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—
Chair

Mr. Fabian Manning

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•(0910)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, March 11, 2008, the committee will now commence clause-by-clause consideration of Bill S-215.

The preamble and clause 1 are postponed, pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), and I call clause 2.

Mr. Keddy, do you want to move your amendment, G-2?

(On clause 2—*Definitions*)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Absolutely. Mr. Chair, I don't think we're going to have a lot of discussion on this, but I'll move right to the amendment.

I move that clause 2 of Bill S-215 be amended by replacing line 9 on page 2 with the following:

this Act, and includes any related building

As it reads now, it says

this Act, and includes any related structure

The Chair: Is there any discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Blais.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): I've realized that Mr. Keddy's amendments virtually all concern the same subject.

[English]

The Chair: Try again, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: I'd like to get a better understanding of the amendments Mr. Keddy is introducing, and for him to say exactly how they will change or improve the present enactment. I understand the words used, but I don't understand the idea behind all this.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To cut to the chase on this, the biggest issue, quite frankly, will be the change of the words from "related structure" to "related building". The reasons behind this are twofold.

First of all, Monsieur Blais, it's to establish the heritage value of the lighthouse itself and any buildings that have significant heritage value. For instance, many lights have a lightkeeper's house. Some are attached to the lights, some are separately built on the islands and have significant heritage value. Other light-station houses are brand-new and really don't have any heritage value. There may be utility sheds. In some cases there may be Quonset huts, which certainly have no heritage value, at least at this time, but they do have value in maintaining the integrity and the ability to keep that light there. The first point is on the heritage value.

The second point is to allow community groups—or DFO, in the cases of lights that will continue to be maintained by DFO—the ability to maintain these structures, in the case of wharves or helipads, with reasonable cost. If we went back to rebuild some of these wharves as they were traditionally built with old timbers or spruce timbers, or non-treated non-Wolmanized wood, we would be forever maintaining these wharves. We need to have the ability to separate the heritage value of the light and any related buildings. In some cases there are foghorn buildings and other buildings that have true heritage value. There are other buildings that are newer and quite frankly don't have that same heritage value.

The Chair: Mr. Blais.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Thank you, Mr. Manning.

May I ask our witnesses some questions at this point?

[English]

The Chair: Of course; that's why we're here.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: The lack of funding is one of the problems that will cause people to speak out against the bill as it stands. You can't disagree twice as much about something, but you can disagree more. Our idea can be reinforced when we disagree. Mr. Keddy's amendment reinforces my idea because it's as though we were adding other facilities or infrastructures that will eventually have to be maintained.

Is that correct?

Ms. Patricia Kell (Director, Policy and Government Relations Branch, National Historic Sites Directorate, Parks Canada Agency): This amendment would remove structures from the bill. The number of infrastructures that must be maintained would thus be reduced, not increased.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Do Mr. Keddy's amendments reduce the \$65 million amount? Does that amount remain the same?

Mr. David Burden (Director, Divestiture, Real Property, Safety and Security, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): If I've understood correctly, the amendment moved by Mr. Keddy today includes the figures that we have provided to you. Without the amendment, the cost could increase by at least \$24 million.

• (0915)

Mr. Raynald Blais: Then I don't understand.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Blais, just a second. Mr. Keddy might be able to answer that question.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Yes, Monsieur Blais, I'll try one more round of this.

The issue as it exists, as the bill is written now, is that if it includes "any related structure", then automatically all structures surrounding the lighthouse are included in the divestiture and in the designation. If lights are designated heritage lights, regardless of whether the structures have heritage value or not, they would all have to be maintained.

This will actually replace that with "any related building", which means that the lightkeeper's house, or perhaps a shed built in the late 1800s or something like that, would have significant heritage value for the process.

