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Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Thank you very much for coming in to meet with our committee today, gentlemen. I have just a few housekeeping items before we begin.

Generally we allow about ten minutes for presentations. I understand that you each have some opening remarks before we get into questions and answers. Please try to be mindful that all the members have some time constraints, and they try to get as many questions and answers in as possible during that timeframe.

Gentlemen, unless there's anything else, I'd ask you to proceed with your presentation. I'm not sure who's going to lead off.

Mr. Fudge, you lead off, and we'll just work across. Would that be all right? It's totally up to you, whatever order you want to go in.

I'll just ask at this time, Mr. Fudge, if you want to proceed. Thank you.

Mr. Morris Fudge (Member, Newfoundland and Labrador, National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): Thank you, sir.

First of all, I'd like to thank you for inviting us here, and I would like to thank each and every one of you for the money we already got for the program. I'm sure it's going to go a long way into the program. But—I said but—it's not enough. We need a lot more.

Our infrastructure's been deteriorating so badly over the years that it's going to take a lot of money to get it up to standard. And even when we do get it there, it's going to take a lot of money to keep it up.

In the Newfoundland region right now we have about a hundred wharves that are really at the end of their lives. Three of those we had to shut down this year. Two of them are in the southwest area, where aquaculture's very heavy. They need those wharves in these areas.

If you have a problem getting rid of your money in other sectors, if you can't use the money we already have in the small craft harbours program, it's not a problem. We can use it for this.

Our economic action plan is going full out. I mean, we're well ahead of the game with that. That's thanks to our small craft harbours staff and Public Works. I have to include them, because those guys bend over backwards to keep us on track and to keep us going.

The last time I was before this committee, I asked for a wheelbarrow full of money. Thanks to you guys, again, we got a half of one. This time I'm asking for two wheelbarrows so that maybe we'll get lucky and get a full one.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Osborne Burke (Member, Maritimes and Gulf, National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): Good afternoon to Mr. Weston and the members. I'm pleased to be here today to speak to your committee about our small craft harbours facilities in the coastal communities across Canada.

My name is Osborne Burke, and I'm one of the volunteers on our National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee; in particular, I'm from the Maritimes and gulf region. I've had the pleasure of being here on at least two previous occasions representing the national HAAC, as with some of the others in the room, to come before the committee and make presentations. I'd also want to acknowledge that a large number of the 15 members, excluding ourselves, are sitting behind.

We're very appreciative of the support we've had from the committee. I know we're speaking to the converted here in relation to support for small craft harbours facilities, so we're very pleased. And we've been very pleased to see the dollars that have been put into it to date. As Morris said, it's not sufficient, but it's a start in the right direction.

To give you an appreciation of the scope of the Maritimes and gulf region, we're spanning three provinces, two of the five Department of Fisheries and Oceans regions. We've got about 236 harbour authorities, and about 281 core harbours are being managed by that group, about 41% of the national number of harbour authorities.

We're generating about a billion dollars a year in the commercial fishery, approximately \$300 million in aquaculture, and through the harbour authorities themselves, right at this time according to our best estimate, about \$10 million of revenue generation is being contributed to the overall picture.

As I said, with the \$200 million in the economic action plan, I'm seeing the benefits in my community and we're seeing it in a lot of the areas. But as we say that, just in the Maritimes and gulf region for a snapshot, looking forward we've probably got in excess of \$700 million worth of work that can still be done, and probably 1,500 to 1,700 potential projects in the long term. I think that, critically, what it comes down to is our A-base funding. It's great with the \$200 million now, but what happens when the \$200 million is gone, used? Hopefully we'll be able to use it all and use it very efficiently, but we need time to plan and we also need dollars. And in that core A-base funding is where we need the dollars to give ourselves the time, in partnership with small craft harbours directorate, Public Works, and other agencies, to plan it out and do it as efficiently as possible.

As Morris said, it's hats off to them right now in what they're doing in the timeframe they have. And we do have some harbours that are not in totally bad shape either. It's not that everything is crumbling, but there's a lot out there that need work.

In addition to that, in our Maritimes and gulf region, another issue that comes to the forefront is harbour authorities with virtually no authority, where volunteer groups attempt to collect fees, generate revenues, and are operating leased facilities belonging to the federal government with no ability to be able to enforce in a lot of the cases. This is something that needs to be looked at by this committee.

Thank you very much.

