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Chair

Mr. Tom Wappel

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.)): We're already a little late starting, and I apologize to our witnesses for that. Let's get started.

We're here today to study the main estimates, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4). We welcome the Honourable Geoff Regan, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and his team. I'll introduce them now: Mr. Larry Murray, deputy minister; Mr. John Adams, commissioner, Canadian Coast Guard; Mr. David Bevan, assistant deputy minister, fisheries and aquaculture management; Mr. George Da Pont, assistant deputy minister, human resources and corporate services; Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright, assistant deputy minister, science; and Sue Kirby, assistant deputy minister, oceans and habitat. There was supposed to be one other person. If she comes up we'll introduce her.

Minister, I understand you're going to begin with an opening statement, and then we'll go right to questions. Please, the floor is yours.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, honourable members. It's a great pleasure to join you here this morning.

I'm joined by a number of officials, as you've indicated, Mr. Chairman, as well as by Deputy Minister Murray. They'll assist me in answering questions and comments after my opening statement.

Mr. Chairman, from what I've heard, people prefer the *Reader's Digest* version of my committee speeches. Therefore, with your permission, I propose to table my full remarks in both official languages and to present only a few opening remarks to provide as much time as possible for your questions. Is that all right, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: Certainly, sir.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you.

I would like to point out that there are many important issues that my department and I are working on. Many of them are discussed in my long speech that you have before you in text. While I won't address all of them now, I would certainly welcome your questions on any subject, of course.

I'd like to begin by thanking your members, Mr. Chairman, for the ongoing work that you're doing in support of Canada's fisheries and oceans. From overfishing, to dealing with issues in our west coast fisheries, to aquaculture, to coast guard funding, you've had a big

hand in moving these priorities forward, and I thank you all. You can take great pride in the fact that in February's budget there was a direct reflection of the importance this committee and all parliamentarians place on Fisheries and Oceans issues.

The budget made a number of healthy investments in DFO's activities: a \$30-million investment to establish the Atlantic salmon endowment fund; \$276 million for coast guard ships; \$28 million to launch the first phase of the oceans action plan; \$59 million to the national aquatic animal health program; \$85 million for the invasive alien species strategy, with \$10 million invested in the sea lamprey control program—something that this committee has been interested in, in particular Paul Steckle—and \$15 million to combat overfishing on an ongoing basis and to increase surveillance and monitoring in the NAFO regulatory area.

Speaking of overfishing, I was also pleased to recently announce an additional \$20 million to fight this problem and improve international fisheries governance. This investment will help us move forward on a number of new fronts, including more science on the Grand Banks and a commitment to work with international organizations to manage species in the Pacific Ocean. It will also help to create a global advocacy campaign to curb overfishing around the world, something this committee recommended in its reports on the issue.

As you know, an international conference in St. John's two weeks ago was an excellent step forward in this regard. Delegates from over 40 nations came together to deal with the problem of overfishing. While we won't solve this problem overnight, the conference did give me great hope that the nations of the world share Canada's concerns about overfishing and share our commitment to take immediate global action to meet this challenge.

It was a little over a year ago that we began our current strategy to end overfishing, a critical piece in our oceans action plan. I'm pleased to report, Mr. Chairman, that as the numbers show, our strategy is working. In 2004 there were 240 inspections, up 51% over 2003. There was a decrease of about one-third in the number of infractions compared to 2003. There were nearly 20% fewer boats on the Grand Banks—that's fewer foreign vessels—fishing for groundfish on the Grand Banks in 2004 compared to 2003, with a 37% decrease in the number of days spent fishing groundfish. I think you'll agree that these are very encouraging results, although the job is not finished.

•(1110)

[Translation]

I would also like to say a few words about the investment in the Canadian Coast Guard. Nobody was happier than I was with the funding we received for this important national institution. The investment reflects the high regard in which all Canadians hold the Coast Guard.

[English]

The funding will see the construction of six new large vessels, including two offshore fishery research vessels, and four midshore patrol vessels to support conservation and protection of our fisheries.

As part of the government's commitment to secure the nation's coasts and waterways, the coast guard will also receive funding to build and operate four midshore patrol vessels for the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River.

Mr. Chairman, I'm sure you'd agree that the coast guard is one of Canada's most important and recognizable institutions. This funding, and the coast guard's new status as a special operating agency, will ensure that this institution and the brave men and women who work in it can continue playing a key role in Canadian life for many years to come.

I'd like to turn now to management of our fisheries. We all recognize the many challenges. On the west coast, for example, while most fisheries are performing very well, salmon continues to decline in both abundance and value. In Atlantic Canada fishermen are seeing good landings in crab, lobster, and shrimp, but we're also seeing signs of a decline in some key fisheries. Certain cod stocks remain at historically low levels. Emerging fisheries in the north—and the harbour infrastructure required there to support them—also deserve more support.

Before we look to the future of the fisheries in Canada, I'd like to say a few more words, particularly about the Fraser River salmon fishery. The challenges are certainly well known to you. The comprehensive and articulate report you prepared on west coast salmon was certainly appreciated by my department and by me personally. The department is currently working on a response to this report.

To deal with the most fundamental issues, Mr. Chairman, I recently announced a blueprint for change for Pacific Canada's fisheries—to improve the economic performance of our Pacific fisheries, especially salmon; to work with first nations and Indian Affairs and Northern Development; to explore options for greater commercial access for first nations in a manner consistent with the treaty process; and to ensure that Pacific Canada's fisheries are managed sustainably in the years to come.

While the blueprint responds specifically to the joint task group and first nations panel reports, it also puts us in a good position to respond to the Williams report on last year's salmon fishery in the Fraser River and to your report.

The blueprint I announced, Mr. Chairman, will also benefit from the new conservation approach being finalized through the wild salmon policy that I intend to release in the coming weeks. Upcoming responses to your report and to Justice Williams' report

will address concerns about enforcement on the Fraser River. Let me be very clear on this front. I am committed to the provision of adequate resources for enforcement and compliance for this year's season, and I have directed officials to provide them. I've asked my officials to develop a plan for this as soon as possible.

But to make a difference over the long term, we need comprehensive reforms in how we manage our fisheries.

•(1115)

[Translation]

This management reform process is about ensuring strong, sustainable fisheries for years to come and about providing the kind of stability and predictability that resource users are looking for.

[English]

While we can do much with our current regime, legislative change—changes to the Fisheries Act, for instance—would provide important tools to assist us. I've indicated on many occasions, both in front of this committee and elsewhere, that I'm serious about updating the act. This 137-year-old statute simply isn't adequate for managing today's fishery. As I've said before, I would like to hear your views on how to reform the act and on what your role could be in that process.

Without prejudging your views, I'm especially interested in hearing them in four complex areas: how to address conservation in the act, how to reform the sanctions regime, how to best approach co-management with fishing organizations and aboriginal groups, and how to reform the allocation process.

Canada's fisheries and oceans have changed and evolved, in some cases far beyond the tools and processes currently in place. I'm committed to taking action to adapt to these changes and to bring programs and policies into line with the realities of this industry in the 21st century.

Honourable members, I'm proud of the progress we've made over the last year. We're on the cusp of making important changes in the fisheries and oceans sector. The initiatives I've outlined today, and countless others my department is working on, represent our plan to build a strong, sustainable, and flexible fisheries and oceans sector in Canada, one that can continue to make such an important contribution to Canadian life.

[Translation]

I will be pleased to respond to your questions and comments.

[English]

Thank you very much.

Merci beaucoup.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

You gave us the *Reader's Digest* version, as you said. I notice that your oral remarks changed from your written remarks on page six. You added a bullet point.

Hon. Geoff Regan: On sanctions.

The Chair: I just want to confirm that it's on how to reform the sanctions regime, so we have that. Is that correct?

Hon. Geoff Regan: I added that, yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll begin the questioning with Mr. Hearn.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Chair, because of the evidence we've discussed recently, there were some very important issues you were very interested in. You very seldom get a chance to raise these, so if the committee is okay with it, I would suggest you lead the questions today.

• (1120)

Hon. Geoff Regan: That's a pretty good arrangement, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, members.

The suggestion was that I lead off the questioning. Is that okay?

Thank you.

This is a surprise to me, Minister.

Hon. Geoff Regan: The day is full of surprises, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Apparently. So this should be no different.

Minister, thank you very much. We will read your full remarks with interest, because there's a lot of interesting and correct information in there that I know the committee will be interested in.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I hope it's all correct.

The Chair: Indeed.

I should say that our committee is pleased with a number of aspects of the budget. Needless to say, there are aspects that certain members will criticize, but we should all say thank you for what is in there, which we did fight for over a period of years.

In your remarks you brought up our interest in a variety of issues, but in particular the west coast fisheries and our unanimous report on the Fraser River salmon river fishery of 2004. This particular issue continues to be of great concern to this committee. Uncharacteristically for me, I suspect that in my intervention here with you there will be fewer questions and more statements, but I'm hopeful you'll have an opportunity to respond.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I'll take notes, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.

We had an opportunity to be provided by your deputy minister with a document that we have agreed to keep in camera, but I have to refer to it. It's a report by Robert Melvin, intelligence officer. He made certain comments that provided a snapshot of things in time, as of September 2003. The committee has reviewed this particular document.

