it up.

● (2120)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say that I do not agree with much of what the member for Yorkton—Melville said, but I admire his tenacity. It is sort of like the flat earth society, never yielding to the fact that its theories are wrong. In fact, day by day, month by month and year by year, the firearms program is proving that it is making Canada safer.

If what the member for Yorkton—Melville said is true, then he is saying that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police is wrong, because it supports this tool. In fact, there are 2,000 inquiries a day at

the firearms registry by police officers, by law enforcement people. Are we to think they sit around all day just playing with their computers? What an insult to front line policemen who also support the gun registry and the firearms program.

The member minimizes the effect of 12,000 individual firearms licences that have been revoked. Why have they been revoked? Because of a history of domestic violence, drug offences, mental health issues and other public safety concerns. They are 12,000 firearms owners who would have been in the possession of firearms and able to do something with serious consequences. That is the benefit of the firearms program. I could go on and on.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, I wish the person who asked the question had been here from the beginning. I have already refuted a lot of what he said.

I want to pick up on the issue of the 2,000 inquiries at the firearms registry every day. I have put in numerous access to information requests. I have tried to find out if they are made by bureaucrats in the justice department or front line police officers. I have talked to front line police officers. They have no use for the registry. They have told me that any self-respecting police officer who trusts any of the information in that registry would be taking his life in his hands.

In fact, the Auditor General herself said that over 90% of the registration certificates contain errors. Over five million registrations have never been verified.

I know the minister is not listening to what I am saying but if the Liberals would listen to some of the arguments in regard to this, and some of the research that has been done, they could not support the registry. It is riddled with errors. The 2,000 hits per day are not being done by policemen who are interested in public safety or finding out where the firearms are.

We cannot find out from the government who is accessing the registry.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has done a lot of work on this and I would ask him to think outside the box a little bit. I am wondering whether in order to deal with public safety he would advocate compulsory penalties for those who use a gun in the commission of an offence. Those penalties would run consecutively and not concurrently, those penalties could not be plea bargained away and there would be penalties for those who trafficked in weapons.

The trafficking in weapons is a big problem. Weapons are one of the products involved in the trafficking of illegal products across our border with the U.S., something which concerns all of us. I am wondering if he would be an advocate for those types of solutions to address the gun problem but also to address the trafficking issue which obviously involves organized crime.

● (2125)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could go into some depth. That was a very good question and I appreciate the member raising it. I wish he would raise this issue within his own party and start talking it up.

Supply

Yes, I am in favour of punishing people who use a weapon in the commission of a crime. More and more knives and all kinds of other things are being used in the commission of crimes. It is not just guns with which we have a problem.

As far as consecutive sentences, I think that is an excellent suggestion. I wish we would start talking more about these kinds of solutions to crime problems in this country, and not just with firearms. We should be talking about consecutive sentences in many other areas. It becomes a deterrent and we should be looking for deterrents. We should be looking for ways that substantially improve public safety. The gun registry does not. It is a bureaucratic exercise.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate in the House of Commons tonight that deals with the opposition's efforts to bring responsible spending back to the forefront. I want to take a moment to congratulate my colleague from Yorkton—Melville for the incredible tenacity and work that he has done on this file, as demonstrated by his very factual and erudite presentation moments ago.

When I personally think of the gun registry, I think of a comment by Winston Churchill that is somewhat apropos because never have so few spent so much and achieved so little.

The debate tonight should focus in on the ineffectual and completely intellectually bankrupt approach that the government has taken in presenting the gun registry to Canadians. It promised almost 10 years ago that this was going to cost \$2 million. We now know that this has ballooned and is now approaching \$2 billion. That is like a kid going into a store and picking out a bag of candy that is priced at \$2 and by the time he gets to the register, he is told it is going to cost \$2,000. One thousand times over budget is what we have seen with respect to the gun registry.

Let us take a look at some of the facts that the parliamentary secretary and the current Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Responsible for Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness do not tell us. They do not tell us about the inaccuracy of the information that is found in the registry. They do not tell us the number of long guns that are still not registered. They do not tell us about the inescapable fact that is so absent from the discussion on gun registry. The Hells Angels are not registering their long guns, shocking as that may be.

To hear government members opposite trying to defend this complete waste of money in this black hole is reminiscent of the great Lincoln Alexander, the member from Hamilton, who used to talk about the personification of bamboo and bombast. I am reminded very much of that statement when I look at the President of the Treasury Board and some of his characterizations of why we should put money back into the budget of the Governor General.

In terms of the out of control spending on behalf of the government, most Canadians sitting at home tonight would be shocked to learn that we were actually going to put millions more into a system that has proven to be so ineffective, not connected to public safety in any way shape or form.

The suggestion that the police are using this to any great effect is simply not true. We just need to talk to front line police officers.

They approach every domestic call as if a weapon is present. That is the way they should do it.

Mr. Roy Cullen: They passed a resolution supporting it. Speak the truth.