● (1540)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Legresley (Member, Quebec, National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Luc Legresley and I represent the Quebec region. First, I want to thank the committee members for allowing us to be here today and for hearing our perspective. I think that we are directly involved with communities and fishing harbour users. What is important, today, is that the individuals appearing before you will tell you the truth about what is happening locally.

I believe that you have already received my prepared brief. So I do not need to repeat the budget data on fishing harbours. Everything is included in the document you received and it is a fairly clear portrait of the situation in Quebec.

Today, it is important, I believe, to look at various funds. Quebec's concerns are as follows: the collection of duties; the lack of funding; the devolution, or if you prefer, the transfer program; dredging, an extremely serious issue in the Quebec region; staff renewal within port authorities, an issue that truly requires our full attention. Added to this are the severity and number of storms.

I can tell you that on December 22 of last year, the Gaspé region suffered a terrible storm that I will always remember. It was so intense that we could no longer see one of the fishing wharves; it was totally buried under the waves. Imagine if there had been boats tied up at that wharf.

I have another concern. We now have \$200 million, and people are happy, but what about after? This cannot be the end of it; it has to continue. Decisions made within government will be extremely important for the Harbour Authority Program.

Thank you very much.

[English]

Mr. Stacy Linington (Member, Central and Arctic, National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): I'm Stacy Linington, from Canyon Creek, Alberta, representing the north, central, and Arctic region.

Our existing facilities face the same operational issues as those of the other regions. Where we differ most is in the number of fishers who don't have access to any facilities at all.

In much of our area we have no DFO presence. There is no search and rescue or any other DFO presence, other than that represented by small craft harbours. These small craft harbours are operated and maintained by volunteers, and they serve only about 40% of the fishers in the central and Arctic region.

There are many other areas where the opportunity to develop sustainable commercial fisheries exists. Many of these are remote northern areas with indigenous people. We need the economic opportunities that a commercial fishery could offer.

The Pangnirtung project is a great start. However, we have many other opportunities to develop viable and sustainable commercial fisheries in our area. These opportunities exist in northern communities in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the territories. When we consider the lack of facilities in our remote indigenous communities, it is indeed a very low percentage of the potential fishers in the central and Arctic region who have access to government-funded facilities. All these fishers deserve to have a safe harbour.

When I volunteered to participate as a member of this harbour authority I felt it was my responsibility to work with the government and work toward safe harbours for all of our fishers. It is to this end that I would respectfully ask that this group consider additional funding to aid in the economic development of viable and sustainable commercial fisheries in our northern communities.

For approximately \$5 million the central and Arctic region could provide an additional 15 harbours to accommodate 400 to 500 fishers on the lakes in Great Slave Lake, Northwest Territories, Chip Lake in Northern Alberta, Baker Lake in Nunavut, Deschambault Lake in Saskatchewan, or the northern regions of Lake Winnipeg. As an example, Goodman's Landing has no facility there now, and there are 60 to 80 vessels that go there and 500,000 pounds of product are landed there now. There is no dock. At present they are beaching their vessels there at the landing and they offload from the beach. Whenever there is a storm that comes up it becomes impossible for them. They are losing product right now because of the lack of facilities to offload.

I can't stress enough the need for safe harbours in our region for commercial fishers of our area. We have all known fishers who died on a lake in the past few years. We feel that we deserve to have safe harbours, and we would like for our families to feel that we are safe while we are on the waters, especially when we are coming in to unload our catch.

Thank you.

• (1545)

Mr. Ben Mabberley (Member, Pacific, National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): My name is Ben Mabberley. I'm a commercial fisherman from Galiano Island in British Columbia. I was before this committee when it came out to B.C., and it's a pleasure to appear before you again.

We have a lot of varying issues in the Pacific region. You talk about dredging derelict vessels, issues like that, but what it really comes down to right across the country is the volunteers. We have 5,000 volunteers running over \$3 billion worth of assets for the federal government. These are numbers that come out of your interim report, but there is something in your interim report on which we have done our research since then. If you look at the revenues that have been generated by harbour authorities over the last ten years, ten years ago harbour authorities generated \$11 million in revenues toward the program. Today that number is \$24 million. That does not include the man-hours that we put in, and that is 135,000 man-hours on top of the \$24 million in revenue.

