

Oral Questions

and fish plant workers in Canso, Gaultois, Trepassey and elsewhere face the loss of their livelihood?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member might understand that tens of thousands of tonnes of surplus species, including redfish, have been left uncaught by the Canadian fishery in recent years. I believe that in these times where Atlantic communities are facing great hardship because there are fish unavailable from our primary cod stocks, we should take advantage of this uncaught surplus through a pooling arrangement to make it available to firms that will indeed harvest it, process it and market it to create additional employment in Atlantic Canada.

I have made that opportunity available to the established redfish users by giving them a 20 per cent cushion over and above the redfish they have used during the past four years and offered to supplement it on the basis of viable enterprise proposals which they will put before the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans. Other parties can at the same time put forward bids to turn this unused resource to the advantage of Atlantic communities.

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries repeatedly said in the House that Canadians are free and in fact encouraged to go out and fish these so-called under-utilized species. Why is it that when they do and when they invest time and money into developing them, he calls them under-utilized and gives them away at the same time as these fish plants in Atlantic Canada are being allowed to close?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, we make surplus fish stocks available on a priority basis to any Canadian venture and to any Canadian fisherman who wishes to go out and harvest that stock.

The decisions on which these quotas of surplus and non-surplus stocks are based are taken after extensive consultation with all of the interested parties in the Atlantic groundfish fishery. I must repeat the point I made a moment ago: There are tens of thousands of tonnes of redfish which have been left uncaught in the water and I intend to make those available to the large companies and to others who bring forward viable

propositions to land them in Canadian plants and create that economic benefit for Atlantic communities.

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PROPOSED GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, outside the House, the minister said that support was growing for his GST proposal.

Was the Minister of Finance referring to the fact that the provincial Liberal government in Ontario has enthusiastically jumped on his bandwagon by agreeing to collect the federal tax? Can he also confirm that a second provincial Liberal government, namely that of the province of New Brunswick, led by Frank McKenna, is about to jump on this Liberal-Conservative bandwagon of the GST? Can he confirm those facts?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, there is growing all-party support, and I am sure that if there had been a provincial NDP government, it would also be offering to participate in what I think are useful discussions which we initiated as a result of the federal-provincial Finance Ministers' meeting in early December to review different ways that we could co-operate, between the two levels of government, to reduce the compliance burden and to find ways that could simplify the operations of the tax, particularly as far as small businesses are concerned.

I did not imply that the provincial governments were coming on board in support of this particular proposal, but I do want to say that I am very encouraged by the positive attitude on the part of the provincial governments to look for ways of simplifying the operations of the tax.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Finance can explain something else. We learned yesterday that three polls done last year on the GST cost the taxpayers some \$290,000. I wonder if he would agree that this is a waste of money. Why spend that kind of money on polling? I wonder whether or not he will also agree to tell us how much more money they are going to spend on polling on the GST and whether or not those polls will be made public without going through the process of access to information.