Mr. Peter MacKay: I hear the member opposite shouting and shaking his head. I can hear it rattling from here. He is suggesting that front line police officers are in favour of this. I do not know who he has been talking to. We have heard from plenty of front line police officers. Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino, the police chief of the biggest city in Canada, said on January 3, 2003:

We have an ongoing gun crisis including firearms related homicides lately in Toronto, and a law registering firearms has neither deterred these crimes nor helped us solve any of them. None of the guns we know to have been used were registered, although we believe that more than half of them were smuggled into Canada from the United States.

Here is the final unkindest cut of all. He continued:

The firearms registry is long on philosophy and short on practical results considering the money could be more effectively used for security against terrorism as well as a host of other public safety initiatives.

There are many other references that could be made and a lot of issues that the Liberals like to overlook. They talk about the number of firearms registered. They say 7 million. It is estimated that there are over 16 million firearms in the country. They suggest that the firearms are just going to disappear or evaporate once the computer system is up and running. More than 300,000 owners of previously registered handguns still do not have a firearms licence.

If the emphasis is to be on licensing, let us put it on licensing, training, public safety and proper storage, all of which were put in place by a previous Conservative government, where the emphasis was actually on public safety. There was some nexus to protecting the public, not simply putting money into a registry.

I will explain very simply how the firearms registry is flawed. If I took one of the little laser-guided stickers that are placed on a long gun and stuck it to this chair and picked it up, and hit my friend from Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley over the head with it, it would not prevent a thing, whether that number was registered in a computer or otherwise.

● (2130)

It is completely flawed from start to finish. It was presented to Canadians in the wake of a terrible tragedy that we commemorated this week, the terrible massacre of women at École polytechnique de Montréal.

The totally offensive way in which the government has tried to play on the sentiments of Canadians in suggesting that somehow this registry would have or could have prevented that tragedy is asinine and offensive. That incident took place because a deranged individual used a restricted weapon that would never have been caught by this firearms registry.

Supply

I would like to put on the record some more facts. More than 315,000 owners of a registered handgun still have not re-registered them. We have had the registration of handguns in Canada for 70 years. The biggest problem in Canada today is related to handguns, not Uncle Henry's duck hunting rifle or a person who has collected a rifle for sentimental reasons or a person who engages in a completely lawful and understandable practice of hunting or shooting for sport.

Only 282,000 plus of the 2 million firearm licence holders have taken safety courses. There is a bit of a focal point that maybe we should revisit. More than five million of the seven million firearms in the gun registry still have not been verified, according to police. There is no requirement in the Firearms Act for gun owners to tell anyone where they store their guns or who they would loan them to. Firearms registration for the Nunavut Inuit has been temporarily suspended for two years. There is an entire region of the country where this registry is not even operating.

A briefing note to the current minister when she was the minister of justice back in 2001 in relation to the firearms registry stated:

There are currently just over 1,800 employees associated with the firearms program, counting processing sites, the regions and all partners including the Registrar and CCRA.

It continued, "The Liberals have refused to provide a complete statistic on the number of employees associated with the firearms program since that date". This is part of the ongoing mystery as to how close to \$2 billion could be spent on a registry system.

I am told there is a program in the country now, and many of my colleagues from the west would know this, where every cow in the country has been registered for somewhere in the range of \$2 million. The registry is aware of every cow in the country, but we cannot register firearms for a cost of less than \$2 billion. It is absolutely shocking.

Here is what \$2 billion would pay for, just to put it into perspective for some members. It would be the average income of 76,136 Nova Scotians for a year. It would be the salary of 4,444 new police officers for eight years with an average salary of \$66,000. It would be the maximum annual salary for 25 years for over 1,500 nurses in the province of Nova Scotia. It would have paid for 500 installed MRI machines. It would have paid for all kinds of practical programs that would actually save lives, prevent crime, and enhance the lives of Canadians living at home.

This program has been perhaps one of the most abject failures of any program. It is probably the biggest and most serious case of fraud ever perpetrated on an unsuspecting public by any government at any time in this country's history. It should be reduced, cancelled, and the money should be put into front line policing where it would actually do some good.

• (2135)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it looks like the member for Central Nova has paid his \$25 and joined the flat earth society. Perhaps he has subscribed to some of the statistics supplied to him by the member for Yorkton—Melville.

First of all, the figure of \$2 billion for the firearms program is a total myth. The member knows it and he is trying to deceive the Canadian public, but they are not so naive.

Second, I would like to rebut his statement of how many firearms there are in Canada. The government engaged a private consultant with a methodology that was signed off by an expert in methodological approaches. That is the reason why the government is saying that there is a 90% compliance in licensing and a 90% compliance in registration. The member's numbers are totally fallacious.

Third, we all know that there are crimes with handguns and that the Hells Angels do not register their guns. The police are saying that this is a useful tool. In fact, our government will be introducing measures which will bring in tougher sanctions for crimes using long guns and shotguns. Crimes using long guns and shotguns have actually been on a steady decline. That is the kind of result we are getting from this firearms program.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, to round out my presentation I quoted the former British prime minister Winston Churchill. I want to respond to this by quoting the great Labour leader of Great Britain at that time, Aneurin Bevan, who in response to some of the rhetoric that used to come from the benches in Great Britain said, "I welcome this opportunity of pricking the bloated bladder of lies with the poniard of truth".