In that time the increase in our A-base budget has been around \$10 million, so while all of these volunteers running government properties have increased their revenues by 250%, the government's increase has been less than 10%. When it comes right down to it, when, as they say, the rubber hits the road, it's all about A-base funding. If the government kept pace with the harbour authorities, and if you looked at the success of this harbour authority program—you only have to go around the country and look at these harbours and talk to the people and see the pride and see the state of these harbours since this program was instituted—you would understand what I'm talking about.

It's appropriate for the government to step up to the plate and increase the A-base funding to small craft harbours. I'm not saying that it has to be 250%, but they have to try to keep up with those people who are running the harbours for them. These are volunteers running your facilities for the benefit of all Canadians. If you look at the numbers, it's about 700-and-some-odd communities. These are big numbers. There are a lot of people putting in a lot of effort.

I look forward to answering any questions that you have today.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

Mr. Andrews, I believe you will start off.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Thank you so much, gentlemen, for coming in today.

It was a pleasure earlier this week to go to the Prix d'Excellence awards for small crafts harbours and meet some of you there for the work that you did, the recognition that some of you received this week in receiving awards on behalf of your harbour authorities, or as

individuals, for the work that you do. It was an excellent evening. I quite enjoyed myself meeting some of you there. It was a pleasure to take part in that. Congratulations to you on some of the awards that you have won this week for the work you do.

I have three questions. The first is not specific to any area, but it may relate to your area.

A number of years ago the coastal wharves were transferred from Transport Canada to small craft harbours directorate and then down to the individual harbour authorities. As you know, a lot of these wharves were much bigger than the ones you normally deal with. I was wondering about the impact that the transfer of these wharves to small craft harbours and then down to harbour authorities is now having on the harbour authorities as these properties get a little older. I'm not familiar with whether it's the same throughout all regions. I know it is in our region, in Newfoundland.

• (1550)

Mr. Morris Fudge: Well, it's not just recently that the harbour authority at Burin took over a public wharf from Public Works.

It happened to us, and it increased our revenue quite a bit. We now operate with big boats there, because we never had a place to tie up big fishing boats. It's too early for us to see what impact it will have on the harbour authority, because it's only a couple of years that we've been in the business. But it did generate more revenue for us.

Mr. Scott Andrews: I know of a harbour authority that has one of these coastal wharves, and it needs some repair. It generates a lot of revenue for the harbour authorities. However, when small craft harbours were asked, they responded that they don't build that size of wharf any more and they weren't going to maintain that size, but they could tear it down and replace it, bring it in another 50 yards into shallower water and make it smaller. But they were not going to keep that same size of wharf.

The harbour authority is really upset, because it generates huge amounts of revenue for the harbour. Could you just elaborate on the revenue part, Morris?

Mr. Morris Fudge: Well, like I say, we do take in the revenue from them. Last year we had four Nova Scotia boats that landed that summer. It was something like \$4,200 we made off the four boats for the month or so that they were landing fish. That's where they were tying up; it's the only place we had to tie them up. So yes, they do generate revenue.

What happened before we took over the wharf was they got the wharf up to standard. I don't know if there are too many of the harbour authorities that did take over those wharves. I don't know how many it is, but I don't think there are really that many.

Mr. Scott Andrews: It's a good question. I know of a couple of incidents in my area, and I didn't know if it was like that across the country.

Speaking about boats getting bigger and bigger, they've changed regulations now, and people seem to be moving to bigger and bigger boats. What impact is that going to have on the harbour authorities?

Mr. Luc Legresley: I'd just like to make one comment if I could, Morris.

The one thing we saw with the whole fisheries renewal initiative and other programs of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans outside of small craft harbours is that there's a lot of consultation done with fishermen's organizations, and those people—in fisheries and aquaculture management's eyes—were the ones to consult. But in many cases they forget about the harbour authorities and the potential impacts it will have. Whether you're talking about vessels that are going in Newfoundland from 64-11 up to 89-11, it's going to have an impact—larger boats, much larger; fewer boats in some cases. In some cases we've seen increases because of changes in fisheries policy.

The one thing we've been raising nationally is the need to consult with groups such as ours, from a harbour authority perspective, because we're the last ones they think about in terms of a potential impact. At the same time, people like to talk revenue generation, and we have policies that are changing, but we're not being consulted. Let's face it, they have to leave from a harbour and come back to a harbour, so it does have an impact, the policy and changes that are happening. In the west coast we've seen there have been buybacks or purchases of licences, access to licences, but no vessels, and some of the harbour authorities are left to deal with vessels that become abandoned or derelict.