Before I make any comments in relation thereto, I want to ask if you've had an opportunity to review the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council's annual report to you of 2004. Have you seen that yet? I know in this department there are a million pieces of

paper, and there's only so much time in the day, but have you had an opportunity to see that report?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Of course, you know that I see many files every night. I'm going to have to ask my deputy whether I've seen that. I don't recall seeing it offhand.

The deputy says we've received it, but he's not sure if I've actually seen it. I don't recall it offhand, but I look forward to hearing details from you and seeing it soon.

The Chair: Thank you. This is in no way to sandbag you. That's why I asked you if you'd seen it. I just want to read a couple of things to you.

On page 15 of the report, the Honourable John Fraser, who appeared before us at our committee hearings in December, says :

The persistent failure of the governments of Canada and British Columbia to gain public trust for their management of salmon aquaculture has been a matter of great concern to the Council.

He then goes on, under a separate heading entitled, "Diminished Capacity to Conserve Pacific Salmon", to say the following:

The Council has become increasingly concerned that the federal government is now failing to meet its obligations to conserve and scientifically manage the fisheries resource.

I further quote:

It is noteworthy that the energies of the Pacific Region of Fisheries & Oceans Canada that should be directed towards managing the resource are being consumed by attempts to deal with budget cuts.

Finally:

Enforcement, habitat protection and restoration, salmon enhancement, research, and stock assessment are all areas in which the federal government's capacity to do the full job is questionable. It is time for Fisheries & Oceans Canada to explain what it now cannot do that it previously could do, and to open its management to scrutiny about whether or not the choices being made are the appropriate ones.

Minister, I bring that to your attention because that's basically what we said in our report on the salmon river fishery in different words. We want to highlight to you what we consider to be the major failings that are going to cost the resource a tremendous amount if they are not dealt with. You said in your speech that this has been a year of vision for DFO, that it has been a year of changes in how your department operates, and that it has been a year of finding better ways to do the job Canadians expect of us. I hope those are not just words, because this is a respected organization. There are major problems with the way the department is being operated on the west coast. They're not necessarily finding fault with individuals. They're concerned that lack of money is forcing a focus away from conservation and enforcement and to number-crunching and abacus work. We just want to bring that to your attention.

Finally, we were saddened when we read the Melvin report, because although this is a snapshot in time, it simply served to underscore 100% the evidence we heard in 2004 and the concerns we highlighted in our report. It is our committee's view that appeasement in enforcement is not a proper public policy. The law is there for all Canadians and it is to be enforced by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for the benefit of all Canadians and for the resource, and for there to be a policy whereby it is enforced for some and a blind eye is turned for others is absolutely contrary to what this committee believes is in the best interests of the rule of law and in the best interests of the management of the fishery.

That was a long preamble, for which I apologize. I ask the question, Minister, have you had an opportunity to personally review Robert Melvin's report?

• (1125)

Hon. Geoff Regan: I am certainly aware of the details of it. I'm trying to recall whether I've read the whole report, but I certainly have been made aware of the issues that you're referring to. I am certainly concerned about what I see, but at the same time, I think it's very important to recognize a couple of things.

One is that I've directed the department to increase our resources for enforcement on the lower Fraser River, and enforcement certainly is an important priority for us. You've talked about budgetary challenges. There's no question that we faced budgetary challenges in the past year. There's no question, also, that we had some good news this year. Is there room for more good news? Well, certainly. And I don't think you'd find many ministers who wouldn't like more good news. You wouldn't find many ministers who are more in need of it, perhaps in some respects, and yet we did have some very important achievements in the budget in relation to the coast guard, and other things that I mentioned. I think that is a very important indication of the importance this government gives to my department, to the work that you are interested in regarding Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Are there other areas that I would like to seek more funding for? Certainly. I think we can find money this year internally to increase our funding in terms of enforcement in places like the Fraser River. One of the things we're doing is trying to focus more on those kinds of needs and less in areas that you pointed out in the past aren't areas where we feel we should be paying as much attention. We've been following that over the past, and making a number of adjustments in that regard.

The Chair: Minister, excuse me. I'm running out of my own time here.

I just want to bring your attention to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats assessment report. I'm not going to quote any portion of it. It's called SWOT. It can't take more than 10 minutes to read. I would honestly encourage you to read it, because it's a blueprint for how not to run the enforcement section of Fisheries and Oceans Canada on the west coast. On behalf of the committee, it's critical that we ask you to look at this and to ensure that this is not the way of the future for enforcement on the west coast.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me also say, though, that part of what we do in enforcement... we've had some complaints about culverts, for example, about dealing with culverts that farmers have. People on the committee have been unhappy with too much attention given to that sometimes, am I right?

Well, I think you have to realize that sometimes there are other ways to achieve compliance than with a stick, and sometimes there are other ways of achieving compliance that are more effective, and we can't ignore those either.

One of our efforts in relation to the Fraser River salmon is a variety of ways of increasing compliance, whether it be through

education or through other means. But these issues sometimes are not as simple as they may seem at first. Having said that, I have directed that I want the department to have more enforcement there, and it's my view, as it is yours, that we have to enforce the rules that are in force.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

And thank you, colleagues, for giving me that opportunity.

We'll go back to the regular questioning list. Mr. Hearn, for 10 minutes.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I guess the best thing to do is throw out some questions and get the answers, because if not, we can quite often use up 10 minutes on one question.

I want to make one observation on this, and I'm sure some of our members will come back to it. We talk about fisheries officers being involved with putting in culverts and so on. We've had more complaints about more fisheries officers around the drain when somebody's putting in a culvert than we have seen on the Fraser River. I think therein lies our problem, and it's something that has to be addressed.

I'll ask five questions. The answers shouldn't be all that long. We should get them in within time.

One is about crab outside 200. Here is a resource whose potential nobody seems to know. The one sector in the fishery that can prosecute the fishery there, the over-65-foot, have constantly been denied crab. Because of the type of boats they have and the equipment they carry, they can land fresh product...rather than forcing small boats out into such areas. But it seems we have such little scientific information that a proper assessment and allocations can't be made. I'd like a comment on that.

The second one has to do with father-and-son enterprises. Traditionally, over the years, enterprises have been passed on through the family. Now you can have father and son fishing in two separate enterprises, sometimes in the one boat, which is allowable. But if the father wants to get out of the fishery, the son can't combine. He has to sell out. That's a real complication. Isn't there a better way of trying to secure the enterprise within the family, particularly in light of the extra cost?

The third question is on infrastructure. Our report to the minister a few years ago drew a lot of attention and \$100 million to the department, Mr. Minister. One of the things we talked about is areas. Because of the change in fishery, there is a need to do some work in some areas that are not solely owned. The minister's response said they were looking at this, but that's almost three years ago. In some of these areas where it makes common sense to spend some money to upgrade facilities, which are government-owned, because the money came through Canada works or whatever, but not solely owned, isn't that the proper thing to do?

The fourth question refers to resource inside 200. Where we have resources that are not fished by our people, is it possible that foreign bottoms could fish that fish, provided they land and repackage it in Newfoundland or Nova Scotian ports? This would create employment.

Finally, I want to look at shrimp licences. It seems foreign countries can get all kinds of shrimp, while people in the fishery and adjacent to the fishery who are looking for shrimp licences can't.

So I'll leave those with you.

• (1130)

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think my colleague is aware that these are five interesting questions. We'll do our best to get through them one at a time within the 10 minutes. If we get cut off, I hope we can come back to the ones we don't manage to get through.

On crab outside 200 miles, I mentioned earlier that the \$20 million that was announced recently with respect to overfishing includes science—\$11.5 million for science on the Grand Banks—to look at the ecosystem and the variety of stocks that are there. Certainly, one of the things we could look at in that process is crab, if there's a feeling that there's not enough science in that area.

I was in Newfoundland recently, as you know, in places like Gander and St. John's, and the following weekend I was actually, in Labrador in communities like L'Anse au Claire, Forteau, Williams Harbour, and Black Tickle. One of the things I heard from inshore fishermen about crab is that they have to go as far as 70 miles out in small vessels, and that's a concern to them. So your point about small vessels going out a long way is an issue that I'm concerned about, because there is the question of danger, and one worries when they go out that far following crab.

I'm going to ask David Bevan if he wants to comment further on this.

Mr. David Bevan (Assistant Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you, Minister.

As you know, we have allocated the crab. The vessels engaged in that process have been offered the opportunity to be removed from the vessel length restrictions in the event they were to adopt things like IQs or other means of capacity management. So we're open to suggestions from fleets about how that might be done, but we don't wish to put more effort into the fishery. We think it has enough fishing capacity now, and we want to be careful about the possibility of having more added.

I think there are opportunities to find better ways to do it. We are open to suggestions from the fleets, and we'll have to keep working with them to try to find a way to get the right vessel in the right spot.

Hon. Geoff Regan: The next question, of course, is about father-and-son enterprises, another one that really receives a lot of attention, and rightly so. It certainly is one that preoccupies me. You see this in many communities. How do you ensure that the fishing activity remains in the coastal communities and that they benefit from that activity when the value of licences is going up in some cases.... Take lobster in parts of Nova Scotia, for example,

where the prices of licences have skyrocketed in recent years—and primarily because the value of catches has been well up, frankly.