What we have heard from the parliamentary secretary, suggesting that these statistics represent the truth, is absolute nonsense. What happens, and we have seen it consistently from Statistics Canada, is that rifles and handguns are interspersed. We have known since 1975 that weapons-related crime has been on the decline. The government likes to suggest that there is some connection with the long gun registry and the decline in the use of firearms. It is simply not true.

According to Statistics Canada, in relation to firearms-related homicides, most firearms that are used to commit homicide are not registered. It says that in 1997 the homicide surveys began to collect additional information on the firearms-related homicides, including firearms registration, ownership, possession.

It goes on to say that this information that has been reported, and documented by police services, shows that in 87% of the firearms-related homicides, the firearms were not registered.

• (2140)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question I just want to say that I do not intend to defend the administrative fiasco surrounding the gun registry. I would also like to add that this subject seems to get a very passionate response. If ever there were a subject we should speak rationally about, it is the use of weapons that can kill, it seems to me.

I want the hon. member for Central Nova to tell me what he thinks of the statistics that have been presented to us. The homicide rate in the United States is three and a half times higher than in Canada. The rate of gun-related homicide is five times higher than in Canada. The rate of gun-related homicide in which women are killed by their partners is eight times higher than in Canada.

I agree with him that perhaps Hells Angels and other criminal organizations will still acquire guns, but does he not agree that the difficulty in obtaining guns in Canada will have an impact on street gangs that do not have a lot of money and do not plan very far in advance?

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the hon. member who just asked that question. The response is simple. The differences between the United States and Canada are cultural. To make an accurate comparison, it is necessary to compare both cultures.

[*English*]

The issue in the United States, as it is in the large cities in Canada, is handguns. What we have talked about and what we have overlooked, and I appreciate the hon. member trying to bring this back to some rational level, is the registration of long guns versus handguns. There is no connection with putting this registry system in place, therefore taking resources away from front line policing.

While at the same time what is being done in the United States, and I hear the chipmunks opposite again getting agitated, taking resources away from front line policing, closing detachments in the province of Quebec and suggesting this is going to enhance law enforcement is asinine. It does not work because the criminals do not participate.

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

I rise today to speak in favour of reinstating the full budget of the Governor General. I do this because I believe the Governor General is an important institution of the country not something to be used as a political pawn.

The Government General, as representative of the Crown, along with Parliament and the judiciary, forms the foundation, one of the three pillars of our democratic system in Canada.

The institution of the Governor General is a powerful symbol of the Canadian national sovereignty and identity, a symbol as powerful and as etched in our national psyche as Canada's flag, our extraordinary geography and the very Parliament buildings in which we are now sitting.

The Governor General is first and foremost Canada's de facto head of state and commander-in-chief of the Canadian armed forces. This constitutional role is central to the responsibilities of the office.

The Governor General has not only the ability but the responsibility to bring Canadians together, to engage them in non-partisan dialogue on issues of importance to them, to know what their preoccupations are, to know what their values are and to reflect these to other Canadians right across the country. The current Governor General does all of those things, particularly bringing Canadians together better than any other.

I wish to address the important work that our Governor General is doing to bring Canadians from all walks of life, from all corners of this land together. Whether it is by plane, train, car or canoe, the Governor General travels the country visiting Canadians and bringing Canadians together to meet one another.

Supply

There are stops in every province and territory beyond our capital cities and continuing off the beaten track to visit Canadians on their farms, in their small towns in rural areas and in northern communities.

I rise today to address the important work that our Governor General is doing to bring Canadians from all walks of life and from all corners of this land together. Visiting Canadians, meeting with Canadians, bringing Canadians together to meet one another.

The current Governor General has made it clear that her goal is to experience how Canadians live and to see how they live. The Governor General uses her visits to speak to Canadians about Canadians and about Canada, and to open their eyes to the originality of the people, of the land and of our languages.

Imagine the type of travel schedule involved. As MPs, we often complain about how many nights we spend away from home. It is no different for the Governor General. At least one week per month is spent outside Rideau Hall or outside of La Citadelle in Quebec City. While visiting different parts of Canada, the Governor General and His Excellency John Ralston Saul meet Canadians of all ages and all walks of life.

They organize round table discussions on questions of social justice and participate in school and community events. As part of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Canadian Governors General, Governor General Clarkson presided over ceremonies to invest Canadians into the Order of Canada in four different cities across the country, not as has been the practice simply here in Ottawa.

Events at Rideau Hall and at La Citadelle also provide occasions for Canadians to meet and exchange ideas. In February 2002, Rideau Hall for example, was the site of the first ever Governor General's youth forum. More than 100 high school students spent four days with the Governor General and His Excellency John Ralston Saul talking about challenges to community building and ways to involve more young people in their home towns.