So there are a number of issues there where some consultation in the initial stages would have been, I'm sure, very useful.

Mr. Ben Maberley: I have a couple of comments.

When you talk about the Transport Canada docks, I think in our region the certain impact that it had was that a lot of our uses for various harbours suddenly had to be amalgamated into one harbour. I know that especially in my area we had a Transport Canada dock that we were using for an off-loading facility.

When that was divested, we no longer had access to an off-loading facility. We took over two of the other harbours on our island, but it's been ten years now that we've been gradually working towards being able to off-load on the island. That's ten years we've lost, not having summers where we can adequately off-load. I think Osborne touched on it. It's the consultation, when these things are taking place.

The buybacks are a really good example. If you look at PICFI, the purchasing of licences, that isn't a buyback. It is a reallocation of licences to first nations. What those fisheries will look like, we don't know yet. We have to be able to plan to be able to accept not only those boats but also the fish, the off-loading of fish. A big part of it is being involved in the process so that we can plan at our harbours to facilitate whatever changes are coming into place. It's really important.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Legresley: Boats are constantly increasing in size, which is causing congestion in the Magdalen Islands. Some forty boats will need to use Transport Canada infrastructure instead of the Fisheries and Oceans infrastructure, which represents a very serious problem. On the Magdalen Islands, expansion work enabling the provision of adequate service to 40 or 50 additional boats would cost over \$10 million. It is essential to also consider the fact that increasing boat size means larger drafts.

So, dredging will be increasingly necessary in order to enable these boats to enter current harbours. Whether we like it or not, dredging is quite costly. Furthermore, there are many more requirements related to energy consumption, in particular. This is creating numerous problems for port authorities. Costs are ever increasing. I would like to mention, for example, the fact that about a dozen boats are so large that they have to remain in the water, in the ice, because they cannot be taken out and dry-docked. This is creating many problems.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Andrews: Finally, I have another thought. We discussed it at our last meeting as well: the working relationship that you have with recreational boaters and the relationship between the commercial side and the recreational side, and then where small craft harbours fit in there, because in a lot of incidents you have a lot of recreational boaters. If you could do something for them, you would move them from one part of your harbour to another and free up space on the commercial side.

I'm wondering if I could just get your thoughts on the recreational boater side, and on how small craft harbours treat recreational boaters in the scheme of things. Is it important?

Mr. Osborne Burke: Perhaps I may speak to that.

I'm a president of a harbour authority where there are six harbours. We've merged together voluntarily. In some of those facilities we do accommodate recreational vessels, so it's not so much small craft harbours as small craft harbours facilities. We will request funding to rebuild the facilities or do what we can. Where possible, we would try to put some floating docks for recreational vessels on one side of the harbour, looking at the potential of revenue generation. There are some facilities where it's just not suitable to have a recreational component, but there are some where there is a willingness to do it.

Our harbour authority board of directors, for example, includes a representative of recreational boaters. We try to encourage it wherever possible. In the long term, I think there's potential for that, from one coast to the other, where possible, to increase revenues. Again, that's part of our lease. It's not only the commercial fishery—which is a priority, of course, to us—but it does also state public access. From a tourism potential, a recreational boating potential, wherever we can try to accommodate that, I think most harbour authorities have.

Mr. Morris Fudge: In the Newfoundland region we accommodate recreational boats, but the fisherman comes first. If we get space and so on for recreational boats, then we get to do it. There's a lot of revenue in that, and we do the best we can for those guys. We don't have any complaints with them, and I'm sure they appreciate it. It's not only for the Newfoundlanders. These yachts come in from all over the world. We're having yachts in Burin. We accommodate them to the best of our ability. We just haven't got a problem with that.

•(1600)

Mr. Stacy Linington: In our area in Alberta we actually adjust our commercial fishing seasons around the angling. We fish early in the spring and late in the fall, typically before school is out, and not again until after school is back in. We do that deliberately to make room for the anglers, because they help support our facility. Their fees pay most of the shot for our facility for the year, so we do whatever we can to accommodate the anglers at our facility.

We don't view them as a problem, but once in a while they view us as so. We do whatever we can to accommodate them, and I believe it's the same throughout the central and Arctic region.

Mr. Ben Mabblerley: In the Pacific region, as you know, it's a big source of our revenue. We rely heavily on recreational boaters. The one advantage we have, of course, is year-round moorage. We don't have to pull boats out and we don't have ice problems. So our ability to accommodate recreational boaters through the winter is a big source of revenue for us.

