

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Barry Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, Canada's refugee determination system is admired around the world as one of the world's fairest and most humane and I think the member knows that.

In the little more than three years since its creation, the new Immigration and Refugee Board has handled 55,000 cases to their conclusion. Most of the 280 immigration and refugee board members have backgrounds in immigration, refugee work or law. Before they hear their first case, all members undergo the most extensive training program given to members of any Canadian tribunal.

The minister is well aware of the allegations raised against certain members. He expressed his concerns about these allegations to Mr. Fairweather, the chairman of the Immigration and Refugee Board, in the strongest possible terms.

Mr. Fairweather responded: "The complaints were thoroughly investigated. Several members were removed from the hearing schedule and apologies were issued in another case".

In short, where concerns have been raised, appropriate action has been taken promptly by Mr. Fairweather. If the member has concerns about other particular cases he too should bring those concerns, as he did, to the attention of Mr. Fairweather.

As for the guides which assist members in writing their decisions, the Appeal Division of the Federal Court rejected claims that these guides in any way prejudiced Immigration and Refugee Board decisions. It is time for the hon. member to give this board and its many highly dedicated members the credit they very much deserve.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, the unique Experimental Lakes area in northwestern Ontario has enabled Canadian scientists to conduct world class research on fresh water ecosystems.

This cluster of wilderness lakes has served as an ecological laboratory and has answered several tough environmental questions.

This is the facility that helped convince the public in Canada and the U.S. that phosphates in laundry detergents caused the explosive growth of algae in lakes. This

research was instrumental in convincing policy makers to control the use of phosphates. It is no exaggeration to say that the research at the Experimental Lakes helped save Lake Erie.

The ELA program established that even moderate amounts of industrially generated acid rain damaged Canadian lakes. This information was crucial in the fight for pollution controls on industrial smokestacks.

The ELA program is continuing to do ground-breaking scientific information on the effects on aquatic life by heavy metals. Using its 22 year string of uninterrupted data allows researchers to describe the horrific effects on northern Canada that are likely if the world fails to limit emissions that cause global warming.

Most recently an ELA program has been started, before new hydroelectric dams are built, to determine the amount of the greenhouse gas methane that is released when large tracts of boreal forest land are flooded for the creation of reservoirs.

There does not seem to be any question about the quality of research that is conducted at the ELA. It has led to the publication of 500 scientific papers. Last year its first scientific manager received the internationally prestigious Stockholm Water Prize for work that was conducted there.

No one denies either that pioneering research of this calibre cannot be done on a fiscal shoestring forever. The time has come for the federal government to make a long-term commitment to enable the facility to remain independent and its respected work to continue.

Simply put, the ELA needs money quickly. The Auditor General stated in his annual report released last December that: "The program has clearly reached a critical decision point. The secure financial base is eroded and the program currently relies heavily on unpredictable special external funding sources". Unfortunately, when it comes to money, the government's attention seems focused on other matters.

When I raised this subject in the Oral Question Period on March 12, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, whose responsibility it is to fund the program, apparently did not even know what I was talking about. He mistakenly called the project, "the Edmonton experimental lakes" and then asked: "Is it in Ontario" before admitting that: "Now you really know I have not looked at it