Since 1998, His Excellency John Ralston Saul has been bringing together French immersion and francophone students from across the country for the annual French for the Future, Français pour l'avenir conference. The conference has grown from a one community event in 1997 to a cross-country forum which links students in nine different cities from Vancouver to St. John's.

Through a video link, students are able to interact with other French immersion and francophone students from across the country and share their experiences and thoughts on being bilingual in today's wonderful Canadian society.

Through the annual Lafontaine-Baldwin conference, His Excellency John Ralston Saul encourages Canadians to come together in national debate around the future shape of Canada's civic culture. If we are not encouraged from time to time to think about ourselves, to think where we are and where we should be going, where is our future?

Supply

● (2145)

By looking back at the historical context of our democratic roots, all members of the House and all Canadians are in a better position as a society to discuss the way we imagine ourselves and the way we imagine us continually evolving democracy. This also means ensuring that the rest of the world understands that the greatness of Canada is based on our economic, political and cultural resources and values.

Abroad, the Governor General and His Excellency John Ralston Saul paint a contemporary image of Canada by bringing together a cross-section of people who contributed to society. First nations, Inuit representatives, film makers, playwrights, novelists, poets and business people accompany them on state visits. They also invite people who make wine, people who are concerned about the environment and people who study and write about our social policy.

For the Governor General, these people are part of Canadian culture and it is through them that our society becomes known in other countries.

I would now like to turn to one of Canada's most enduring symbols, the residence of the Governor General, Rideau Hall. I believe the work that is being done by the Governor General to showcase Rideau Hall is extremely important. Whether it is the flowers in the gardens, hospitality offered on behalf of Canadians during state visits or the art collection that adorns the walls of Rideau Hall, Government House is now a showcase of Canadian excellence and creativity.

At home and abroad, the Governor General takes pride in work produced by Canadians. When we walk down the corridors of Rideau Hall, the walls come alive with the creative spirit of Canadian artists. Working with the National Gallery and many other galleries across the country, the Governor General has turned Rideau Hall into a temporary home for many of Canada's finest art works. It is a showcase of Canada's best art, ranging from classic to contemporary. That is what the Canadian public and visiting dignitaries deserve to see when they visit the official residences of the Governor General. The doors are wide open.

In what other country in the world is the resident of the head of state wide open to the public?

The Governor General hosts foreign dignitaries and heads of states at Rideau Hall. Not only do they find an office vividly linked to excellence in the arts, they discover a menu featuring Canadian products from all parts of the country.

His Excellency John Ralston Saul leads working delegations of industry representatives and ambassadors from countries that produce wine and represent potential markets for Canadian wines to the annual Cuvée at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario and the Okanagan wine festival in British Columbia.

Rideau Hall and its grounds, as I say, belong to the Canadian people. The gates are wide open.

I support the motion before us to reinstate the full budget of the Governor General as prescribed in the estimates and I do this: (a) because of the office; and (b) because of the quality of the present incumbent.

● (2150)

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before we conclude the debate, we have been listening to a lot of this Liberal drivel all night. I want to put the record straight in response.

It is not about the office of the Governor General. No one here is out to attack the office of the Governor General. It is simply about trimming her sails and taking her down a notch or two. Maybe she was living a little high on the hog and the folks just said that it was enough. Before she destroyed the office of the Governor General in the minds of Canadians, because of this profligate waste of spending, we wanted her to just tone it down a bit. It is about that.

It is not about her travelling across Canada. It is about her travelling around the world with an entourage of friends, flaunting our money and wasting it. That has annoyed Canadians. Canadians said that it is enough and that it should be toned down a bit.

It is not about some great dramatic loss of money for the Governor General or people not getting their Order of Canada or their bravery medal because we are cutting her back. We are talking about \$400,000 out of an almost \$20 million budget.

It is a slap on the wrist to say, "Enough is enough. Just tone it down a little Your Excellency".

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is speaking out of two sides of his mouth. If he has so much respect for the office and for the incumbent, why this slash and burn approach to the cutting? It is not the amount of money. It is the way it has been done. That has been made very clear from this side. This is the last quarter of her budget.

What would the member opposite think and would he be respectful if I now substantially cut his budget in the last quarter of the year when he had hired staff and so on? If he respects the office so much, why does he not wait and make the arguments for this at an appropriate time? Then if these changes should be made, they can be made in a proper, efficient and respectful fashion.

I suggest it is a witch hunt and that the members opposite are after the office of the Governor General.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the talk about the Governor General is a thorn in my side. The hon. member said a minute ago that Rideau Hall is a showcase for Canada's best art. That may be true. However, it is not a showcase for Canada's best people. When the Governor General wants to hire someone, she hires them by postal codes. She would not hire someone from the member's riding. She would not hire someone from your riding, Mr. Speaker. She would not hire someone from my riding. She puts restrictions on by postal code.