How do you deal with that problem when you can't finance them and they can't get a mortgage on a licence? That's one of the things we're looking at in our examination of the owner-operator rule and trust agreements. You know, for example, that we have John Hanlon, from the Antigonish office of DFO in Nova Scotia, leading this issue and bringing forth proposals to the industry to discuss how we can deal with that issue. But there are two parts to it. There's not only the question of financing, which is an important part of it. There's also the concern we have about people who transfer the beneficial use of a licence. That's what we're trying to avoid.

I don't see a big problem with a fisherman who decides to make an agreement with a fish processor to land his fish there. That's not the problem. The problem is when someone else is fishing someone's licence. We're trying to avoid that.

I think you're talking about this broader issue as well as how we ensure the transfer, and part of this again is the tax issue. This is a concern I have, and we're working with the Department of Finance to try, as we look at this whole process, to find a fix on that issue as well. You've raised a very important point.

I don't know how much time I have, Mr. Chairman.

• (1135)

The Chair: You have infrastructure, resources.

Hon. Geoff Regan: On infrastructure, you mentioned ones that Canada Infrastructure Works has invested in. Of course, they can be municipal sometimes. They aren't always federal. Canada Infrastructure Works over the years.... You're talking about ones that are federal, aren't you? Would they be mostly Transport harbours?

Mr. Loyola Hearn: No, basically, what I'm talking about is where over the years an addition had to be made, say, to a wharf, or a crib had to be put in between, or whatever, it was done through a local initiative, maybe by Canada Works money—I'm using Canada Works—with actual material from Small Craft Harbours. This would be strictly federal government money owned, in addition to the wharf or whatever. Now, when the addition gives out, there's nobody responsible.

Hon. Geoff Regan: So these are not Small Craft Harbours wharves as such?

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Well, they disowned them a couple of years ago.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Yes. Well, clearly you know that we have our work cut out for us in maintaining small craft harbours across the country. In fact, there are challenges there as well in the funds we have for divesting recreational harbours. But we do have some funds, and we are working to do this.

We can certainly have a look at the situations you're talking about. If there are particular instances you want to discuss with me... Offhand, I think it's a difficult one, as you can imagine, but I'm certainly happy to talk to you about it, if there are any means at all—which may be doubtful, but let's have a look at it. Okay?

In talking about inside 200 miles—you're talking about where fish is not fished by Canadians—essentially, as you know, now only Canadian vessels are fishing inside the 200-mile limit, and I haven't heard anybody, I must tell you—I don't recall hearing anyone until today—suggest to me that we should change that. I have a certain reluctance, considering the problems we've seen on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the kinds of activities we've been concerned about there, and I know you share those concerns. I think we'd be cautious before entering into that kind of discussion, but I'd welcome your views on it and I'd look forward to hearing them.

Now, I have question number five, shrimp licences, and I can't recall exactly what the question was.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: It was basically about a lot of regular fishermen—45-footers, 65-footers—trying to get shrimp licences who can't, yet there are sometimes increases in allocations given to foreign countries. Everybody seems to be able to get shrimp—this is the perception of the fishermen—except those who are adjacent to it and want to get into the fishery.

Hon. Geoff Regan: David's anxious to come in here, it looks like. But the first thing I want to say is that I think one of the important things we've done this year is to stabilize the resources allocations, because if you're asking people to take measures to act in a way this year that promotes conservation and if they feel that next year there will be a whole bunch of new people coming into their sector and fishing the same fish, there's a lot less reason for them to exercise conservation methods. I think that's been an important step. You're nodding, and I think you might agree with that.

Obviously, when we develop the shrimp quotas, we do it through NAFO for the NAFO area, and we did not see an increase in the shrimp this year. What will happen next year I don't know. The stability issue, I think, is an important one to consider, but again I'll consider your views.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Blais, you have seven minutes.

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

Welcome. As you probably have guessed, I am now going to address the subject of small craft harbours.

Some hon. members: Oh, no!

Mr. Raynald Blais: Ah, yes! It is surprising, isn't it?

It is just as surprising to see that the situation has not really improved. I remember we had an opportunity to speak to Mr. Regan a few months ago. We were in this room or another one. I will probably be asking the same questions. I imagine a little progress has been made on this issue.

I mean by that that there is a higher degree of awareness of the issue. But as for real action, that is another story. I do not yet see any signs of it out in the field. Visits to my riding and others lead us to believe there has been no improvement in real life. In terms of awareness, though, I do think there has been some progress.

We were told recently—and you will be able to confirm this—that you intend to ask for additional funding or budgeting from Cabinet to deal with the situation in small craft harbours. It has really become very serious. People from the port authorities have told you frankly, in Halifax and elsewhere, that they are worn out by the situation. Therefore, I wonder what measures you plan to take in the short, medium and long terms, with respect to small craft harbours.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, as Mr. Blais mentioned, I attended the meeting of the Association of Canadian Port Authorities in Halifax a few weeks ago. I had a very interesting discussion with those people, dealing with their concerns and the department's activities.

As you know, four years ago, the government increased the budget for small craft harbours by \$100 million over five years. It continues to be a priority, and we still making that investment as well as the ones already in our budget. I have given several examples of cases in which we have succeeded in obtaining funds in the budget. These were important achievements for the department. Did I say it was all over, or that there were some areas for which I absolutely did not want to get a lot of money? I did not say that. In fact, I intend to try to get more money for small craft harbours.

I continue to believe it is a very high priority. The Coast Guard and the Oceans Action Plan are also important priorities. Within my mandate, there are a number of high priorities. I would not like to be in Mr. Goodale's position and try to meet all the challenges involved. In short, I am pleased we have been allocated the funding for the purposes I have already mentioned. These were very important issues for the department.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Like me, you will certainly have noticed that even though an additional amount of \$20 million per year over five years was announced for small craft harbours, the effects are not very visible. We have not seen any in recent years, unfortunately, and we do not see them coming in the next year.

In the first years, it was clear that the budget had been increased. However, I ask you to look at your own figures. It is very hard to trace that extra \$20 million within the estimates for 2006-07 and 2005-06. I have already discussed this several times with Mr. Da Pont and other senior officials.

Let us be clear on one thing, Mr. Regan. The fact is that \$20 million is unfortunately not enough. The roof is leaking, Mr. Regan, and it is so bad the ceiling is about to fall in. The roof is collapsing and the horror stories are piling up. We must not wait for circumstances to get worse or more tragic before we finally take action. That is why I am asking you what measures you intend to take in the short, medium and long term with respect to the small craft harbours program.

• (1145)

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, the hon. Mr. Blais has said it was hard to trace the current whereabouts of the \$20 million. I will ask my Assistant Deputy Minister, Mr. George Da Pont, to explain where to find it.

Mr. George Da Pont (Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Corporate Services, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): As you know, that \$20 million is part of the \$100 million allocated in the budget several years ago. It is true that it was only for five years. So it was \$20 million per year for five years.

At present, this funding is expected to end in two years. Nevertheless, as the minister and I have both said a number of times, we have been asked to initiate discussions with the central agencies to try to find solutions and to keep this money in our budget. We have begun these discussions, but we still have two years to solve the problem of the \$20 million. We cannot make specific commitments.

The \$20 million is entirely spent on repairs to small craft harbours. That is part of the plan announced early this year. All the money goes to repairs, as planned.

[English]

The Chair: Merci, Monsieur.

Now we have Mr. Stoffer for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Minister and staff, for being here today.

I have many questions to ask, so I'm just going to rattle them off. If you could get back to the committee, either in writing or however you see fit, it would be greatly appreciated.

My first one, of course—we'll start from the west coast—is regarding the Taku River and the Tlingit people and the report, Minister, that you're reviewing regarding Redcorp and the possible road through that territory. How is that report coming along?

There's also the aquaculture report that you were asked a question on yesterday in the House of Commons. Why is there delay on that report, when it was indicated to us that the report may be released in April?

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer, is that dealing with sea lice?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Yes. And this is something that disturbs the hell out of me—exporting our jobs out of the country. It's come to my attention that the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation—get this, I love this—get the fish from Lake Winnipeg fishermen; they freeze it and send it to China, where it's thawed, processed, refrozen, packaged, and sent back to Canada, and then labelled, believe it or not, Mr. Chairman, “product of China”. It's not a product of China.

It's manufactured, configured, in China—processed—but it's not a product of China.

How a department or the Canadian government can allow a crown corporation to export processing jobs across the way is beyond me. I'd like an answer as to why that's happening.

Also, the enforcement cuts in the DFO officers in central Canada, why is that happening?

Now, moving, of course, over to the east coast, it's come to my attention that the *Terry Fox* vessel will be laid up this winter. I'd like to know how long that layup will be and whether the layup is because of cost-cutting measures. Of course, it's the *Terry Fox* that is used for icebreaking work in terms of the spring season, if I'm not mistaken, in the far north and possibly the gulf as well.

I have many more questions, but we'll run out of time.

• (1150)

The Chair: You've allowed the minister only three minutes, and he has five areas to hit.

Mr. Minister.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I'll get back to you with more.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chairman, I'm sure Mr. Stoffer will get back to me on others of these.