In some instances, all related structures could include structures built in recent years that have no heritage value whatsoever. It could include wharves approaching some of these entities. It would actually increase, not decrease, the cost of the divestiture process. There would even be a twofold effect, because it would include the fact that those related structures would have to be maintained the way they were built in order to retain their heritage character. That may mean, in some instances, using older technologies and older processes, and we would be continually maintaining some of these wharves.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: I want to be sure I understand clearly. I get the impression I'm hearing two completely different things.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I don't think so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Let's take example 2 of G-2. It concerns Clause 2, which concerns definitions. If I carefully read the English, it states: "That Bill S-215, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing [...]"

So we're replacing...

Mr. Keddy, I would advise you to listen to me, or else the two of us may be having a fairly long discussion.

It states: "That Bill S-215, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 9 on page 2 with the following: 'this Act, and includes any related building'".

Could you tell me what this section is, and how the new section would read? That would give me a clearer understanding.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Yes, let me take a shot at it.

As it currently reads, the light station has a number of structures on it, one of which is the lighthouse, but there are other buildings sometimes, as Mr. Keddy has explained. There are also other structures like wharves and helipads and so on. So the intent of this amendment is to restrict, through the statutory obligation, that heritage level to just those buildings, rather than all the things that would be considered structures.

The next amendment flushes it out a little bit more. If you look at amendment G-3, we're explaining what "related building" means more clearly. I think the intent is to narrow the scope of the bill, which in my opinion is a good thing.

• (0920)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Well, if I can just add to that, the way I see this, Mr. Blais, is that if these heritage lighthouses are given over to a community group for maintenance and operation, if it's a tourist attraction and there has to be a wharf or some type of access facility, it would be much more costly if that access—whether it's a wharf, whether it's a road, whatever type of physical improvement is needed to provide access—had to be maintained in a heritage format. It would be much more onerous for whatever community group took over the operation of that heritage lighthouse.

I see this as an opportunity to create a little bit more success for those groups by allowing them to keep modern structures and modern access facilities open, yet still give the act the authority it needs to maintain the relevant structures, which are the lighthouse and any of the outbuildings that might be relevant to the long-term operation of that lighthouse, in their heritage state.

So for me, I think this is a good thing in terms of keeping costs down and giving these lighthouses every opportunity to be successful as heritage lighthouses.

The Chair: I just want to advise the committee that the acceptance of this amendment to clause 2 will be consequential to clauses 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, basically along the same lines. The amendment will go up to and include clause 7. I just wanted you to be aware of that.

Is there any further comment?

Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I think Mr. Blais was asking for the entire clause to be read to see how the change fits into it.

In English, the entire clause would read:

"heritage lighthouse" means a lighthouse designated as a heritage lighthouse under this Act, and includes any related building that is included in the designation.

The Chair: My interpretation of that is the same as yours.

Is that okay, Mr. Blais?

Mr. Raynald Blais: Okay, good.

The Chair: Okay. I wasn't sure if he was agreeing or not. He wasn't nodding his head.

Are there any other comments or questions on the amendment to clause 2?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: And amendments G-3, G-4, G-5, G-6 and G-7 are carried also?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All those in favour of clause 2 as amended.

(Clause 2 as amended agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: You can go as fast as you want, Mr. Chairman, but you definitely can't go as far as I hear. There's a delay between the moment you ask who is voting nay and what I hear. Give me the time to understand what the interpreter says. I sort of understand what you mean, but I want to be sure I've clearly understood. So there will definitely be a delay between the moment you ask me for my opinion and the moment I express it.

[*English*]

The Chair: I look forward to our hearings in Newfoundland on Monday. It should be an interesting day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: And we're just starting.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm down to about 60 kilometres now. Anyway, we'll go ahead to clause 3.

Mr. Blais.

(On clause 3—*Purpose*)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Thank you.

I'm speaking once again to the witnesses. The question somewhat concerns the bill as a whole. We're talking about Clause 3, but, in this case, it could be any clause. I'd like someone to give me more details on the amounts that were presented to us concerning the transfers and eventual maintenance. I would like someone to tell me what the bill entails in financial terms for the department and also what the bill as amended means in financial terms. I imagine that will take some time. The transfers won't be made from one day to the next.

