

Motions

These harbours should not be privatized, throwing the burden of maintaining the infrastructure on those who cannot handle it. The advisory committee should be a general regional committee which establishes regional priorities. Not a small group who will assume ownership under the Government's privatization regime, but a legitimate public mechanism.

I want to point out again that I am not cynical. Indeed, I am one of the optimists in here.

Mr. Comeau: Madam Speaker, I am rather surprised that the NDP spokesman denies that the wharf in Saulnierville is very badly needed. Of course, in the next election campaign I will point out what the NDP thinks.

Mr. Skelly: Point of order, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Member cannot be allowed to distort the truth. I said I advocated more money be spent there.

Some Hon. Members: Debate!

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Both Hon. Members are engaged in friendly debate and I am sure the Hon. Member will allow the Hon. Member for South West Nova (Mr. Comeau) to answer.

Mr. Comeau: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member had his chance to say his piece and I would like to have mine.

Would he deny a wharf to the people of Saulnierville? They waited 20 years for it. That wharf is ranked third in its landing of fish in the Scotia-Fundy area. That is the largest fishing area in the world. My riding alone has the highest landed value of fish in all of Canada. Yet that Hon. Member would deny the need for repairs to that harbour. As I said earlier, the people of South West Nova will be very surprised to hear the Hon. Member's comments.

The Hon. Member would also deny the fishermen of our communities the right to form harbour authorities in order to take a more direct role in the management of their harbours. That is what the harbour authority is all about. Those areas that do not have enough fishermen to form a harbour authority will be given special consideration. Those areas that do have the numbers will be given the right, which they did not have in the past, to form an authority where they can set their own priorities.

The Hon. Member distorts the facts and will not look at the truth. We want to help the fishermen help themselves. Of course, the Hon. Member has never really been known to stress the truth all that much, so we will leave him be on that point.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robichaud: Madam Speaker, I also have a question for the Hon. Member for South West Nova (Mr. Comeau). Like him, I welcome the efforts of a government that has finally realized that new money should be spent on repairing harbours from coast to coast.

In his response to the report on small craft harbours, there is nevertheless one item that worries me a great deal. It is a subject that was mentioned just now, and I am referring to the harbour authorities. Now this reminds me of the fight we had to put up during the debate on Bill C-75, and I think you will recall, Madam Speaker, that the Hon. Member for Humber—Port-au-Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) spoke for nearly seven hours to block this Bill, especially Clause 4 which provided fees for users of Canada's ports, which meant that fishermen using various harbour facilities would be charged a fee. In fact, it says on page 3, item 3, that consideration is being given to introducing a user fee mechanism.

My question is as follows: Does the Hon. Member for South West Nova agree with this policy—a policy the Government is now trying to sneak in through the back door—of charging user fees, especially to fishermen?

Mr. Comeau: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member pointed out that we now have a mechanism to collect user fees. However, he forgets that user fees were collected for years, even by his own government. This has been going on for ages, and at the time, it was the Government that collected these fees. From now on, the fishermen will collect these funds.

Isn't it better to have the fishermen collecting the funds instead of the Government? Perhaps the Hon. Member should consider this aspect.

Personally, I prefer to leave it up to the fishermen.

[*English*]

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to participate in the debate on this concurrence motion, moved by the Hon. Member for Comox—Powell River (Mr. Skelly), I assume because the Hon. Member for Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands (Mr. Manly) was unable to be here today.

Over the last year and a half the committee worked very hard and spent many long hours trying to obtain funding for the Small Craft Harbours Program. I remember when our committee travelled to British Columbia and Atlantic Canada, hearing witnesses from those areas which are of great importance to the fishery. I guess, in every area that we travelled to, in British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Quebec, one of the main irritants we found with fishermen was the lack of funding for small craft harbours. This is understandable because harbours and wharves are the heart and soul of the fishing communities. They are their home base, their infrastructure. They form a very integral part of the fishing community. The primary base of a fishing enterprise is the vessels, nets, gear and, of course, the stocks which they go to sea to fish.

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Fishing is a very hazardous industry. Fishermen continue to fight the elements, not only at sea but in the ports themselves, especially in Atlantic Canada where we have a lot of winter