

Government Orders

We have an extremely effective Public Service. We have a very good Coast Guard helicopter service. The employees themselves have recommended many upgrades that could improve the efficiency, effectiveness and cost picture of operation, but the government continuously turns a deaf ear to those suggestions because of the philosophical fixation that I think is really leading to the destruction of our Public Service and in many cases irreparable harm to the country. This is creating an enormous problem.

There is the shutting down of the Cape St. James weather station. This is one of the most important weather stations on the Pacific coast. You cannot travel from one end of that coast without travelling through an extremely bleak area in which there are very few resources and the Cape St. James weather station. All kinds of promises were made about automated facilities that would give good weather briefing, but there is no replacement for a good set of eyes and an Environment Canada weather briefer or meteorologist to give you an indication of what you are going to be facing three hours from now when you arrive right in the middle of that cauldron with no information about what is happening.

They took the weather ships out of the Pacific many years ago. They figured they would put two buoys out there that would transmit weather information. My information is that those buoys are out there but they are floating around and they are really not sure where the heck they are. They break down. The Coast Guard has to use its limited ship resources to try to keep them up on behalf of the atmospheric environmental weather service people. I gather one is floating around broken off the north end of the Queen Charlotte Islands right now. That was a Liberal government contribution to safety, to the travelling public and to the Public Service in Canada.

We have watched a whole litany, and I have focused on the area of transportation safety, closing the Cape St. James weather station, two serious attempts by both governments, the previous Liberal and the present Conservative, to de-staff those lighthouses, and then a political commitment to keep the staff in the lighthouses and upgrade them. No upgrades, but the upgrades that have been going in are designed to facilitate an implementation of a de-staffing scheme which will automate them. This is just ludicrous.

We then have the cutbacks of hovercraft where they decided they wanted them both parked in Vancouver and

leave the whole of the Straits of Georgia, with all its reefs and shallow waters, where ships cannot penetrate to look for people out there who are lost. The hovercraft goes to Vancouver and it leaves the area I represent totally left out of that very valuable hovercraft service.

We then watched the suggested privatization of Coast Guard helicopters. A bad idea. We are now hearing things about the privatization of flight service stations. This is a worse idea, if you can get worse. We get to a situation where over and over and over again they are prepared to demoralize the Public Service, to cut that service and cause enormous harm.

• (1620)

While I have the opportunity, in my closing remarks I would like to talk about fisheries and oceans.

On the west coast of British Columbia we are currently going through a process by which the Government of Canada is working on an aboriginal fisheries strategy. We understand how that strategy has come into place because of requirements of the Supreme Court of Canada, but the implementation of this has been catastrophic. You could summarize it, as I guess the provincial government has done, by saying no conservation, no consultation, and no compensation.

On the conservation aspect, with the cutbacks over the nine years of this government, cutbacks to staff within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the bad treatment, mistreatment of people in the Public Service in fisheries and oceans, we have a situation where there is an enormous change, one that has to be carried out. Yet with that enormous change it does not have the resources to protect the fisheries resource on the coast of British Columbia.

We want the minister to stand up in this House and explain why there are no stream counts for escapements. It is a blind guess. Why can they not do stream clearing? Why can they not do a whole effective amount of things, not only on the Fraser River where it is extremely important, but along the coast of British Columbia where there are areas that are just absolutely untouched by fisheries and oceans. That is because of the cuts to the Public Service which this government has carried out over the years. It is extremely proud of this, but in being extremely proud of them, it has put that resource in jeopardy.