On the Taku Tlingit issue, we have had a period for public comment. I think it's just recently concluded, and it's being studied by the department. In other words, the public commentary on this is being examined by the department, and we should have something on it fairly soon.

On aquaculture, I haven't seen it yet. I expect to see it very soon. My understanding is that our scientists have needed to review the data they received, do the job properly and make sure they do a thorough review of the information that's come from that study before it is released. I expect to see it released in the very near future.

As you know, the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation is a crown corporation, and I can't talk to that corporation. I don't direct them as a minister or tell them what to do, because they're a crown corporation; they're at arm's length. And that's a very important principle, as you know.

I do believe that information was provided to the committee by them last week. As I understand it, Mr. Chairman, I think there was a letter that came to you from the corporation last week in response to this issue.

The Chair: If that's true, we'll find out. I'm not aware of it.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Would you check, please? What I'd like you to do is examine that response, perhaps share it with Mr. Stoffer and other members of the committee. I'd be interested in hearing what they have to say.

I think Mr. Bevan wanted to make a point on the question in relation to the corporation.

Mr. David Bevan: The corporation's goal and objective is to maximize the payments going back to the fishermen. To do that, they have to work in a very competitive market, and they have looked at ways of maximizing the value so that they can have the maximum payments going back to the fishermen.

You raised the issue of the product process in China labelled as "product of China". That is a requirement under the international rules that dictate how products are to be labelled.

Hon. Geoff Regan: You asked about enforcement cuts in places like the Prairies, and I mentioned earlier the committee's past concerns about fisheries officers dealing with farmers and culverts and perhaps dealing with cottagers and their wharves more than dealing with actual fisheries issues.

What we've done here, essentially, is respond to that concern, because we clearly feel that it's better to work with farmers in terms of compliance, in terms of education about how to do things. We think that has proven to be a better model, and more successful than the fisheries officer enforcement model. We think it's seen more success and will see more success in the future.

So this is not a reduction in places like the Fraser River or on the coasts and rivers. It's a reduction in terms of dealing with people like farmers and cottagers, for example, and it's a different way of doing it.

On the last—

The Chair: We're out of time, but could you give us a quick one minute on the *Terry Fox* vessel?

Hon. Geoff Regan: I'll ask the commissioner to respond to the *Terry Fox*.

Commr John Adams (Commissioner, Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Just quickly, traditionally the practice has been that we've kept one of our breakers out of operation during the wintertime. It will go north in the summer—in this case it's the *Terry Fox*. It will go north of 60 this summer and will do the breaking.

When it comes back in the fall, it will be refit and put in cold layup, ready to be called out if necessary. Historically, we've been doing that with the *Louis S. St. Laurent*, but we have to keep it in hot layup. We find that to be more expensive than what we can do with the *Terry Fox*, because it was designed to go into cold layup. We don't need any crew on it. We put it in cold layup.

There will be no impact on indeterminate employees. We will simply use those employees on other vessels. If we need the *Terry Fox* we'll pull it out on an as-required basis. But on only one occasion in the last six years have we needed the extra breaker in the gulf to break ice.

So it's simply a cost-efficiency move, Mr. Chair.

•(1155)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

We now go to Mr. Murphy, for 10 minutes.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just one of the issues, Minister, that was raised in the budget—which I think we were all pretty pleased about, but it's been a little quiet since then—is the salmon endowment fund. This was certainly a major issue for a lot of members of Parliament in Atlantic Canada, and we were very pleased to see it.

Can you perhaps bring the committee up to date as to where it stands now and how you see the fund being established, funded, and managed going forward?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, through you to Mr. Murphy, I was certainly delighted. I think it is appropriate to recognize that the need for an Atlantic salmon endowment fund is an issue that the committee has raised a number of times over the years. I certainly appreciate the support of the colleagues on my side, but I'll acknowledge that the committee as a whole raised this issue a number of times. I think that was important in terms of getting this fund in the budget. I was delighted with that.

Let me talk about how we're doing this and how we're setting it up.

It will be in the form of a trust fund with a board of directors. We're consulting with groups like the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the provinces, and other groups involved in salmon and river stewardship on how we should set up that organization or trust fund, who should be on it, and who should be appointing or recommending names for the board.

It takes some time to do that consultation. I can tell you that I'm very anxious. I raised this with the deputy yesterday. My desire is to see this move quickly and to have people in place in short order, so that that money can be transferred and it can start collecting interest. Therefore, one would think that a year from that point, we can start spending the money and using it for the benefit of salmon and salmon habitat in Atlantic Canada and in Quebec. It takes time.

I'm going to ask the deputy to respond to this, but maybe he wants to refer it to someone else. I know that he knows about this and is interested in it.

Could you comment further on the process that we're trying to follow here?

Mr. Larry Murray (Deputy Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): I think you've basically covered it, Minister.

Consultation is ongoing. We're trying to set up an arm's-length body. The top priority is to really sort out what the body is so that we can get them in place and move forward on having the money in 2005-06.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: When do you expect this to be done?

Mr. Larry Murray: The target is to ensure that the money is in play in 2005-06, this fiscal year. We're working really hard to ensure that happens, obviously, and the minister has been clear on his direction in that regard.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: My second area, Mr. Minister, is in regard to the recent disallowance of the section on the Ontario fisheries management by the committee on rules and regulations.

From my review of the situation, this could be a fairly serious situation if it's not dealt with very quickly. The clock is ticking, as I see it. I think it will actually result in chaos if it's not dealt with by the department, the House of Commons, and the Senate. As you probably noticed, this place is getting rather crazy these days.

Can you fill us in on how you plan to handle this situation? Are you confident in getting the legislative amendments through the House within the required 30 days? I believe we have 30 days to do it.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you.

Again, Mr. Chairman, through you to Mr. Murphy, this is certainly a concern that I have.

Members, you will recall that at this time last year, there was a bill before the House to deal with this. It fell by the wayside with the dissolution of the House. We plan to introduce another bill in the coming days to deal with the same issue.

You will also recall that I talked about the need for an overall reform of the Fisheries Act. I am anxious to hear that you're interested in moving forward on that. For the bill that I'll bring forward, we're in a minority Parliament and I really require the cooperation of members. Obviously, we need enough members to support a particular bill for it to advance. When we bring this bill forward in the next couple of days, I hope it will receive the support of members.

I want to read part of a letter on this subject that I received from the Honourable David Ramsay, the Minister of Natural Resources for Ontario:

Terms and conditions are currently the only mechanisms by which Ontario can establish allowable quota, areas where fishing can occur, designates who can take fish under a licence, reporting for commercial fishing licences. Without this provision, Ontario would literally have its hands tied with respect to enforcement of the commercial fishery. It is entirely likely that the revocation of subsection 36(2) would result in chaos in this sector and threaten the sustainability of our fisheries resources.

I would hope to have the support of the committee members in this regard in the coming days. This is certainly a concern, but I think we're dealing with it effectively by bringing forward the bill.

When you look at the concerns that Minister Ramsay expressed about the fact that the terms and conditions of a licence are the only means they have to regulate these things, it again highlights the need for changes to the Fisheries Act, which is 137 years old, and the two regimes we have that belong in the 19th century, not in the 21st century.

• (1200)

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Do you see this being tabled this week?

Perhaps my first question is, is it 30 days that we have to deal with the issue or 60?

Hon. Geoff Regan: I think it's 30.

The Chair: Mr. Murphy, I happen to sit on that committee, and a report was presented to the House of Commons. It's my recollection that if there isn't something done by the minister specifically in 15 sitting days, then the regulation is deemed to have been revoked. And obviously nature abhors a vacuum, so one would be looking for

that vacuum to be filled by another regulation or something of that nature.

On that point, if anybody in the public is interested, they can go to that particular committee's website and they can download the report that was presented to the House that deals with the legal aspects of why the committee recommended the revocation of this regulation.

None of that is out of your time. Go ahead.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chairman, I can tell you we'll be bringing it very soon.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: The next issue, Mr. Minister, again deals with the fishing situation in Nunavut. I realize that since you last appeared before this committee you've had the opportunity to visit that territory and you've seen firsthand some of the issues they face. It's a point that I've raised before this committee before and I've discussed it with you before: the total absence of fishing infrastructure in that territory and the inability of the territory to move forward in their fishing industry.

Now, I know you don't have it in your budget, or I don't believe you have it in your budget. It will require more focus and more priority from the centre of government. But can you update us as to where we stand on this situation? I believe it is a very important situation. We've had a number of different groups over the last six months from Nunavut talking about quota and arguing about quota, whereas I think the emphasis should be put on infrastructure and developing the industry, especially the inshore industry. I realize there are challenges, transportation challenges and other challenges, but I do believe it has potential.

So if you could share your thoughts with the committee, it would be appreciated.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Again, through you to Mr. Murphy, I can say I had the pleasure of spending three days in Nunavut a couple of weeks ago. I was in Iqaluit for most of the time, but I also had the pleasure of visiting Pangnirtung for an afternoon and seeing the operations there, the fish plant there, seeing what their wharf is like. You actually can tell, because of the ice in the bay there—or the fjord, really, I suppose you'd call it—where the ice gets suddenly smooth. Where it's shallow, the ice is all broken up and lumpy, you might say, and then you see where it's smooth because that's where it's deep. When the tide goes down and so forth, it does that to ice. But it's interesting how you can actually see where the deep part is.