The transfers will also concern the organizations that will eventually become the new owners, and I would like to know what that entails for them as well in financial terms. I suppose an estimate has been made. I've already heard some figures, but I want to make sure I understood correctly.

• (0925)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Sorry to interrupt you, Monsieur Blais; we can come back to your question.

We passed the first amendment in clause 2, but there's also a second amendment in clause 2 that's consequential to the first amendment. Were we passing that automatically, or do we pass that separately?

The Chair: We just did. All the amendments, right up to clause 7, have been passed.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I understood that, but I wasn't sure if the consequential amendment was literally passed.

The Chair: Yes, it was.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Okay, thank you. Very good.

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): No, I have a different issue after Mr. Blais.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm sorry, I forgot to welcome our witnesses back this morning. It's nice to be back, I'm sure.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Patricia Kell: Two departments are involved: the Parks Canada Agency and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. In the case of Parks Canada, costs will be associated with the administration of the act, that is costs supporting a program, the appraisal of lighthouses, petitions and the evaluation of projects proposed once a lighthouse is designated. Those costs won't change at all, or very little, whether the amendment is passed or not. These are procedural costs. Parks Canada owns some 12 lighthouses. Some lighthouses are also managed by Fisheries and Oceans.

In the case of the management of light stations, the amendment has an impact on the costs associated with passage of the act. When the designations to be included in the act are made, they may concern not only the lighthouse itself, but also the buildings associated with it. If there is no amendment, structures could also be included. Costs will be associated with the maintenance of each of those structures. So, if the amendment is passed, we will only have to concern ourselves with the lighthouse and buildings that have a historical value identified in the lighthouse designation. If the bill is not passed, there will be costs associated with the lighthouse, the buildings and the support and access structures. The amendment thus has the effect of increasing the number of structures that must be maintained under the act and the number of standards associated with the maintenance of historic structures.

Mr. Raynald Blais: That's where I find it hard to understand. At first, I thought I understood that, but, in view of what was subsequently said—and in French—it seemed to be the reverse. That's why I'm asking for clarification.

You're telling me the reverse of what you told me earlier. Earlier I understood that the amendments were going to reduce the costs.

• (0930)

Ms. Patricia Kell: That's it: the amendments will reduce the costs.

Mr. Raynald Blais: But, from what I've just heard, you just said that they would increase the costs. That's what I understood.

Ms. Patricia Kell: No, if the structures are included, that increases the costs; if they are removed, that reduces the costs.

Mr. Raynald Blais: We replace structure with “related building”?

Ms. Patricia Kell: Yes, that's it.

Mr. Raynald Blais: A related building is nevertheless an object; it has to be maintained.

Ms. Patricia Kell: Yes, but there are fewer buildings than structures. So the word “structures” is more inclusive.

Mr. Raynald Blais: All right, but the question is by how much the costs will be reduced if the bill is amended to replace structure with “related building”.

Ms. Patricia Kell: All right.

Mr. David Burden: The reduction would be between \$24 and \$65 million.

Mr. Doug Tapley (Manager, Cabinet Affairs, Parks Canada Agency): Because we remove the access structures.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Why between \$24 and \$65 million?

Mr. David Burden: Because it's impossible for us to establish exact figures without knowing the criteria and number of lighthouses, as well as which lighthouses will be designated. Some lighthouses in Nova Scotia have no structures. So the cost is less than in the case of structures in British Columbia, which are located on islands and which require an access site for a helicopter or boat. We can reduce the costs if we use modern techniques rather than heritage techniques to do the maintenance and things of that kind.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Whether we like it or not, there will be costs, won't there?

