

Adjournment Debate

Community. Discussions are ongoing concerning the implementation of this plan.

Mr. Speaker, it is unusual for such a complex question issue to be endorsed with such unanimity considering the many organizations involved. In this case, it is really no wonder, since it is generally recognized that this plan will mark the beginning of a new and better era for Harbourfront. In this context, the people of Toronto and the millions of people who visit the city will benefit from a more accessible waterfront, more parks and recreation facilities as well as a cultural and educational program, the funding of which will be guaranteed.

[English]

FISHERIES

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to give voice to the tremendous frustration felt by the 6,500 residents of the island of Isle Madame, which lies off the southeast coast of Cape Breton Island in my riding of Cape Breton Highlands—Canso.

This frustration stems from a series of decisions taken by the Minister of Fisheries last December. One such decision reduced the offshore share of the cod quota in 4T-VN by 9 per cent, from 53,000 tonnes to 48,000 tonnes.

Isle Madame and its 6,500 residents are particularly reliant on one fishery, located in Petit De Grat, on Isle Madame, namely Richmond Fisheries, which happens to be the sole employer in Petit De Grat.

Imagine the horror of the people of Isle Madame upon learning last December that the Minister of Fisheries had reduced the enterprise allocation for Richmond Fisheries in 4T-VN, not by 9 per cent but by 37 per cent of the total allowable catch.

Since that time, the residents of Isle Madame and of Petit De Grat have asked one question of the Minister of Fisheries: Why? Why have you singled us out? Why are you putting at risk our very way of life?

Since that time the Minister of Fisheries has maintained a stony, almost contemptuous silence, as if to say "I don't owe you an explanation, I am the minister".

Since that time, I have risen in the House time and time again, asking the Minister of Fisheries for an explanation and asking him to reverse this disastrous decision for the sake of the people of Isle Madame. He

has either been unwilling or unable to provide an adequate explanation for his actions.

• (1810)

The last time I rose in the House on this issue was on Friday, March 15. That morning, Richmond Fisheries announced that it was tying up two of its four trawlers, putting 26 trawlermen out of work. The minister was not in the House at the time, but his parliamentary secretary responded to my question.

The parliamentary secretary conceded that, "the effects on Richmond Fisheries and so many others, are unfortunate, but they are in the long-term interest of all those who depend on the fishery."

It is indeed unfortunate that neither the minister nor his parliamentary secretary have provided an adequate explanation to either Richmond Fisheries or the people of Isle Madame as to why this company was singled out for a 37 per cent cut in its enterprise allocation, nor have they even attempted to.

I wrote to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on January 7 asking him for an explanation of why he had taken this action. I also pointed out to him that his action was in violation of his own management plan, specifically principle 10. I have yet to receive a reply from him to my letter, or an explanation as to why he has chosen to violate his own plan.

On December 18 of last year I rose in the House of Commons to question the minister of fisheries on the subject of these cuts and their potential impact on the people of Isle Madame. I asked the minister then if he realized that he risked forcing Richmond Fisheries out of business. I also asked him that as the sole employer in Petit de Gras why he did not provide the people of this village an explanation beforehand.

Did the minister believe that the community was not worth saving. In the minister's response, he did not even mention the people of Petit de Gras nor Isle Madame, nor did he provide me or the people most affected with any sort of explanation.

At a time when Canadians in every part of the country are fed up with the way their views are ignored, and with the seeming inability of their elected officials to represent their concerns, could there be any greater symbol of that widespread discontent than the minister of fisheries' refusal to listen to the people of Isle Madame and the representations of Richmond Fisheries. These people want an explanation from the minister. The minister has