A person can only apply for a job in her office if he or she has a postal code around Ottawa. When I complained about that, she wrote me back to say that we must do this in the interest of several factors, such as efficiency and cost control. Here is the same person that spends \$5 million on a trip to Europe. Yet she will not spend a few dollars going through resumes from Nova Scotia or from any other province other than this little bunch of postal codes around Ottawa.

Would the member explain why people in his riding cannot work in the Governor General's office because it costs too much to go—

• (2155)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, he is the second member opposite to mention the Governor General's northern trip.

What I forgot to mention before was the Governor General visited nine northern countries, which is something I approve. I would like to ask a question, although I am not sure if I am allowed. What did the Conservative Party representatives on that trip report when they came home? Did they report to their caucus? What did they say? Why are the people who were on that trip not speaking today?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too rise this evening in support of the motion to restore funding to the Governor General's budget.

As we know, the question of other government department support to the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General has been an issue in the recent past because parliamentarians have indeed expressed an interest in the overall expenditures of the government in support of the Governor General. This is in addition to the direct budgetary expenditures of the office.

During the time I have I would like to outline the support provided by other federal departments and agencies to the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General. It should be noted that such support is not new to this mandate, but has been government practice for virtually every Governor General since Confederation.

I would like to begin by making one point very clear. Costs are incurred by other government departments to support certain activities of the Governor General because these activities help them to achieve their departmental mandate. That is why these costs form part of their annual budgetary appropriation that is approved by Parliament. As such, most if not all of the decisions to incur expenses in support of the Governor General are made by those departments and agencies in whose budget these allocations appear and not by the office of the Governor General itself.

The institution of Governor General is a powerful symbol of Canada's national sovereignty and identity and, as I will note, the Governor General is frequently called upon to participate in departmental events when it is important to have our head of state present.

However, in the interests of transparency, the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General has made public a report that summarizes the source of funding from all other government departments and agencies that provide that kind of support, the purposes to which those funds are put, and the amount of those expenditures for the most recent complete fiscal year, that being 2003-04.

Let me now tell hon. members about some of the highlights of this report. The Department of National Defence provides support to the Governor General and to the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General in several respects because of the position of the Governor General as Canada's head of state and commander in chief.

Supply

In particular, the Department of National Defence provides transportation services and other logistical support for all the Governor General's travel, whether for an event in Canada or for state visits abroad. The service covers travel of a personal nature and security policy advises that the Governor General travel by government aircraft.

The Department of National Defence provides several key personnel to the Governor General and the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General on military assignments. They include five aide-de-camps who are junior officers at the captain or naval lieutenant level from all three services and undertake this posting as a two year assignment. It also includes a colonel or captain on a three year or four year assignment. Other personnel are provided for special services on short term assignments for undertakings such as state visits abroad.

All members of the House will agree that as commander in chief the Governor General plays a highly visible role and has an important symbolic relationship with the Canadian Forces. This is reflected in requests from the Department of National Defence for the Governor General to participate in events which are particularly meaningful to the Canadian Forces as a whole or to individual branches or units.

• (2200)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 10 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the opposition motion in the name of Mr. Kamp.

Call in the members.

* * *

• (2225)

[Translation]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SOCKEYE SALMON STOCKS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Order. The first question will be on the Opposition motion, standing in the name of the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, on sockeye salmon stocks.

• (2235)

The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:

(Division No. 25)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Allison
Anders
Angus
Benoit
Blaikie
Broadbent
Cadman
Casey

Ablonczy
Ambrose
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Batters
Bezan
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Carrie
Casson

Supply

Chong
Comartin
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies
Devolin
Duncan
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Goldring
Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Guergis
Harper
Harrison
Hiebert
Hinton
Jean
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Lukiwski
Lunnay
MacKenzie
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
Oda
Penson
Prentice
Rajotte
Reynolds
Ritz
Schellenberger
Siksay
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
Stoffer
Stronach
Toews
Tweed
Vellacott
Wasylcia-Leis
White
Yelich — 113

Christopherson
Crowder
Cummins
Desjarlais
Doyle
Épp
Fitzpatrick
Forseth
Godin
Goodyear
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Hanger
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Jaffer
Johnston
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Layton
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mark
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
McDonough
Merrifield
Mills
O'Connor
Pallister
Poilievre
Preston
Reid
Richardson
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Skelton
Solberg
Stinson
Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Trost
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Williams

Dosanjh
Dryden
Easter
Emerson
Folco
Frulla
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gauthier
Godfrey
Graham
Guay
Holland
Ianno
Kadis
Karygiannis
Kilgour
Laframboise
Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Lemay
Lévesque
Loubier
Macklin
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mitchell
Myers
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pacetti
Paradis
Perron
Phinney
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Poirier-Rivard
Proulx
Redman
Robillard
Rota
Saada
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Simms
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Szabo
Temelkovski
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Torsney
Valeri
Vincent
Wappel
Wrzesnewskyj

