

Motions

at certain harbours where improvements are needed to meet the expanding demands of both the tourism and the fishing industries.

The following specific measures have been taken. There will be an increase from \$48.5 million to \$70 million. This is a 44 per cent increase to the ongoing level of funding assistance for the federal Small Craft Harbours program under which the federal Government manages some 1,415 commercial fishing and 840 recreational boat harbours throughout Canada. This 44 per cent increase will be in what is called the operating level or the A-Base budget.

The launching of a special three-year infrastructure revitalization program with additional funding of \$85 million over three years is aimed at reducing the large backlog of accumulated damage and deterioration to harbours essential to commercial fishermen, recreational boaters and the communities which rely on them. This will bring our harbours up to a level at which they can again be used.

The use of funds for emergency repairs had risen from 40 per cent to 90 per cent of regular maintenance budgets since 1982. As Hon. Members will recall, the maintenance budget had been at the level of about \$46 million. It was simply not adequate to repair harbours over the years. Emergency repairs were taking up most of the budgets. Last year alone, it was necessary to place safety barricades at 50 different locations. If these trends had been allowed to continue, 150 harbours would have closed over the next five years.

Under the new program there will be room for more community input. The users themselves—the fishermen—will be able to advise us on how to do improvements and where to put new harbours, as well as what kind of programs there should be for individual harbours. It will give fishermen and other users a more direct role in the management and operation of their harbours. At the same time, there will be important benefits to cost effectiveness. Under this approach, the federal Government will assist in the formation of harbour authorities appointed by the fishermen themselves and in some cases by local governments. In all cases, funding will be sufficient to keep all harbours up to standards of safety prescribed by the federal Small Craft Harbours program.

It is expected that some 500 harbours, which account for 80 per cent of the fish caught in Atlantic Canada, will opt for this local input process. Maintenance projects are far too costly and complex for small harbour authorities to assume on their own, so these will be assumed by the federal Government. Local fishermen will do small maintenance projects which they will be able to do quickly. They will not need to wait months and months for small craft harbours officials to go to the region to carry out these projects.

The establishment of a grassroots user-management system will allow the Government to match programs more precisely to local needs and priorities while reaping the cost-saving benefits of local tendering and procurement. The fishermen

themselves will be able to do repairs locally through local contractors under this new program.

The Government has come up with a program which was required for small craft harbours across Canada. As I noted earlier in my remarks, free trade will be coming onstream within the next couple of years. We will need these small craft harbours in order to accommodate the very expanded activity which will be going on in the fishing communities throughout Canada. I for one look forward to the benefits this program will have for my community.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) noted in the Throne Speech that we needed to place more emphasis on the safety of both fishermen and equipment. This new program has responded to that.

On behalf of the fishermen in my community, I wish to thank the Government for having come up with this program. It has been extremely well received in my community. The announcements I have been able to make over the past few months have been very well received. The fishermen are looking forward to working in closer co-operation with Small Craft Harbour officials. I see this as being a very positive approach on the part of the Government and I congratulate Small Craft Harbours officials for the way they have met with local communities and fishermen and for the way the program is coming into place.

Mr. Skelly: Madam Speaker, I too would leap for joy if I had found that \$6 million had been spent in my riding since the inception and announcement of the program in June of this year. There is no doubt that spending in Canada is profoundly skewed. I would point to the fact that the Hon. Member did receive \$6 million. I would not ask that one penny less be spent in that riding, indeed, in Atlantic Canada, or in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. There are still facilities there that need further repairs. However, I want equal treatment for the West Coast. There should be a more thoughtful allocation of resources by the Government. The Hon. Member might want to give us some indication of when the important needs of other regions of the country might be attended to.

● (1200)

The Hon. Member said I was cynical. I am not. It was the committee that he chaired which said that the operation of small craft harbours was a disaster. The committee was most critical of the fact that the Conservative Government was prepared to do nothing about it. Does he stand by that?

The third item is that of independent harbour authorities and the fact that if you do not form a harbour authority, it does not matter whether you have need or not, you are not on the priority list. Some communities cannot afford to take on the responsibility of a harbour authority. This is a move towards privatization of government infrastructure. This is total nonsense. The Government has already started giving away harbours that the people of Canada built and they, through the Government, should take responsibility for them.