The concern they have there is that the wharf doesn't go out to where it's deep, so they're looking for infrastructure there. Of course, as we know, the cost of building things in the north is considerably higher than it is in the south, because you have to transport just about everything up to the north. That makes it much more costly, but it remains important.

But I think there have been some very important developments in the last few years. I think it's the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board...or is it the BFC that owns the factory freezer trawler? It's the Baffin Fisheries Coalition that owns a factory trawler of their own. Of course, when we talk about the inshore fishery it's important we keep in mind that one of the challenges they have, among others, is that the season during which there isn't ice in the harbours is a rather short one—I needn't tell you that—and one of the challenges they have when they have a trawler, of course, is to keep it busy year-round and not just in the summer months. So there are some important challenges there, but we've made advances in terms of seeing more allocations going to Nunavut.

As you know, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board is mandated, through the land settlement agreement, to be the body that makes recommendations in terms of allocations and management of the fishery in the north. We work with them and follow them. In fact, I'm only allowed to override their recommendations for reasons like conservation, for example. Generally speaking, I have to follow the recommendations. And I have no problem with that. I think it makes sense that the people who are there locally should have that kind of role, as they do.

We've seen some very positive developments in Nunavut. It was exciting for me to see the things they're doing there in the fishery, to see how they, for instance, fish for halibut—pardon me, I was going to say Greenland halibut, and that's turbot, of course. In the winter, when the ice is frozen, they use a kite mechanism. You think of a kite being up in the air. This is actually under the ice, in the water. When the tide goes out it takes the kite, and it pulls a long line of hooks. Then, they'll leave it out for a couple of hours and then bring it back in and take the turbot off the hooks—baited hooks, naturally. That's an ingenious way to fish. That's actually technology they've received from Greenland.

This year they had difficulty, in that the ice in Cumberland Sound actually broke up a little bit early. Some of the fellows were out there fishing with snowmobiles and this equipment when they heard loud cracks and started to run. Thank goodness they did, because some of the ice did break, and they lost a couple of snowmobiles and some of the equipment. It's a tricky environment, as you can see, and it raises the concern about the changing environment, and the fact that the ice is breaking up earlier than it used to.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you.

Minister, so we don't have any misunderstanding, you said something about Baffin Fisheries Coalition owning the vessel.

Mr. Bevan.

Mr. David Bevan: Thank you.

There's still lots of complexity around the arrangements there. To suggest that they own all of the interest I think is an oversimplification. Obviously they have locked the vessel in, it's their licence, they've licensed the vessel, etc., but there are other people who have interests in the vessel. I don't know all the details off the top of my head as to how that whole thing is structured.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Geoff Regan: My note, Mr. Chairman, said that they have acquired a large factory freezer vessel to fish their allocations. I think that when I said “acquired”, perhaps the meaning is not quite what I thought it was.

The deputy wants to add a comment here.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Murray.

Mr. Larry Murray: Mr. Chairman, I have a very short comment in response to the question.

We have been working jointly with Nunavut on port infrastructure. There is a study that will be coming forward shortly. I believe it will recommend seven small craft harbour facilities to be put in over the next five to seven years, and I believe the cost is \$35 million. The minister has been clear in his direction to try to move that forward. We would probably do it in the context of the broader strategy that has been alluded to, or the northern strategy.

The Chair: Thank you.

The next round will be Mr. Keddy, Mr. Roy, Mr. Stoffer, and Mr. Matthews, each for five minutes, and I'm looking for hands for round three.

Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd certainly like to thank the minister for appearing at the committee today.

I want to pick up briefly on your comment to Mr. Hearn about father-and-son operations and the difficulty, really, of handing fishery assets down to family members. The minister said that he was looking at the Department of Finance rules, or working with the Department of Finance. I'm certain he would be prepared to support, or at least take a look at, my private member's bill on fishermen's capital gains, which would certainly answer that question quite neatly, allowing fishermen to pass on their assets to family members. We've done it in agriculture and we've done it in forestry; the fishery is the last resource sector to really require it, and if we're going to keep an independent fishery, especially a small-boat fishery, that's a good part of the answer to doing that. And that's a statement of mine, Mr. Minister, so I don't really need an answer to it.

Certainly, the other issue that would go a long way toward helping the small-boat fishery—and again, taking part of a question that Mr. Hearn asked—is the cubic metre size of boats and the whole issue of the length of a vessel. We've got a 45-foot class and we've got a 65-foot class. Certainly, there's a major concern that the vessel length has affected vessel safety. All of you are aware that the vessels are wider in the beam and they're deeper in the hull and they're higher, and they're going out farther to catch more fish than they caught before. So it's not a matter of a 45-foot boat that used to be 12 feet in the beam now being 18 feet or 20 feet in the beam; they also take more fuel, and they're not as manoeuvrable. There is a major safety issue.

Quite frankly, Mr. Minister, I don't understand the reluctance here to change the vessel length class, because most of those vessels are already fishing a quota, so they already have an ITQ, whether that's an individual quota or an individual transferable quota. Are you and the department willing to take a serious look at changing the regulations and rules governing the length of boat, especially for safety, and especially for the Newfoundland crab fleet?

• (1210)

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chairman, I mentioned earlier the things I've heard from fishermen in places like Labrador and Gander, etc. I know that Gander is close to lots of fishing communities, of course, so I've heard from people there and from places like Fogo Island and Bonavista.

What we've said to the fleets, essentially, is that if you can bring forward alternatives to capacity management in terms of how we manage capacity and avoid having overcapacity and more pressure on resources, we're certainly willing to look at changes to the vessel length issue.

I share the concern about the design of these vessels these days. I've heard different things, and there are those who have expressed to me their concern that the designs are not as safe as they ought to be, that the designs are getting wider, and so forth. I'm no marine architect, obviously, and I'm no expert in the area, but common sense seems to suggest that when they get more like a tub than a boat, one should get concerned about what's going to happen to them. I think you feel the same way.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Definitely.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I know that David has a little bit more to say in terms of what happens when they have more than one licence and what issues that creates.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Exactly.

Mr. David Bevan: That does become a complicating factor when, for example, there's an enterprise that might have six or seven licences—sometimes two or three major licences. So if you're fishing crab and you also have a groundfish allocation, you might be limited by one or the other licence.

We're looking at trying to make it easier for fleets to come to us with proposals to get out of these restrictions, but we do need to prevent the overcapitalization on the one hand, and on the other, we want to prevent somebody using the release of these rules in, say, the crab fishery to put a much larger, more capable boat into groundfish to the disadvantage of his competitors.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Part of the worry, Mr. Keddy—through you, Mr. Chairman—is that if you have a larger boat, you have a larger loan. You need to have.... You know the issue quite well.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Excuse me, Mr. Minister, I appreciate that, but the reality is that the boats are larger and more capable than they were 20 years ago when the rules were brought in. You could take an average hull size and say you simply can't catch more fish than that, but for other reasons—reasons of safety, reasons of manoeuvrability, reasons of fuel management—you might want to build a different type of hull.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roy, please. You have five minutes.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good day, Mr. Minister. I would like to go back to the question of small craft harbours. Mr. Da Pont's answer struck me as being entirely wrong. I will ask you this question: in the last few years or recently has anyone constructed any small craft harbours anywhere at all in Canada?

Hon. Geoff Regan: I will let Mr. Da Pont answer that question, but there have been investments in many small craft harbours.

• (1215)

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Fine, but have any new harbours been built?

Mr. George Da Pont: No, nothing entirely new has been built. Still, quite a lot of new infrastructure has been built to replace broken-down elements.

Hon. Geoff Regan: At the moment we have a good deal of fisheries infrastructure, but we lack resources. Considering the situation, I do not find it surprising that we are trying to maintain the infrastructure we already have, and not building new infrastructure.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: That answers my question. As for capital works and infrastructures, in 2005-06 we can see a decrease of 6% in the budget, simply for small craft harbour infrastructure.

You say you are investing \$20 million a year. In fact, that is \$20 million less \$5.9 million, corresponding to the decrease in the overall budget for repairs and maintenance of small craft harbour. That means, Mr. Da Pont and Mr. Minister, a decrease of 5.9%; add to that the 5% per year cuts in the Fisheries and Oceans budget the government is asking you to carry out; in addition to this cut, we note that the department's overall budget will not be increased during fiscal 2004-05. Thus, the department will have \$30,000 less, and adjusted for cost of living increases, that represents an additional cut of around 2.5%.

Looking at these figures, I do not see how you can solve the small craft harbour problem. It is all very well, Mr. Minister, to tell me you are going to defend the idea in Cabinet, that you are going down on your knees to Mr. Goodale to get the money, but they are cutting your budget by 7% every year, taking the cost of living into account.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, I already mentioned the fact that we were pleased to get increases in several sectors of our budget, particularly in February. I am pleased with these significant increases. It is an important indication that the government supports the fisheries and oceans sector.

Still, as I said, I intend to seek other resources for the small craft harbours. I do not foresee any situation in which I would be on my knees. I would like, however, to say very clearly to my colleagues that the department has received budget increases in certain respects. Our budget has been very successful because of the efforts of many, not only my own. I assure you that I have made a serious effort and for that, I appreciate the support of my fellow members.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I would like to come back to the conference on overfishing. That is quite a different aspect. You were telling us just now that many of the foreign ships are no longer fishing, but perhaps that is because we had a big clearance sale and nothing much is left.