Drouin
Duceppe
Efford
Faille
Fontana
Fry
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gaudet
Godbout
Goodale
Guarnieri
Guimond
Hubbard
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Khan
Kotto
Lalonde
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lavallée
Lee
Lessard
Longfield
MacAulay
Malhi
Marceau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Minna
Murphy
Neville
Owen
Paquette
Patry
Peterson
Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon
Powers
Ratansi
Regan
Rodriguez
Roy
Sauvageau
Savoy
Scott
Silva
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Smith (Pontiac)
St. Amand
Steckle
Telegdi
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Tonks
Ur
Valley
Volpe
Wilfert
Zed- — 182

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Asselin
Bachand
Bains
Barnes
Bélangier
Bellavance
Bergeron
Bigras
Blondin-Andrew
Boivin
Bonsant
Bouchard
Boulianne
Bradshaw
Brown (Oakville)
Bulte
Cannis
Carr
Carroll
Chamberlain
Clavet
Coderre
Côté
Crête
Cuzner
Demers
Desrochers
Dhalla

Alcock
André
Augustine
Bagnell
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bell
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Blais
Boire
Bonin
Boshcoff
Boudria
Bourgeois
Brison
Brunelle
Byrne
Cardin
Carrier
Catterall
Chan
Cleary
Comuzzi
Cotler
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
D'Amours
Deschamps
DeVillers
Dion

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

MAIN ESTIMATES

RESTORATION OF VOTE 1—GOVERNOR GENERAL

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The question is on motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

PAIRED

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

● (2250)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 26*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	Augustine
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Bonin	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brison
Brown (Oakville)	Bulte
Byrne	Cannis
Carr	Carroll
Catterall	Chan
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
DeVillers	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Drouin	Dryden
Easter	Efford
Emerson	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Godbout
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Guarnieri
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Khan
Kilgour	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Longfield
MacAulay	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	McCallum
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLellan
McTeague	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Myers	Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	Owen
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Peterson
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Powers	Proulx
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Saada	Savage
Savoy	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sgro
Silva	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Smith (Pontiac)

St. Amand
Szabo
Temelkovski
Tonks
Valeri
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

Supply

St. Denis
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Torsney
Valley
Wilfert
Zed- — 120

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
André	Angus
Asselin	Bachand
Batters	Bell
Bellavance	Benoit
Bergeron	Bezan
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Boire
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Breitkreuz
Broadbent	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brunelle	Cadman
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casey
Casson	Chamberlain
Chong	Christopherson
Clavet	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Davies
Demers	Deschamps
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Devolin	Doyle
Duceppe	Duncan
Epp	Faillie
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Forsyth
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)	Gallant
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godin	Goldring
Goodyear	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guay
Guergis	Guimond
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Holland	Jaffer
Jean	Johnston
Julian	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Kotto	Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Lauzon
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Marceau
Mark	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McDonough	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
O'Connor	Oda
Pallister	Paquette
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Poillievre	Poirier-Rivard
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Reynolds	Richardson
Ritz	Roy
Sauvageau	Scheer

Supply

Schellenberger	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Siksay	Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Skelton	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Hilaire	Stinson
Stoffer	Strahl
Stronach	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Van Loan	Vellacott
Vincent	Warawa
Wasylycia-Leis	Watson
White	Williams
Yelich— 171	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.*[English]*

RESTORATION OF VOTE 1—PRIVY COUNCIL

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.) moved:

That Vote 1, in the amount of \$111,358,000, under PRIVY COUNCIL, in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, less the amount voted in the Interim Supply, be restored.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.*And more than five members having risen:*

• (2300)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 27)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	Augustine
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Boivin	Bonin
Boshcoff	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Bulte
Byrne	Cannis
Carr	Carroll
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Coderre
Comuzzi	Cotler
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner

D'Amours	DeVillers
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Drouin
Dryden	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Folco	Fontana
Frulla	Fry
Godbout	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Khan	Kilgour
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lastewka
LeBlanc	Lee
Longfield	MacAulay
Macklin	Malhi
Maloney	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	McTeague
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Neville	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)	Powers
Proulx	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Saada
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Silva
Simard (Saint Boniface)	Simms
Smith (Pontiac)	St. Amand
St. Denis	Szabo
Temelkovski	Thibault (West Nova)
Tonks	Torsney
Valeri	Valley
Volpe	Wilfert
Wrzesnewskyj	Zed— 124

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Ambrose
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Angus
Bachand
Bellavance
Bergeron
Bigras
Blais
Bonsant
Boulianne
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Cadman
Carrie
Casey
Chong
Clavet
Comartin
Crête
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies
Deschamps
Desrochers
Doyle
Duncan
Faillie
Fitzpatrick
Forsyth
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gallant
Gauthier
Goldring
Grewal (Newton—North Delta)

Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guergis
Hanger
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Jaffer
Johnston
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kotto
Laframboise
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lavallée
Lemay
Lévesque
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mark
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
McDonough
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
Pallister
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Poilievre
Prentice
Rajotte
Reynolds
Ritz
Sauvageau
Schellenberger
Siksay
Skelton
Solberg
St-Hilaire
Stoffer
Stronach
Basques
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Trost
Van Loan
Vincent
Wasylcia-Leis
White
Yelich — 167