Ms. Patricia Kell: Even if we delete structures from the bill, there will definitely be costs associated with their maintenance, but they aren't costs associated with the bill. As the bill is based on heritage value, the designation of a lighthouse under this bill means that we must maintain it in a certain way, which increases maintenance costs. In other words, if we have to do the work in a particular way, it costs more than if we do it in a way—

Mr. Raynald Blais: The maintenance of a non-heritage building entails certain costs, whereas costs automatically increase if it's a designated heritage building. Is that correct?

Ms. Patricia Kell: Yes.

Mr. Raynald Blais: What will happen to the structures? Are they completely abandoned in that case?

Ms. Patricia Kell: No. The act provides for the obligation to maintain the designated lighthouses. However, there has to be access in order to maintain them. Even if the structures themselves are not designated, they have to be maintained, but in a non-heritage manner.

Mr. Raynald Blais: That's a minimum. That's what you're doing now. That will change absolutely nothing to what you're doing now.

Ms. Patricia Kell: Yes, that's correct.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Just on a related question, I notice in the act it talks about the minister being the minister responsible for parks. A lot of the lighthouses right now fall under the purview of the coast guard, which is under the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I've never asked this question in all the years I've been here. How does

that process work for transfer of responsibility of a lighthouse, say in Whitehead, Nova Scotia, that is deemed heritage by the minister for parks or the person responsible for that? How do they make that transfer from DFO over to Parks Canada? Is it a cumbersome process, or is it done fairly quickly?

● (0935)

Ms. Patricia Kell: The minister responsible for Parks Canada is the minister responsible for the act, which means he is responsible for the administration of the act. It does not imply and the act doesn't say that all lighthouses that are designated should be transferred to Parks Canada. So coast guard would remain the custodian of lighthouses that were designated that it owned.

It means Parks Canada is responsible for running the program, for making sure the petitions are received and evaluated and the minister makes decisions about designation, and in assisting the department in any conservation, assisting in terms of professional expertise to the department in terms of conservation work that is done on designated buildings and on conditions related to sale or disposal.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Lévesque.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Good morning, madam, gentlemen. If I understand correctly, when a lighthouse receives the heritage designation, it's transferred from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to Parks Canada. No. All right. Then I'll continue.

Once the lighthouse is designated heritage, do you reassign it, or do you let a volunteer administration manage it? As for the words “building” and “structure”, structures include the platforms to enable a helicopter to land, the wharves to enable a boat to land, the roads to enable visitors to reach the monument.

Once the lighthouse is designated heritage, do you have an obligation to maintain the infrastructure, or will the province or agency responsible for it have to maintain the structures while you maintain the buildings? That's what I would like to understand.

An amount of \$65 million has been budgeted. Did that include the structures?

Ms. Patricia Kell: I'll start by answering the last question.

The \$65 million amount does not include the structures. If the structures were included, we would be talking about several millions of dollars more.

As regards ownership, the bill does not state that there will be a change of owner after a designation. So the lighthouse belongs to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and it will still own it after it designated. That's the department that will be responsible for maintenance and for decisions concerning that lighthouse. If a lighthouse were sold to a community group, that group would be responsible for the lighthouse and structures, as well as their maintenance.

Does that answer your question?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lévesque.

Mr. Matthews.

Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to welcome our witnesses.

To continue, if it stays with DFO we're not saying there's not a problem, but they continue to maintain the heritage structures plus the related infrastructure for access.

The problem, as I see it, or a couple of problems.... If there's one designation or a hundred designations, it seems obvious to me that it's going to put added pressure on your existing budget, which is going to be watered down. You're going to have that many more heritage structures to try to assist from your present budget, which won't be increased, it doesn't seem, by this legislation. So that seems to be a fundamental problem. I don't know how you respond to that. If you don't have enough money now, if you have one or a hundred designations, there are going to be requests for money for that. So that's the first one.

The bigger one is if a community group petitions and a lighthouse or light station is designated, and if they are successful in getting money from you and other sources to maintain the heritage structure, the integrity of the place, then access, to me, seems the obvious biggest problem. How are they going to maintain access to it? If it is not DFO's, it's a community group's, and they can only get some money from you for keeping the heritage integrity or whatever. So to me that seems to be perhaps the biggest problem we're facing here. And of course if they can't access the place, then....

