

[English]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

CALL FOR ENUMERATION REFORM

Mr. Lee Clark (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, before last summer's election becomes just a fleeting but heartwarming memory, I urge Members of the House to give serious consideration to the reform of our electoral process.

Under the current system, voters are enumerated prior to a federal election. This past summer we witnessed the frustration of many voters who were denied the opportunity to vote because they had not been enumerated. For example, some long-term residents of my constituency were away on holidays, were in the midst of harvesting, or for other reasons were not at home when the enumerators called. While some were able to have their names added to the voters' list during the period of revision, others were unable to meet the strict deadlines imposed by our current procedures.

I would ask why a resident of a city such as Brandon, Manitoba, cannot be accompanied by a neighbour to his or her polling place and enumerated on election day. Rural voters have long enjoyed this privilege.

Or perhaps the time has come for Canada to establish a permanent voters' list as is done in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. It has long been argued that such a list would be expensive to maintain. However, I would point out that unanticipated expenses made the most recent enumeration a costly undertaking.

Given the increasing problems, injustices, and costs of our current system of enumeration, I urge all Members of the House to give serious consideration to the implementation of one of the above electoral reforms.

* * *

FISHERIES

WEST COAST SALMON TREATY—MINISTERIAL ACTION WELCOMED

Mr. Ted Schellenberg (Nanaimo-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, one week ago the sports fishermen on Canada's West Coast were in an uproar about the stringent Chinook allocations allowed under the new Pacific salmon treaty. With considerable fortitude, the Fisheries Minister (Mr. Fraser) travelled to B.C. and entered the valley of discontent. It was the first time in many years that West Coast fishermen had actually seen a federal Minister of Fisheries, and the first time in decades that one had actually listened to them.

A week ago today the Minister announced an accommodation within the treaty that calmed the fears of the B.C. sports fishing community. That is the way this Government works. It welcomes positive input, and then acts.

It should be noted that the treaty can still be improved. Accommodations can still be found. The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry should be travelling to the West

S.O. 21

Coast to receive constructive suggestions on the treaty and on other issues. We should be welcoming witnesses to travel to Ottawa to express their concerns.

However, it is important to note that after some 20 years of negotiating, we have a Pacific salmon treaty. Fishermen can plan for the years to come. Our depleted resource can be enhanced. Although we cannot please all of the people all of the time, we can replace inaction with action. Those were our instructions from the Canadian people on September 4, and that is how we will continue to govern.

* * *

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT

NECESSITY TO HELP SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED BUSINESSES

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard-Anjou): Mr. Speaker, lending ceiling allowed under legislation providing for guaranteed loans for business development was reached by mid-January. Since then, no new loans have been authorized. If the small business sector in our economy is to survive, it is absolutely essential that the funds required to continue implementation of the Small Businesses Loans Act be approved. The latest statistics have shown a further increase in the unemployment rate, so that it is clearly urgent to help small businesses create jobs.

If the Minister of State (Small Businesses) (Mr. Bissonnette) is truly concerned about encouraging small business, the most important sector of our economy, he will split Bill C-23 and table forthwith in the House a Bill to authorize the funds required to continue this program. The Liberal Opposition will fully support this amendment, and the remaining amendments to the Small Business Loans Act would then be submitted separately to the House for consideration and free debate.

● (1115)

[English]

The Government is trying to piggyback controversial changes on an important and urgent amendment. Small business is where the most jobs can be created the fastest. If the Government is serious about job creation, which it claims is its first priority, then it will split the Bill amending the SBLA and ask the House to provide money for small business loans to be issued again.

* * *

EXTERNAL AID

NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATION ADVOCATED

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, those who question whether Canadians can see beyond their own national goals and boundaries will find the answer in the response to the tragic famine in Ethiopia.