

Routine Proceedings

previous recommendations", specifically that (a) "significant elements of a national search and rescue program have not been developed", (b) "time-based search and rescue service standards—are lacking", (c) "expanded use of volunteer and other resources should be pursued" and (d) "greater use of other federal resources for search and rescue is possible"?"

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): I am informed by the Departments of National Defence and Transport as follows:

(a) Relating to the federal government's area of responsibility, the system for directing the operation of SAR activities and resources is well established. There has also been good progress in developing principles and plans for managing the federal portion of the national SAR program. With reference to provincial and territorial governmental involvement in the national SAR program, progress has naturally been slower as the provinces and territories assess the value of their involvement in the co-operative program such as SAR. The federal government will continue to display leadership in this area.

(b) Since the original recommendation of the Auditor General (AG) in 1992, the Department of National Defence (DND) and Transport Canada have consistently maintained that they disagree with the AG recommendation for time-based SAR service standards. Both departments have developed suitable service standards and they do not judge that time-based service standards provide an accurate or effective indicator of program performance.

The Canadian Coast Guard responds to 6,000 to 8,000 search and rescue incidents, of all types, per year. The existing system includes coast guard, other government vessels, the Canadian Marine Rescue Auxiliary, and vessels of opportunity.

The present levels of service indicate that, on average, 90 per cent of lives at risk in marine distress incidents are saved by all responders, private and government. Thus, the Canadian search and rescue system compares favourably with systems of other countries.

The Canadian Coast Guard has published many standards for search and rescue. These standards pertain to operations, co-ordination and planning and performance. The standards apply to the rescue co-ordination centres and sub-centres, primary and secondary vessels, the Canadian Marine Rescue Auxiliary, and other components of the coast guard search and rescue system.

The Canadian Coast Guard has established levels of service (LOS) for search and rescue which focus on quality and extent of service and the effectiveness of response, based on the actual probability for effecting a rescue. On the basis of these LOS criteria, it should be noted that the comparable results between the whole Canadian marine search and rescue system and that of the United States for the period 1986 to 1990 are 90.5 per cent versus 80.3 per cent.

The departments involved in search and rescue are currently enhancing and integrating their information systems in order to improve performance reporting and analysis. Until recently they lacked an automated information system to provide timely data on the performance of federal search and rescue resources. In addition, further sophistication of analysis as to severity of the incident and the type of assistance provided continues to be required for decisions on levels of service, acquisition and management of resources.

A new computer information system called SISAR is currently in use by the Canadian Coast Guard and the Department of National Defence. This new system, which captures accurate and consistent data on search and rescue incidents, establishes an information base which will provide essential information for consideration in the decision-making process concerning the search and rescue program.

(c) In 1978, the Canadian Coast Guard established the Canadian Marine Rescue Auxiliary (CMRA), an all volunteer force. It started with four members in Nova Scotia; by last year it has expanded to five separate associations in all areas of Canada with some 3,300 members and 1,200 vessels. Last year, these volunteers responded to some 1,800 search and rescue incidents—about 25 per cent of the total. The Canadian Coast Guard is continuing to support and expand the capability of this effective group of volunteers.

In 1992, the Canadian Coast Guard's Laurentian regional office was given a mandate to develop an approach to promote the co-operation of local resources to provide search and rescue services on inland waters, advise local resources and ensure technology transfer for search and rescue training, equipment and expertise. The Laurentian regional office set up a successful pilot project in the Lac St. Jean, Quebec area which is being used as a model for other coast guard offices across the country.

The federal government of Canada places a high value on the contribution of volunteer SAR organizations such as the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA) and the Canadian Marine Rescue Auxiliary (CMRA). In the face of increasing fiscal restraint, the participation of volunteers in the national SAR program becomes increasingly important. To illustrate, the government provides \$800,000 per year and the services of 12 Canadian forces training and support personnel to assist in training CASARA volunteers. Specialized SAR equipment is also provided for installation on CASARA aircraft. The federal government search and rescue officials will continue to pursue every opportunity to use volunteers in search and rescue activities.

(d) The interdepartmental committee on search and rescue (ICSAR) was formed to co-ordinate federal involvement in search and rescue activities. Currently, the federal government