I don't know how you respond to that, but I think access is probably going to be one of the more serious issues of all this once it flushes out.

● (0940)

Mr. David Burden: I guess I'll respond to the back end of the question first.

I think the committee heard from the stakeholders in the last couple of meetings that they did not feel that all lighthouses across the country were going to be designated under the legislation. I think that's fundamental to this.

We have a number of lighthouses across the country that are in remote, desolate areas. There are some in the Bay of Fundy that come to mind that are 50 miles from the closest community on an isolated island. I don't see a community group coming forward with a petition for that.

Under those circumstances, the access or the designation may not be an issue. In those instances when there is a requirement for an ongoing program operation for a lighthouse, we'll need to have access for health and safety issues for employees, whether it's a staffed lighthouse or our technicians are just going out to maintain the aid to navigation as part of the program. We as a department will be required to continue to do that.

In the time that I've been running the divestiture program in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, we have not had a community group fail. When we look at their business case, we look at all aspects of it. Yes, we will have to put funds into bringing lighthouses

up to a reasonable level of maintenance before a community group can take them over, and that is money we do not have in our budget.

If Parliament deems that this is a bill they want to move forward, then we will have to come forward with a request. I believe my colleagues and I said a year or so ago before committees and this committee when we were discussing this that there would be an ask, because our departmental budget could not absorb the cost. But the community groups are all volunteers, for the most part, and they've been very good at doing a lot of the things that need to be done, with minimal resources.

The Chair: Mr. Tapley.

Mr. Doug Tapley: Perhaps I can add a little bit of information.

Parks Canada has had a long history of dealing with volunteer organizations—community groups, if you will. We see the same sort of situation occurring here that we are used to.

If a community group were interested in taking over a lighthouse for a continuing public purpose, they would come forward with a business case. If they foresaw a requirement for some government financial assistance, they would outline it in that business case. That is not to say they would not have recourse to their own sources of funds.

In Parks Canada's experience, we've had some volunteer groups that actually operate some of our facilities, and they have been remarkably successful. They have implemented user fees, as Parks Canada implements user fees. They have done very well in undertaking major fundraising campaigns, for example, to develop major exhibits on site that explain the heritage value of the property.

There are also economic development programs that can be targeted for purposes such as heritage tourism, and they exist at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.

All that is to say that community groups have different means of finding money to support the operation of heritage lighthouses.

● (0945)

The Chair: Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a couple of things. First of all, Mr. Chairman, we've already voted on this amendment, and the discussion on this amendment should really have finished at the vote. But since we are discussing it, I think we have to understand that we're putting in place a process that will probably take four years before it's in place. We're not talking about a major expenditure coming out of DFO or Parks Canada this year or next year. The petition process will take two years to get up and going.

The whole point here is that out of the maximum of 246 lighthouses out there, there are differing numbers in terms of how many will actually end up with heritage designations. But it certainly won't be the 246.

In the short term, DFO has a responsibility to maintain those lights in working order. So it's not as if they're free; there is a cost to these lights, as we speak.

What we will be doing in the long term is transferring the annual maintenance cost of the majority of these lights over to the province in some cases, but the divestiture will go to the province, to the municipality or town, to a public organization, or to a private entity. So these lights will come out of DFO's budget; there will not be an increased cost to DFO's budget.

I think at this time, until we actually know the number.... That's the difficulty of coming up with a real number, but we're putting a process in place for this divestiture to happen and for some of these lights to receive heritage status—and they will probably stay under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Some will move into Parks Canada, and some are within Parks Canada's domain now—I think there are 12 altogether. But the vast majority will probably move to community groups, rather than a province or municipality or town taking them over. Among these community groups, as was just explained by Mr. Tapley, there will be partnerships, there will be economic development and tourism opportunities, and they will fund-raise and take over these costs.

