

Government Orders

For example, someone close to a brook or a river decides to construct a road or a bridge to gain access to his cottage, camp, or wood lot to cut wood, or a big company does so to gain access to its lodge or whatever. Why bother about this little brook or the river? They build a road or bridge across the river and literally not only alter but destroy the fish habitat.

How does the act deal with some who violate the fish habitat section of the Fisheries Act? The current maximum fine is \$5,000 on summary conviction, and \$10,000 for second and subsequent offences.

I submit, with all respect to my colleagues in the House, that this is ridiculous. We are a generation of Canadians in this Parliament who see people every day in Canada, Canadians young and old, concerned about our environment. Today everyone wants to be seen as a proponent of environmental protection.

Political parties and governments throughout Canada are addressing the issue. We can see it. It is an important one. We realize that this fragile environment in which we live is important for us, our children, and the future Canadians who will enjoy it. We have to protect it.

Under the Fisheries Act we have the sections dealing with fish habitat. Those who violate the act and destroy fish habitat will be fined \$5,000.

In this bill we propose to increase the fine on summary conviction to \$300,000, and on indictment, to \$1 million. For those who choose to violate the act, who decide that they can destroy our fish habitat, it will not simply be the cost of doing business any more.

If you want to build a road across a river to access your camp or woodlot, you had better not destroy the fish habitat because you are going to be liable on summary conviction to a \$300,000 fine, or indictment to \$1 million.

Some will argue that these are steep fines.

[*Translation*]

—they are much too high! No, they are not. If you do not want to comply—We can all talk about protecting our environment—Of course, in the back of my mind, when I talk about protecting fish habitats, I am thinking about my environment in general, but I am also thinking about fishermen and people who must depend on those resources. When I talk about people who build roads

across the river or bridges over streams, I can also talk about people who fish on the high seas, who literally throw harmful material in the water.

People will have to look seriously at how they treat fish habitats in future, because those who decide not to pay attention, who just do not care, will be liable to very heavy fines: \$300,000 and \$1 million—that is real money, even in Saint-Quentin! It is a sizable amount anywhere.

Once Parliament, with the consent of all parties, I hope, has endorsed these amendments to the Fisheries Act, it will send a message to the courts, to our system and to people that the Parliament of Canada is serious about wanting to protect our fish habitats.

[*English*]

We also know that people are guilty of dumping chemicals which are harmful to fish. It has happened in the past and it happened again recently. This was a little more serious. Currently, the fine is \$50,000 for dumping chemicals that are harmful to fish. There is a fine of \$100,000 on second and subsequent offences. There are no provisions for indictment. Not everyone out there is a lawyer and people should understand that when we talk about an offence under summary conviction, it is a less serious charge. It is going to be serious enough in terms of the fine or the jail term that can be imposed. Usually, though, the summary conviction offences are those that are less serious.

• (1650)

Those by indictment are more serious because of the act itself and the greater importance Parliament decided to put on those offences. For those who decide to dump chemicals that are harmful to fish, the maximum fine is \$300,000 on summary conviction, as proposed in this bill. So we take it from a \$50,000 fine to a \$300,000 fine. On indictment, we take it from \$100,000 up to \$1 million. Court options, which do not exist under the present act, include up to three years imprisonment on indictment.

The present fine for failure to provide habitat information is a maximum of \$5,000 on summary conviction, with a maximum of \$10,000 for second and subsequent offences. We will increase this maximum to \$200,000 on summary conviction and \$200,000 and/or six months imprisonment for second and subsequent offences.