What concrete measures are foreign countries going to take to stop overfishing? Overfishing is the subject of international negotiations. Canada must not be the only country that does something about it. What concrete measures have been negotiated with foreign countries in the zone beyond 200 miles, on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks, and on the Flemish Cap?

• (1220)

[English]

The Chair: Minister, perhaps you wouldn't mind keeping your answer reasonably brief so that other members can get a question in. That's not a criticism of previous answers; it's just that Monsieur Roy's time is up.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Well, it probably would be a fair criticism, Mr. Chairman, if it were to be one.

I appreciate my honourable colleague's interest in the conference. It was a worthwhile conference.

[Translation]

It is important to understand that in the past when our country has succeeded in advancing our fishing interests, it has usually been thanks to efforts made and discussions held with other countries. Take the 200-mile limit, for example. Even though, in the 1970s, our country wanted the limit to be the continental shelf, the fact is that the international consensus favoured a 200-mile limit. That was much better than a 12-mile limit, obviously. It was not what our country wanted in the 1970s, but it was still considerable progress. We must try to continue such advances.

I would suggest that you look at our web site, where you will find the ministerial declaration. I will read a passage to you. I am sorry, I only have it in English.

[English]

We will implement in a timely fashion the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation agreed to at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in relation to achieving sustainable fisheries.

We will work within RFMO/As

—regional fish management organizations and associations—

of which the State or REIO we respectively represent is a member, to review and strengthen them, where necessary, in a manner that does not overlap or duplicate the mandate of other existing RFMO/As....

I think there are a number of areas here. If you look through the declaration, there are some important advances, I think, and some important agreements that ministers agree to there. It was very

important to give direction to the conference as a whole to work on actions.

Can I say that I'm satisfied, that we don't have more work to do, that the problem is solved? Obviously not.

[Translation]

Obviously, the problem still exists, but our efforts on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks have been successful. We must continue to exert diplomatic pressure. I am eagerly awaiting the report of the Advisory Panel on the Sustainable Management of Straddling Fish Stocks on the Grand Banks. This panel is looking at what we are doing now and will make recommendations to improve our future strategy.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roy.

Mr. Stoffer.

[English]

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, you said earlier, and correct me if I'm wrong, that no foreign vessels are fishing within our 200-mile limit. Is that correct?

Mr. David Bevan: There are very few. There are some foreign requests that deal with squid at this time, but they're only ones that I'm aware of. That would be in the hake box on the Scotian Shelf; there were requests to use foreign vessels for that. But that's one or two out of all the many hundreds of Canadian vessels that are fishing.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: The reason I bring it up is that, as I said earlier, Canadian fish processed in China all of a sudden become a product of China. It's beyond me how that happens. It's the same as reflagging a foreign vessel, putting a Canadian flag up the mast and calling it a Canadian vessel.

In my own view, it's simply a misrepresentation of the facts. The reality is that the *Inukshuk* is owned not by a Canadian entity but by foreign entities. Those are the facts, as we know.

Minister, you and your staff get \$1.5 billion approximately for the preservation of fish and fish habitat. That's more or less what you do. I was really surprised a few months ago when the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board allowed EnCana to change the lease agreements that it has to allow cement pads and piping within the bottom of the ocean, saying that taking it out will cause environmental concern. Then it must have caused environmental concern when it was put in, if that's the argument that is going to be used.

I'm wondering, sir, if your job is the protection of fish and fish habitat, and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is allowed to make a decision that affects, in my view, the environment of the oceans, which it's your job to protect for fish and fish habitat, how does this thing happen? I mean, the lease agreements were that if you brought it out, you bring it in. And for some reason, in the middle of all of this, changes are made. What role do you play in that, if any at all, and can you explain to me how this happens?

My last question is for Ms. Watson-Wright regarding BIO and science. We know that there's a cut to science. When people are asking for more scientific information and more knowledge of what goes on, we're getting a cut to science.

Overall, what's happening in regard to science information? And what about the future of BIO—please, and thank you.

• (1225)

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and through you to Mr. Stoffer.

Certainly the preservation of fish is our key priority. There are a number of important priorities that we deal with, and of course I've talked before about the importance of the oceans action plan—which Mr. Murphy of course has responsibility for, and he's done a very good job with it.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Hear, hear!

Hon. Geoff Regan: I'm pleased to see that he agrees with my assessment.

But, Mr. Chairman, the fact is that the way this worked with the offshore petroleum board is that they sought the advice of this department on this issue. The advice of the department was that taking it out would do more damage than leaving it, that there wasn't significant damage being caused by it being there, but taking it out would disrupt things.

I think Ms. Kirby can tell us more about that, as well as about BIO.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Chair, may I interject for one second?

Hon. Geoff Regan: You may not like that conclusion, but the point is that the conclusion of the department and of our scientists in looking at this was that it was not a big problem to have it there. We concluded that taking it out would disrupt the sea bottom more than leaving it there and would cause more problems.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Then you should answer the question about placing it in the ocean in the first place. Wouldn't that have disrupted the natural environment?

Hon. Geoff Regan: As you know, if you go out and put a hook in the water, you're disrupting the natural environment in one sense, one could say, so there are things that cause disruption. There are things we do, as human beings, that affect our environment, obviously.

The question is, what are the long-term effects? What actions can we take to mitigate things? Will it have an unreasonable effect? Can the bottom recover from the effects relatively quickly? I think it's important that you measure those kinds of things and act in a way that is reasonable and rational in making these decisions.

I know Ms. Kirby can add more, if you'd like to hear it, sir.

Ms. Sue Kirby (Assistant Deputy Minister, Oceans and Habitat, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): I think you've largely answered it, Minister. The offshore board is the regulator. We do provide advice to them, but they are the ones who make the decision.

And yes, we did have some concerns, but it is a matter of significance. Particularly in the most recent decision, we thought it

was a choice between the lesser of two evils and that leaving it there would do less damage than removing it at this point in time.

The BIO is Wendy's area.

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright (Assistant Deputy Minister, Science, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Thank you, Mr. Minister.

In terms of the science budget, there are reductions in some areas, but there are increases in other areas. In fact, what we'll see is a realignment or redirection of some of our resources.

In terms of BIO, in fact it's probably never been in better shape. We are in the process of constructing a new lab, new buildings, and reinvesting in the old, so things are looking good at BIO.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cuzner.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): It should be Mr. Matthews.

The Chair: I'm sorry. My apologies, Mr. Matthews. I'm surprised you didn't chop me up there.

Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): That's quite all right.

Mr. Chairman, we can't have a Cape Bretoner getting in front of a Newfoundlander. That's unacceptable.

Mr. Minister, I want to thank you and your officials for coming. First of all, I want to thank you for the good news last week of an increase in the gulf cod allocation. That was certainly positive for harvesters and fish plant workers who depend upon that resource for income. The stock is certainly moving in the right direction, but as I expressed to you privately, I had a concern about the re-entry strategy for mobile gear. From my own personal point of view, I felt that in the name of conservation and stock rebuilding we should have certainly delayed that re-entry strategy for another time.

When you comment, perhaps you can give me the rationale for why your department decided to go with a re-entry strategy for what many people determined to be not conservation-friendly technology.

Having said that, I want to ask you and your officials to give us an update on the shrimp resource around our shores of Newfoundland and Labrador. What shape is the shrimp resource in now, following up on Mr. Hearn's comments in his questioning?

• (1230)

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And through you to Mr. Matthews, I appreciate your comments about the gulf cod. On the re-entry of mobile gear, you'll note that they only enter at certain levels, and all mobile gear vessels, of course, are not factory freezer trawlers. Some are much smaller in size and they don't have the same effect. Different gears have different impacts, and in fact, I think it's fair to say that any gear type can be negative. It's our position, as you know, that there is no gear type that is inherently destructive, that all can be destructive if misused, and it's important that we manage the use of each of these gear types in a way that preserves the resources.

In terms of the shrimp resources around Newfoundland and Labrador, they are healthy. They haven't been healthy in the last few years, and Mr. Bevan will tell us more about that.

Mr. David Bevan: And perhaps Wendy Watson-Wright as well.

But I think thus far we have seen no substantive change in the resource. It's stable. It's able to sustain the large fishery, and science would indicate to us that this will be continuing for the foreseeable future.

We've also seen that the resources in the NAFO regulatory area are able to sustain a significant fishery, and there are some positive signs in the 3L shrimp area that will be considered by NAFO at the upcoming annual meeting in September.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Wendy is happy to defer to David, I think.

Do you have a comment, Wendy?

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: I would agree with what was said.

Hon. Geoff Regan: That's quite a debate.

Mr. Bill Matthews: Thank you very much.

Minister, I want to have my comments recognized on the re-entry strategy for mobile gear. I know there have been pockets of harvesters who have been lobbying for a few years to have that, and as well I understand the FFAW has been onside to try to get that. But from a conservation point of view, I have a personal difficulty with that.