So at the end of the day, I see a net gain for DFO—although, without question, as Mr. Matthews has said, DFO will have to scramble throughout the process for the dollars to make this happen. But at the end of the day, in the long term, there will be more money in DFO's hands for small craft harbours and other issues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think the scramble for dollars is what most members of the committee seem to be seized with.

Mr. Burden, as manager of the divestiture program within DFO, how have you...? You're fully aware that this committee is currently engaged in a study on small craft harbours, and that to support the minister requesting funds for this in budget 2008, prior to the budget being tabled, this committee provided an interim report on the status of the small craft harbour program, and specifically included a request or suggestion, if not an expectation, that the government allocate upwards of \$700 million over an extended period of time to resolve longstanding issues related to the small craft harbour program. As you're aware, the result or effect of our interim report was that the government decided to allocate just \$10 million for a small craft harbour divestiture program.

Should this proceed, and in the scramble for dollars in the interim or short term, DFO will obviously have to allocate funds for this from somewhere within it. Under the system of parliamentary appropriations, we have various votes, and the money will obviously come from the same pot of funds the small craft harbour program comes from—for operations, maintenance, and capital. There is no funding that is.... Parliament does not necessarily approve direct or targeted funding for small craft harbours; what we approve, if I understand this correctly, is specific funding for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to engage in operations, maintenance, and capital projects for capital assets.

So in terms of the lighthouse program, you would actually be using the same pot of money that the department uses, allocates, or

references for the small craft harbour program. You would actually draw upon that same pot of money that would be available.

Would you be able to comment on that? Is my understanding and interpretation correct?

• (0950)

Mr. David Burden: First off, let me say that I am separate from the small craft harbours program. I think my colleague who runs that program would be a little averse to my speaking of it, but I can say that the department has a block of money, as you've said, which goes into investments. I'm not certain what kinds of strings were attached to the money from the last budget related to the divestiture of recreational harbours for small craft harbours. I would assume there could have been some hook to it saying it must be used for divestiture of recreational harbours. So that money would not be able to be used for divestiture of lighthouses. That would be my assumption. I would really have to go back and talk to the financial officials in the small craft harbours program within the department to give you a completely accurate answer to that.

Suffice it to say, as a manager running a program in DFO for divestiture, I have an annual budget approved through our long-term capital plan, and I have \$2.5 million I can devote towards divestiture of surplus DFO assets. The majority of that would have to be used for lighthouses, if this bill goes through. That's the obvious money the department has at its disposal right now for this bill. It would logically come out of my budget.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Ms. Kell, would you be able to provide the committee with any insight into the parliamentary appropriation process, and the budgetary process within departments related to operations maintenance and capital assets and whether or not that money slides between various program stovepipes?

Ms. Patricia Kell: Doug is the more appropriate person to speak to that.

Mr. Doug Tapley: Is this specific to Parks Canada?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: It could be.

Mr. Doug Tapley: Okay.

We have an annual budget that is approved, and that includes investments in capital funds for our \$10 billion worth of assets, including assets within national historical sites and assets within national parks. So there are some historic and some contemporary assets. We have the flexibility to decide how to invest those funds. Similarly, for the operations of our heritage places across the country, we have annual ongoing operating budgets. We can make adjustments to the levels of investments from place to place.

If there is a new policy requirement, we may be directed to develop a proposal to be considered by cabinet. If additional supplementary funds are eventually approved through the annual federal budgetary process, those typically will be targeted funds, with very clear specifications as to how they can be used. We cannot use them for an unrelated purpose.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: That answers the question.

So, in the interim, without a supplementary parliamentary budgetary appropriation, you'd basically use existing program priorities?