Guay
Guimond
Harper
Harrison
Hiebert
Hinton
Jean
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lalonde
Lauzon
Layton
Lessard
Loubier
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Oda
Paquette
Perron
Plamondon
Poirier-Rivard
Preston
Reid
Richardson
Roy
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
Stinson
Strahl
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Toews
Tweed
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williams

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[*English*]

CONCURRENCE IN VOTE 20—SOLICITOR GENERAL

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Vote 20, in the amount of \$82,080,000, under SOLICITOR GENERAL (Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness)—Canadian Firearms Centre—Operating Expenditures, in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 (less the amount voted in Interim Supply), be concurred in.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Supply

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

● (2310)

The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was agreed to on the following division.

(*Division No. 28*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	André
Asselin	Augustine
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Beaumier
Bélangier	Bell
Bellavance	Bennett
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blais
Blondin-Andrew	Boire
Boivin	Bonin
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boudria
Boulianne	Bourgeois
Bradshaw	Brisson
Broadbent	Brown (Oakville)
Brunelle	Bulte
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carr
Carrier	Carroll
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Christopherson
Clavet	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Comuzzi	Côté
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	Demers
Deschamps	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Drouin	Dryden
Duceppe	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Faille	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godbout	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Khan
Kilgour	Kotto
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lastewka	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Longfield	Loubier
MacAulay	Macklin

Supply

Malhi	Maloney
Marceau	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Neville	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen	Pacetti
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Perron
Peterson	Phinney
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Plamondon	Poirier-Rivard
Powers	Proulx
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Saada
Sauvageau	Savage
Savoy	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Smith (Pontiac)
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)	
Tonks	Torsney
Valeri	Valley
Vincent	Volpe
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert	Wrzesniewskij
Zed— 191	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Angus	Batters
Benoit	Bezan
Blaikie	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Cadman
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cummins
Desjarlais	Devolin
Doyle	Duncan
Epp	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Forseth	Gallant
Godin	Goldring
Goodyear	Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guergis
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Jaffer	Jean
Johnston	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mark	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
O'Connor	Oda
Pallister	Penson
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Reynolds
Richardson	Ritz

Scheer	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	Solberg
Sorenson	Stinson
Stoffer	Strahl
Stronach	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Van Loan
Vellacott	Warawa
Watson	White
Williams	Yelich— 102

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 carried,

CONCURRENCE IN VOTE 25—SOLICITOR GENERAL

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved:

That Vote 25, in the amount of \$14,500,000, under SOLICITOR GENERAL (Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness)—Canadian Firearms Centre—Contributions, in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 (less the amount voted in Interim Supply), be concurred in.

The Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of Motion No. 2 will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And more than five members having risen:*

● (2320)

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 29)***YEAS**

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	André
Asselin	Augustine
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Beaumier
Bélangier	Bell
Bellavance	Bennett
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Blondin-Andrew
Boire	Boivin
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boudria	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Brisson	Broadbent
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Bulte	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carr	Carrier

Carroll
Chamberlain
Christopherson
Cleary
Comartin
Côté
Crête
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
D'Amours
Demers
Desrochers
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Dryden
Easter
Emerson
Folco
Frulla
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gauthier
Godfrey
Graham
Guay
Holland
Ianno
Julian
Karetak-Lindell
Khan
Kotto
Lalonde
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Lemay
Lévesque
Loubier
Macklin
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mitchell
Myers
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pacetti
Paradis
Perron
Phinney
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Poirier-Rivard
Proulx
Redman
Robillard
Rota
Saada
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Silva
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Smith (Pontiac)
St. Amand
Szabo
Temelkovski
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Torsney
Valley
Volpe
Wasylycia-Leis
Wrzesniewskyj

Catterall
Chan
Clavet
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cotler
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies
Deschamps
DeVillers
Dion
Drouin
Duceppe
Efford
Faille
Fontana
Fry
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gaudet
Godbout
Goodale
Guarnieri
Guimond
Hubbard
Jennings
Kadis
Karygiannis
Kilgour
Laframboise
Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka
Layton
Lee
Lessard
Longfield
MacAulay
Malhi
Marceau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McDonough
McGuire
McLellan
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Minna
Murphy
Neville
Owen
Paquette
Patry
Peterson
Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon
Powers
Ratansi
Regan
Rodriguez
Roy
Sauvageau
Savoy
Scott
Siksay
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Simms
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Telegdi
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Tonks
Valeri
Vincent
Wappel
Wilfert
Zed- — 192

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Allison
Anders

Ablonczy
Ambrose
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)

Supply

Angus
Benoit
Breitkreuz
Cadman
Casey
Chong
Cummins
Devolin
Duncan
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Goldring
Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
Guergis
Harper
Harrison
Hiebert
Hinton
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mark
Masse
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
Pallister
Poilievre
Preston
Reid
Richardson
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
Stoffer
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Trost
Van Loan
Warawa
White
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Batters
Bezan
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Carrie
Casson
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Desjarlais
Doyle
Epp
Fitzpatrick
Forsyth
Godin
Goodyear
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Hanger
Harris
Heam
Hill
Jaffer
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Oda
Penson
Prentice
Rajotte
Reynolds
Ritz
Schellenberger
Skelton
Solberg
Stinson
Stronach
Toews
Tweed
Vellacott
Watson
Williams

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 carried.