Another issue I raised with your officials a few weeks ago was fish allocations to companies. Just a few short weeks ago again, I and a delegation from the town of Harbour Breton met with you and the deputy minister and some other people from your department to try to find a future for a town that's been shut down because of a corporate decision to shut down their plant and to take the fish that's been traditionally processed there to another location. As a matter of fact, they're on the verge of shutting down a second plant now in Fortune, which you're very much aware of.

At that point, I raised a concern with your officials. You renew these allocations on an annual basis, and it appears to me that you could give a company, say, 30,000 metric tonnes of fish on the premise that they would operate three plants—I'm just taking numbers out of the air—and you could renew that allocation next year, but the company might only operate one or two plants. There seems to be something fundamentally wrong, because I think there has to be some accountability by the company to your department as to what their operations are before you allocate that fish again in a future year.

I think you know what I'm saying. I'm just wondering if you as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans would seriously consider requiring fish companies to advise your department of their operational processing plans for any respective year before you allocate a pound of fish to them.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, I want to note, through you to Mr. Matthews, that as you say, you have brought this issue to me about Harbour Breton many times. Certainly on the day we got the news of the plant closure you talked to me, and we've talked many times since. I had the pleasure of meeting with the committee that came here from Harbour Breton to talk about this issue.

My department is examining what might be possibilities for that area. We've talked about shrimp before. We know there isn't an increase this year, but next year there may be an increase, and we'll see. We've talked about whether that's a possibility. Certainly the impact on the Connaigre Peninsula of that closure is one that deeply concerns you, and it concerns me also.

As you know, for a long time we've had a policy whereby the department does not tell fishermen where to land their product, and the same applies to the companies that have licences. Licence holders aren't told where to land their product; they can land it where they want. That's a policy I would not interfere with without a lot of debate and consideration about the impacts changing that would have across the region.

Having said that, in that kind of debate the views of members like you are important and appreciated, and it's something you have raised a number of times very effectively.

● (1235)

Mr. Bill Matthews: Can I have one quick one on seals? I asked officials weeks ago about this. They have a seal survey whose results have been in the department for a considerable period of time. I asked officials about it some weeks ago, but still haven't heard how many seals are off our shores. I'd like to know the answer, please.

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: The stock status has been done. I thought the stock status report had been released. If it hasn't been, it will be at some point.

The stocks are in very healthy shape. Essentially, the total population is almost the same as it was the last time we did the assessment, which was in 1999-2000, and the total pup production is very similar to the last time as well, around a million.

Mr. Bill Matthews: Pup production is a million, but how many seals are there?

Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright: There are between five and six million.

Hon. Geoff Regan: It's between five and six million. We heard from anti-sealing groups and groups such as the U.S. Humane Society, who claimed that in fact this was a cull and that it was dangerous for the herd, and we insisted it wasn't dangerous to the herd. In fact, I think this is more evidence that this is the case, that there's not a question of conservation here. I would hope those companies in the U.S. that have joined the boycott would look at the reality of the situation and look at the fact that some of the hysteria created by these anti-sealing organizations has a lot more to do with their fundraising efforts than it has to do with reality.

Mr. Bill Matthews: Absolutely. Thank you.

The Chair: In fact, that's absolutely true. It was just last week that the New York Humane Society, I believe it was, referred to our killing of whitecoats, which is absolutely ridiculous. They're living in a dream world if they believe that, but I guess that brings in money for them.

The next round will be to Mr. Cummins, Monsieur Blais, Mr. Stoffer, and possibly Mr. Cuzner.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, in your presentation today you said that no fisheries officers are being pulled from fisheries conservation protection in the Fraser River, and you said we'll realign enforcement activities to those areas where they're most critically needed, such as the Fraser River.

It was obvious from Mr. Williams' report, our report, and you can go back to John Fraser's report in 1994, that there are insufficient numbers of fisheries officers on the Fraser River. Furthermore, I don't think I can identify an area in British Columbia where there is a surplus of fisheries officers. How do you intend to improve fisheries enforcement on the Fraser River this year if you don't increase the number of fisheries officers?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, I talked about increasing our efforts there, focusing in that area, but also about reallocating. Perhaps I didn't talk about reallocating internally and finding dollars in the department. I've asked the deputy to find the dollars we need to get this done.

But clearly, of all the areas in British Columbia, certainly the Fraser River is one where there is the most concern and where I think it's reasonable to focus considerable efforts.

Mr. John Cummins: Minister, at this point it's not just a matter of finding money; it's a matter of finding bodies. You just don't create fisheries officers out of thin air. How are you going to ensure that there is a sufficient number of fisheries officers on the Fraser River to do the job this year?

Hon. Geoff Regan: For example, you're aware of the fact that we are changing. I talked earlier about the issue of culverts and cottages and so forth. Some of the folks who are coming out of areas like the Prairies, for example, will be available to be in places like the Fraser River.

Mr. Bevan, do you want to add something?

Mr. David Bevan: We're looking at options that you've suggested in terms of organizational changes and the need to deal with the limiting factor right now, which is operating money, to provide more

flexibility within the organization to move people from point A to point B to respond to events as they develop, and to have the operating funds to allow them to do that.

So those are the kinds of issues we think will help them to have presence on the river. That's really what we need, the presence on the river at the right time and at the right place. That can be achieved through other means in terms of using operational—

● (1240)

Mr. John Cummins: We'll watch with interest your efforts in this area, Mr. Bevan, and I'm going to remain skeptical.

Another issue of considerable concern in British Columbia is the handling of the Cultus Lake fishery. The impression that is prevalent on the west coast, and I think it's a fairly well documented one, is that the commercial fleet will be giving up about \$35 million worth of access to the fishery to protect about 10 Cultus Lake sockeye. It seems that the department thinks it can rehabilitate Cultus Lake sockeye solely through harvest rate management.

I don't know anybody outside the department who agrees with that opinion. I'd like to know what your opinion is, minister.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Well, I think it's important to remember that we are investing about \$1 million to assist with the recovery of Cultus Lake and Sakinaw Lake sockeye salmon. That's an important investment. It isn't just by reducing the commercial fishery that we're trying to restore these fish.

Mr. John Cummins: What else are you intending to do, minister?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Well, I'll let Mr. Bevan talk about some of the efforts the \$1 million is being invested in that I think are important and worthwhile activities. Obviously, part of the challenge throughout the sockeye fishery—and other fisheries—if you want to preserve salmon is to ensure that the waterway is clear, that fish passages are there. You're aware that many things can impact on salmon habitat and other fish habitat. It's important to invest in protecting that.

Mr. John Cummins: The key issue, though, is—

Hon. Geoff Regan: Now, if you're saying that we shouldn't worry about biodiversity and shouldn't invest in a particular species or a particular population of sockeye, that we should let it go in favour of the commercial fishery.... I think you have to have balance.

Mr. John Cummins: Well, no, that's not—

Hon. Geoff Regan: I think we have to protect the diversity of the populations. I think if you look at the wild salmon policy, you'll find a very positive approach to how we do that.

Mr. Bevan can answer with more details.

Mr. John Cummins: Well, if I could respond to you, Minister, what the department has been suggesting basically is a huge shutdown of the commercial fishery. The Commercial Salmon Advisory Board and the Sport Fishing Advisory Board reckon that the actions of the department are going to save perhaps 10 Cultus Lake sockeye, but they're going to cost in access about \$30 million worth of fish. The real question is, what are you going to do to control the predator fish in Cultus Lake? That's got to be critical. Habitat problems in Cultus, again, are critical. What are you going to do about that? Certainly, simply shutting down the commercial fishery isn't going to save the fish.

The Chair: That will be your last question, Mr. Cummins.

Mr. Minister.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chairman, part of our investment is in both of those issues, as a matter of fact—the predator issue in the lake as well as the habitat of the lake. Sakinaw Lake has predator control issues. We are investing in these areas. It's important that we do so.

I think it's important to remember that we have a law called the Species at Risk Act. I took a decision a year ago or thereabouts not to list those two particular populations but to invest in the recovery of those populations to ensure that the commercial fishery can continue, albeit in a more restricted fashion. I think the measures we have taken represent a reasonable balance between the protection of our environment and trying to ensure that the commercial fishery can continue for the benefit of people who rely on that fishery.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cummins.

On behalf of the committee, Minister, it's one thing to have enforcement officers on the river, sitting there in boats watching infractions take place and not seizing illegal nets, not seizing illegal catch, not seizing illegal boats, and things of that nature. That has happened. It's another thing to have enforcement officers on the river enforcing the law. I think that is what the committee is stressing.

Monsieur Blais, cinq minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I still do not understand how it is that you can find \$35 million for small craft harbour infrastructure which does not yet exist, and yet not find the same or more money for the existing small craft harbours, which are in danger of disappearing. They are not going to vanish: they are simply going to deteriorate gradually to such a point that you will have to do what you have done in recent months and years, put up fences. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans' solution for deteriorating small craft harbours is to put fences around them.

How can you find \$35 million for infrastructure that does not yet exist, and yet not find the same or more money for the existing harbours?

•(1245)

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, we are continuing to invest in small craft harbours. These are substantial investments. We have a number of priorities and small craft harbours are near the top. That is why we are continuing to spend.

I do not agree with my hon. colleague, Mr. Blais, who seems to think that the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is not a priority. I think it is necessary to respond to the requirements of the agreement concluded with the Government of Nunavut and to look at the situation in that territory, which is not really the same as elsewhere in Canada. The situation there requires more investment, most urgently.