Mr. Doug Tapley: Exactly, and for which we have some flexibility in deciding how we would make allocations.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: One would assume, or I would assume, it would be the same for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. If a new statutory requirement were brought forward for the department and its minister—subject, obviously, to an audit by the Auditor General as to whether or not they are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities and obligations, as voted on by Parliament—they would have an obligation to do so. It being a brand-new program, currently unbudgeted within the department, they'd have to take funds from another program priority and put them into this new program priority—and, obviously, a big part of that would be coast guard capital maintenance and small craft harbours capital maintenance.

Thank you.

• (0955)

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Byrne.

Mr. Keddy, do you have a comment?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: The only comment I would add to what Mr. Byrne has said is there's nothing that prevents cabinet and government from finding new funds as well for this divestiture process, so we can't overlook that. Even if the new funds aren't found, first of all, we don't know the amount clearly at this time; we've only speculated at the amount. There is some built-in flexibility within the department to divest itself of capital assets.

Finally, again this is probably a minimum—a four-year process—before we really have to come up with any funds. At the end of the day, after the divestiture process is through, small craft harbours would actually have more money because they will have fewer capital assets. I think those points have to be recognized.

The Chair: Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess I was just going to follow up on what Mr. Keddy has been pointing out here.

While there is quite a bit of discussion and legitimate concern, I think, around appropriations for funding for this, if you take a look at the statutory timelines that are outlined in this particular act, should it come to pass, there is a significant amount of time for future governments to prepare, through a budgetary process, the funds that they're going to need.

I'm just wondering if anybody from the departments here could enlighten the committee as to what those timelines might be or when we might actually have to realistically see a budget appropriation for this act.

Ms. Patricia Kell: I'll start.

The act is scheduled to come into force two years after royal assent. From a Parks Canada perspective, there is actually work that will need to be done during that period to prepare for the act coming into force: development of requirements for a petition, for example, what would be required; development of criteria.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Would it be realistic to assume that those kinds of tasks could be absorbed with the baseline in-house budget that's already provided? Would it be too much extraneous work?

Ms. Patricia Kell: It's certainly nowhere near the order of magnitude of money that's required for conservation work.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Please continue.

Ms. Patricia Kell: My colleague is pointing out to me that it's not as if we have money sloshing around that is not already allocated to priorities within the agency.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I think all taxpayers appreciate that.

Ms. Patricia Kell: We have the two years before the bill comes into force—that's preparatory time. There is then a period of two years during which petitions are received. That's the period when communities have the opportunity to express their interest in having lighthouses in their area designated, and that's also the period when work needs to be done by them, if the lighthouse has been declared surplus, to propose a business case and to come forward as being willing to take over the lighthouse. There is then a period of three years in which the minister can evaluate those petitions.

At the end of that full five-year period after coming into force, the minister must publicly announce what the results of those deliberations are. So theoretically the minister could start designating from the time the bill comes into force—that would be two years from royal assent—but doesn't have to until the end of seven years from the date the bill is passed. So seven years from now the first designations would have to be announced, and that's the absolute latest.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: It's quite some time to prepare a budget.

The Chair: Okay, any more questions, concerns?

(Clauses 3 to 5 inclusive agreed to)

(Clause 6 as amended agreed to)

(Clause 7 as amended agreed to)

• (1000)

The Chair: Clauses 8, 9, and 10 do not have any amendments. Shall we consider them as a group? Would that be okay with everybody?

Some hon. members: Yes.

(Clauses 8 to 10 inclusive agreed to)

(Clause 11 as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Clauses 12, 13, 14, and 15 have no amendments. Shall we once again consider them as a group?

Some hon. members: Yes.

(Clauses 12 to 15 inclusive agreed to)

(Clause 16 as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Once again, we have clauses 17, 18, and 19 considered as a group, if that is okay with everybody.

Some hon. members: Yes.

(Clauses 17 to 19 inclusive agreed to)

The Chair: We will move right along.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: We have an amendment to the preamble, I understand?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Yes. The preamble should be amended by adding, after line 15, on page 1, the following:

AND WHEREAS it is important to provide access to heritage lighthouses in order for people to understand and appreciate the contribution of those lighthouses to Canada's maritime heritage;

(Amendment agreed to)

• (1005)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill as amended carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall I report the bill as amended to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the committee order a reprint of the bill as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I think our work is complete.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: With the power invested in me, we aren't going back over this.