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, would you please ask the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who slipped back to his seat before the end of the vote, how he intended to vote on this motion?

The Speaker: The hon. whip of the Bloc Québécois suggested that the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was not in his seat at the beginning of the vote. Is that right? I did not hear exactly what he said.

● (2325)

Mr. Michel Guimond: I just wanted to point out that we would be prepared to give consent to allow the vote of the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell to be recorded. He came back before the end of the vote but we did not get to know how he would have voted.

The Speaker: I must say that the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was recorded as having voted in favour of the motion. I think that that closes the matter.

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved:

Government Orders

That the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, including Vote 1 under GOVERNOR GENERAL and Vote 1 under PRIVY COUNCIL as reduced by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, except any Vote disposed of earlier today and less the amounts voted in Interim Supply, be concurred in.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried on division.
(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved that Bill C-34, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2005, be now read a first time and be printed.

(Motions deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you would find consent to deem the present supply bill to have been read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in at report stage and read a third time and adopted on division.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Bill deemed read a second time, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, deemed read a third time and passed on division)

* * *

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved:

That the supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, except any vote disposed of earlier today, be concurred in.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried, on division.
(Motion agreed to.)

[*English*]

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved:

That Bill C-35, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2005, be now read a first time and be printed.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you would find consent to deem the present supply bill to have been read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in at report stage, and read a third time and adopted on division.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Bill deemed read a second time, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, deemed read a third time and passed on division)

* * *

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from December 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Salaries Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the recorded division on the motion for second reading of Bill C-30.

● (2340)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 30*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anderson (Victoria)	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Angus	Augustine
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Batters	Bélangier
Bell	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Boshcoff	Boudria
Bradshaw	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Broadbent
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bulte	Byrne
Cadman	Cannis
Carr	Carrie
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Chan	Chong
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	Desjarlais
DeVillers	Devolin
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Doyle
Drouin	Dryden
Duncan	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Epp	Finley

Government Orders

Fitzpatrick
 Folco
 Forseth
 Fry
 Godbout
 Godin
 Goodale
 Graham
 Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
 Guergis
 Harper
 Harrison
 Hiebert
 Hinton
 Ianno
 Jean
 Julian
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kilgour
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lastewka
 Layton
 Lee
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Macklin
 Maloney
 Marleau
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Merrifield
 Mills
 Mitchell
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Neville
 O'Connor
 Owen
 Pallister
 Patry
 Peterson
 Poilievre
 Prentice
 Proulx
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Reynolds
 Ritz
 Rodriguez
 Saada
 Savoy
 Scheer
 Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Sgro
 Silva
 Simms
 Smith (Pontiac)
 Solberg
 St. Amand
 Stinson
 Stronach
 Thibault (West Nova)

Fletcher
 Fontana
 Frulla
 Gallant
 Godfrey
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Grewal (Newton—North Delta)
 Guarnieri
 Hanger
 Harris
 Hearn
 Hill
 Holland
 Jaffer
 Johnston
 Kadis
 Karetak-Lindell
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Khan
 Komarnicki
 Lapierre (Outremont)
 Lauzon
 LeBlanc
 Longfield
 Lunn
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Malhi
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
 Masse
 McDonough
 McGuire
 McLellan
 Menzies
 Miller
 Minna
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Murphy
 Nicholson
 Oda
 Pacetti
 Paradis
 Penson
 Phinney
 Powers
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Redman
 Reid
 Richardson
 Robillard
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Scott
 Siksay
 Simard (Saint Boniface)
 Skelton
 Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
 Sorenson
 St. Denis
 Stoffer
 Temelkovski
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)

Toews
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Tonks
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 Valeri
 Van Loan
 Volpe
 Wasylcyia-Leis
 White
 Williams
 Yelich

NAYS

Members

André
 Bachand
 Bellavance
 Bigras
 Boire
 Bonsant
 Boulianne
 Brunelle
 Carrier
 Cleary
 Crête
 Demers
 Desrochers
 Faille
 Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
 Gaudet
 Guay
 Hubbard
 Kotto
 Lalonde
 Lavallée
 Lessard
 Loubier
 Ménard (Hochelaga)
 Myers
 Paquette
 Picard (Drummond)
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 Roy
 Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)
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 Cardin
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 Côté
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 Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
 Gauthier
 Guimond
 Jennings
 Laframboise
 Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
 Lemay
 Lévesque
 Marceau
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
 O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
 Perron
 Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
 Poirier-Rivard
 Sauvageau
 St-Hilaire
 Szabo
 Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
 Vincent

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

It being 11:40 p.m, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1)

(The House adjourned at 11:40 p.m.)

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