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## News Release

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### **Committee Set to Unveil Report on Missing Salmon**

**OTTAWA--**The House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries is set to make public on March 22nd its report into the disappearance of Fraser River sockeye in the summer of 2004. It will include a supplementary report, *Ensuring a Future for Fraser River Sockeye*, by John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-Richmond East).

The Committee's report is expected to: (i) outline what the Fisheries Committee believes happened to the missing sockeye, (ii) chronicle the mismanagement by the Department of Fisheries that allowed the disaster to occur, and (iii) set out measures the Committee believes necessary to ensure that the disaster is never again repeated.

The Fisheries Committee held hearings in Vancouver in early December, 2004 and heard first hand reports from fishermen that the Department of Fisheries & Oceans (DFO):

- Allowed aggressive fishing on the Fraser above Mission and in the Fraser Canyon;
- Failed to put even a token force of Fishery Officers on the river to protect returning sockeye;
- Allowed the use of highly destructive set nets in the Fraser Canyon;
- Failed to demand accurate catch reporting from fishermen above Mission; and,
- Allowed the special aboriginal food fishery to be turned into a major black market operation.

In January and February a Post Season Review Committee, chaired by Bryan Williams, held hearings in Kamloops, Richmond, Prince George, Surrey, Chilliwack and on Vancouver Island. Fishery Officers testified of the near total collapse of the Department's enforcement arm, the Conservation and Protection Branch. DFO enforcement painted a picture of massive black market operations moving illegally caught salmon into the U.S. and Alberta being largely ignored by the Department and of food fisheries acting as a source and a cover for the black market operations.

The Fisheries Committee has agonized since December over how to respond to the missing salmon:

- Should it recommend more study and more talk; or,
- Should it recommend for the 2005 season tough conservation measures targeted at excessive fishing pressure, above Mission and in the Fraser Canyon, to protect returning Fraser sockeye?

That was the dilemma faced by the members of the Fisheries Committee as they drafted their report. Included with the Committee's report will be a supplemental report from Cummins that sets out an action plan to ensure the future of Fraser River sockeye.

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