I am aware there are other places that also have great needs, and we are continuing to invest in small craft harbours on both coasts and wherever there is an active fishery. On the other hand, I do not agree that we should ignore the needs and concerns of Nunavut, our newest territory.

Mr. Raynald Blais: I am sorry, Mr. Minister. You may have misinterpreted what I said. I asked how it was that money could be found for that which does not exist but not for that which already exists. I was not challenging the priority of Nunavut or anything else.

I would like to tackle another subject, Mr. Minister, and that is seal hunting. What do you intend to do so as not to repeat this year's error with respect to the Magdalen Islands, when you decided to set a date that was unfair to the seal hunters from those islands? What are you going to do to avoid the mistake your department made this year?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Blais, the fishers from the Magdalen Islands wanted the fishery to open on March 25, while those in Newfoundland and Labrador wanted it to open on April 8 or 9. There is competition between the Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries.

After studying the situation this year, we think that for next year there should be separate quotas for the two fleets. I am worried not only about the problems of the fishers from the Magdalen Islands, but also those from Newfoundland and Labrador, who have to travel long distances for the seal hunt.

It is obviously a dangerous hunt. My department and I are trying our best to limit the dangers.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Could you explain just what you mean by separate quotas?

•(1250)

Hon. Geoff Regan: No.

Mr. David Bevan: It is not possible at this time. We have to consult all the fleets to initiate the dialogue needed for establishing quotas. There will be a big meeting on this subject in St. John's, Newfoundland, in September I believe. We will follow a procedure like that used in 2003 to establish quotas for the fleets.

Mr. Raynald Blais: The seal hunters of the Magdalen Islands have said they want a quota established in order to avoid the problem of opening days, which can be good for one side and bad for the other, as was the case this year. Is it your intention to correct the situation we went through this year?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Yes, that is right. As I said, we want there to be separate quotas.

[English]

The Chair: We have nine minutes left. I'd like to offer Mr. Stoffer three minutes, Mr. Simms three minutes, and then Mr. Kamp three minutes. Since they have sat patiently waiting, I think each of them should have an opportunity. Get your best two questions in order.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I'll just narrow it down to one to allow my colleague Mr. Kamp the chance to speak.

I wonder if you could please brief the committee on what DFO is doing in regard to when we're going to have a constructive public viewing concerning ballast exchanges within our waters.

Hon. Geoff Regan: My honourable colleague Mr. Stoffer is aware that we have received in the budget \$28 million for the oceans action plan. Part of that deals with this. Of course, we have alien species funding in the budget of \$85 million. This is an important concern to deal with. These alien species come in and cause all kinds of problems, whether it be the tunicates that affect mussels in Prince Edward Island, or zebra mussels that affect areas of the Great Lakes.

Sue Kirby can tell you more about that.

Ms. Sue Kirby: As I believe you know, the lead on this issue is Transport Canada. Through the oceans action plan we have provided some funding that Transport will be using to accelerate the process. We are very hopeful that will arrive shortly.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

Mr. Kamp.

The Chair: It's Mr. Simms' turn.

Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Simms.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of questions. Actually, I sat here because I'm in front of Mr. Cuzner's notes, so here we go. I'd like to thank Mr. Cuzner for leaving his notes behind.

One of the things we want to touch on is the fisheries officers in regard to salmon. I want to thank the minister for recently coming to my riding in central Newfoundland, where a big issue is river management groups that are represented there. Perhaps you could comment on the money allocated in the budget for the salmon endowment fund. How does that relate to the issue of enforcement?

Hon. Geoff Regan: The salmon endowment fund really responds to something we've heard from MPs, and particularly from the Atlantic Salmon Federation, for the last number of years. They feel they need more moneys to deal with the stewardship of rivers.

This involves things to improve the habitat. We spend money to try to fix up an area that has been damaged or polluted in some fashion, or where there has been interference with the fish passage. But it also has a lot to do with education—investing in teaching people about how the salmon spawn, how they grow, and what they need in their development and their passage to and from the ocean. We've found that those stewardship efforts have paid big dividends.

Earlier I talked about compliance, and sometimes it's better to achieve compliance through education. Sometimes it's more effective than trying to come in with a stick. This is an example of that. It doesn't mean you don't need to have enforcement officers. That remains a challenge in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's one that I hear about from members like you. You feel there is a need for more officers there, more river guardians.

We've made a major investment this year in the Atlantic Salmon Endowment Fund. I think it will be very important in terms of habitat, and certainly this is a challenge we will go on with. It will continue in relation to river guardians and fisheries officers on the rivers.

David, do you want to add to that?

• (1255)

Mr. David Bevan: I'll make one minor point: more eyes help. The more people who are engaged in shared stewardship on river systems, the more people see, and the more there's an opportunity to have infractions reported back to fishery officers and guardians.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's a good point.

In the conference you recently attended in St. John's, overfishing was discussed. We seemed to focus on the North Atlantic. What was the feeling from the Asian countries? How did they feel about overfishing, and what was their action plan on overfishing? I mean Australia, Japan, and such nations.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Australia feels similar to us about this issue. They have strong concerns about fishing activities going on outside their 200-mile limit and near them. For instance, there's the issue of Patagonian toothfish near their waters, which have been overfished and are having problems. We've heard about orange ruff in the Indian Ocean. We've heard about other species in the Pacific and the Atlantic. One of the countries that were strong in supporting our view and supporting firm measures in the fishery was Australia.

I was pleased with the approach of the Japanese fisheries minister. He seemed keen to move forward to a better system. Commissioner Borg, the European Union commissioner, actually was quite positive in his approach. I'm trying to think of the other Asian countries that were there besides Japan and Australia. The Indonesian minister was onside 100% with trying to move forward.

There are still measures that need to be stronger. We need to have more attention on this, and we need to have pressure put on by the populations of other countries. We're all aware that some vessels from some countries have presented problems for us, and we need people in those countries to put pressure on their own governments. That's one of the reasons we want to invest in a global advocacy campaign.

I appreciate the work of the World Wildlife Fund, which commented positively on the results of the conference. I think this organization can play an important role across the world in drawing attention to this and seeing that countries impose real sanctions, stiff penalties that are a real deterrent to this kind of activity.

The Chair: Thank you.

The final question goes to Mr. Kamp.

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

Let me return again to the issue of enforcement on the Fraser River. I understand the minister's reassurance that there's going to be enforcement there this year. Like my colleague, Mr. Cummins, I'm from Missouri on that one. I'd like to see it happen.

I'd like to talk a bit about the process. Last year and I think in previous years, there was an enforcement agreement above Mission with some of the local bands. There is a notion that enforcement agreements are not about enforcement, they're about avoiding enforcement. In fact, I might even have heard that sentiment from officials in your own department. I'd like you to comment on that and ask if it is the plan for 2005, again, to put in place an enforcement agreement.

Hon. Geoff Regan: You're right, we have had enforcement agreements with some first nations. The first one we had didn't work so well. Since then, generally speaking, they have been effective and have resulted in improvements.

Achieving compliance is our objective. Enforcement is part of our strategy, but our objective is compliance. We are working in a variety of ways to achieve that. We have found that in many cases enforcement agreements have been successful. Should we keep looking for more and better ways to ensure we have success in conserving salmon? Absolutely, but this is one of the measures that have worked well for the most part.

Mr. Randy Kamp: So you believe that it worked well in 2004, and you plan to put another one in place in 2005. Is this the case?

• (1300)

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Kamp, you're trying to put words in my mouth. I've said that generally speaking, in past years.... I said that the first one we had, as Mr. Bevan indicated to me, was not all that successful. Generally speaking, they have been helpful and have

increased compliance. Therefore, it is a mechanism that we continue to use; it is not the only mechanism. That's why I've directed the department to ensure that we have increased resources in that area and that it moves people there, as need be, to get the job done.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Do you believe it was successful? Of the successful years you're referring to in general, was one of them 2004?

Hon. Geoff Regan: I said that agreements had been successful. I think the point is that there are different agreements and different organizations, and each has to be measured and examined on its own merits.

Mr. Bevan, would you like to add to that?

Mr. David Bevan: We did have more charges and more nets seized, for example, than we did in 2003, but clearly more monitoring has to be engaged and we need to have better catch monitoring systems, etc. Those elements have to be brought to this problem as well, and we need to bring it all together in terms of more monitoring, more enforcement, and more catch monitoring, coupled with a reasonable understanding of how communities are going to work. I think that's what's needed to resolve the issue. We were missing some of those in the reports from Williams and from you in 2004.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're out of time. In closing, we desperately pray that you and your department will in fact review, and take very seriously, our Fraser River report and Mr. Williams' report. There were a lot of problems identified there, and they have to be fixed or they're going to damage the resource in perpetuity.

Committee members, we'll meet on the estimates for the fourth and final time this Thursday.

As per our agreement, we will concentrate on small craft harbours, which you'll be pleased to know, Mr. Da Pont. If we run out of questions on small craft harbours, which I know is hard to believe, we will ask other departmental officials to be here to carry on with some of the other questions we have.

Thank you, Minister, and all the officials, for being here today.

We're adjourned.

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