

ment Program have made progress on pollution prevention in recent years.

Despite this program, many parts of the river basin are in need of urgent clean-up action. For example, high levels of heavy metals have been found in non-migratory fish in the lower Fraser River close to waste treatment plants and industrial sites.

The document, which is supposed to be the federal government's bible of environmental clean-up initiatives, remains essentially silent on the future of the Fraser River Estuary Management Program. Nothing is mentioned there about a commitment to continue the funding of the program. There has been no recognition with regard to the development of management strategies for other parts of the Fraser River basin. There have been no specifics in the document as to the assignment of powers of enforcement which could be applied to the Fraser River Estuary Management Program.

• (1815)

To make my point once again, there is no commitment in this green plan for the federal government to continue to fund the Fraser River Estuary Management Program and no commitment for the government to in fact expand the mandate of the program.

I might add that in a detailed document, which my colleagues and I and the New Democratic Party released on November 29, 1990, we did in fact call for an integrated management structure to create agencies similar to the current Fraser River Estuary Management Program, which should be developed, as we pointed out, for all areas of the Fraser River. The FREMP only takes care of the lower part of the Fraser River and we have called for the development of parallel or similar agencies to look at the mid-Fraser and the upper reaches of the Fraser River that are also affected by industrial and domestic sources of pollution.

The reason that I wanted to pursue the question further today is to ask the government whether it has made any final decisions as to the ongoing funding and financing of what has been a very, very valuable environmental initiative, one whose future is currently up in the air. The program has had to wind down because at this point, at least to my knowledge, there has been no final commitment to put that funding into place, nor has there

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been any final commitment, as I mentioned, to expand the mandate of the program to create similar agencies.

Perhaps the member who will be presenting the rebuttal in just a moment will want to discuss just what plans the government has in place for the ongoing funding of the current FREMP and what possible initiatives it is willing to commit itself to at this time in terms of demanding or developing an expanded mandate for these kinds of environmental initiatives.

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words on the very important issue of the environmental well-being of the Fraser River system and in response to the hon. member's question.

First of all, I would like to assure the hon. member that the government is well aware of the environmental needs of the Fraser River system and is well aware of the stress under which it is operating.

I would like to take the opportunity, if I may, to thank my caucus colleagues from the province of British Columbia who have been very, very diligent in ensuring that the minister and his officials and myself, as parliamentary secretary, are kept constantly informed on the needs of the river system. I might say, in return, that I appreciate their ongoing commitment to the environmental agenda of the Government of Canada.

As the hon. member who asked the question is well aware, there have indeed been ongoing talks with the province of British Columbia, particularly with the new minister who is responsible in British Columbia for the environment. We are currently negotiating a three year renewal of the Fraser River Estuary Management Program. It is a program that should include an expanded budget and an expanded membership. I would anticipate that there would be some hard information provided as a result of those talks in the very near future.

I think, as most members of this House understand, the Fraser River Estuary Management Program really addresses only a small part of a very major issue. Although it is a major achievement in itself in terms of interjurisdictional co-operation, it is really the entire Fraser River ecosystem that must be considered and that is very much what is on the agenda at the moment. The