I don't know who had the power invested in me, but they did.

We're going to suspend for a few moments and then we're coming back to discuss Mr. Lévesque's motion.

• _____ (Pause) _____

•

• (1015)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

François has passed around an electronic briefing book for the trip to eastern Canada. It has some great Atlantic Canadian and Quebec artists you can listen to on your way home.

We have a motion by Mr. Lévesque. I am going to read the motion, and then we'll have any discussion we need to have. The motion is that the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans call upon Fisheries and Oceans Canada to collaborate with Environment Canada so that in-depth research on the effects of environmental change on the condition of the eelgrass flats in James Bay can be conducted.

Mr. Lévesque.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I've received some prudent advice. In view of the fact that I would prefer to submit a report rather than simply a letter to the House, I'm going to ask the committee's permission to defer this motion to the next meeting. It will be held on April 29, I believe. Since we're talking about a report here, I would like to put a little flesh on the bone before explaining to the House why we're making this request.

[English]

The Chair: My advice to Mr. Lévesque is that it would be wise at this time to withdraw this motion and then enter another motion on April 29 in line with what your thought process is at that time.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: Yes.

[English]

The Chair: So Mr. Lévesque withdraws the motion.

Any other business? We don't have to leave yet.

Mr. Blais.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: So I can speak for about 40 minutes? No, that's not really my intention.

[English]

The Chair: No. I'm going to have to exercise my authority once again.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: I simply want to know who is going on the tour next week.

[English]

The Chair: As of now, Mr. Blais, we have confirmed me and you and Mr. Matthews, Mr. Mike Allen, Mr. Calkins, Mr. Kamp, Mr. Keddy, Mr. Lévesque, Mr. MacAulay, and Mr. Stoffer. Mr. Simms is pretty well there, from what I understand, but he should be back on schedule on Monday. He'll meet us in St. John's on Monday. So it's pretty well a full slate, with our staff. You're just talking about the members. We have three interpreters: French, English, and Newfoundland.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Will everyone be in Gaspé?

[English]

The Chair: Will everybody be in Gaspé? I'm not sure of that. I will be in Gaspé.

Is there anyone who can't be in Gaspé that they're aware of now?

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: I would like to point out to you the efforts we've made, that I've made, to be present at every opportunity, regardless of where things take place. I remember very clearly going to a number of your committee meetings. I didn't hesitate to do so, even though it caused me a lot of scheduling problems.

I find it really disappointing that there are no representatives of the Conservative party apart from the Chairman. It's as though you think it fun and important for us to go to your ridings, but you don't see the importance in going elsewhere. I find it hard to understand that. I would like to tell you that directly rather than just think it. I find that disheartening and disappointing.

• (1020)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lévesque.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: Mr. Chairman, as regards the Sunday departure, is transportation provided from the Hill to the airport, or do each of us get to the airport on our own?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Lockhart): You all get there on your own.

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): I'm going to fly there myself on Sunday, and that's okay, I guess. Second, I'd like to have a list of all the people, interpreters, etc., who are coming. If you could give that to George, I would appreciate it.

The Clerk: It went out in an e-mail yesterday.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, ma'am. I appreciate it. You're very efficient.

The Chair: We're very efficient here.

Any other comments?

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I'm with Lawrence. I'm heading up there myself on Sunday, so I'll meet you there.

The Chair: Okay, I'll meet you in Newfoundland on Sunday.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I'm planning on my own to get to Newfoundland as well.

The Clerk: A number of people are.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: You're aware of that then.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Gerald, are you going on Sunday?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Not on Sunday.

The Chair: Any other discussion?

We'll see you in Newfoundland on Monday.

We're adjourned.

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