Keep in mind that we are fishing harbours. The relationship with small craft harbours is actually a relationship between harbour authorities and recreational boaters. As a harbour authority we give priority to our commercial fishermen. We accommodate recreational use when we can, because we need the revenue. It's clear when you look at the numbers that we need all the revenue we can get into this program.

I think the relationship's pretty good. As Stacy said, maybe sometimes we're viewed as being a little bit of the problem, but they're fishing docks, and that's the number-one priority.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Blais.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Members of the national harbour authority advisory committee, good day.

This week, the committee members had a discussion. We talked a great deal about the request for proposals process. It was announced that there is a certain amount of money in the budget for repairs, etc. Is there sufficient oversight of the process to ensure that delays will not be an issue? Perhaps the requests for proposals will be announced in early fall and, as a result, work may not commence before next year.

I wanted to hear from you and learn whether, for each region, the current request for proposals process is sufficiently clear, smooth and reasonably quick from the time the funding is allocated to the program to the time you learn that your application has been given priority. Is there anything in the request for proposals process that needs to be changed? I would like to hear from Mr. Legresley first, and then the others.

Mr. Luc Legresley: The best people to talk to you about that are members of the regional boards. However, from having spoken with different people waiting for some work to be done, I can tell you that the process is sometimes slow, particularly when we know that winter is coming, for example. Without taking sides and saying that

the work has not been well done, I think that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is doing quite extensive work in order to be able to respect government standards. In fact, we are asking it to spend \$200 million over two years. If we asked it to do this over three years, things would be done differently. I can answer you in the affirmative, but it depends on the region.

In Quebec, it's not always easy, since there are fewer and fewer entrepreneurs, a fact that you must be aware of. Each time there is a request for proposals, there might be one or two bids whereas, previously, there would have been three, four, five or more. I know that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is doing its best in Quebec, but I am convinced that there may be a staff shortage, that it does not have all the staff it needs to properly promote its files. That can be a disadvantage.

•(1605)

Mr. Raynald Blais: Morris?

[English]

Mr. Morris Fudge: To me, the earlier in the year they can get those projects out the better, in the Newfoundland region. We're on the northeast coast, and after January the ice comes in and you really can't do much work. So you want to get the projects out early in the spring and get the work done in the summertime. Most of the projects come out in March, and then it's July, August, or maybe September before you get started, and then it's too late in the fall. So I think the projects should be announced and attended to earlier in the year.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Osborne?

[English]

Mr. Osborne Burke: I believe with the small craft harbours staff and the public works department and with the harbour authorities, we've had a lot of time to plan, as we said before this committee in the past, and there's been a lot of planning and a lot of preparation done. Even with that, you have a tendering process, and you'd probably be the first to say that we need to make sure the government follows the proper tendering process. All that takes time to put in place. But believe me, when the project's announced, the harbour authority and the small craft harbours staff and public works department are doing their utmost to make sure it happens as timely as possible. From a local point of view, we're the watchdogs. We're there; we're working with them. It's a team effort in trying to make sure we get everything done.

Could some of them happen sooner? In some cases, we're having dredging where you have to mobilize and demobilize equipment and bring it in long distance into isolated areas. You could have delays in getting materials, ordering materials. All those are always challenges, but overall I think they're doing an excellent job with what they have. There's been some additional staff put in place. There are still staffing issues, but considering what's there, I think they're doing a hell of a good job together. I'm hopeful that the \$200 million will be spent and that we'll find a few more additional dollars before our two-year timeframe is up.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Stacy?

[English]

Mr. Stacy Linington: In our immediate area, there was nothing pressing that needed to be done, so in the area where I'm from, there are no major projects that are being done. I do know that projects are prioritized and have been for several years before the announcement of this fund. It appears that they are advancing with things in the order that they were prioritized way before the fund was announced. I know there was a lot of engineering done before that \$200 million was ever announced, so as far as I can see from the way things are advancing, they are going according to plan.

As far as the tendering process goes, the only things we've been involved in at our harbours have been smaller projects that we've been able to look after locally without the assistance of small craft harbours Winnipeg. So I'm not really...

Mr. Ben Maberley: In the Pacific region, I think you have to remember too that of the \$200 million, only a third of the harbours were actually affected by that money. So two-thirds of the harbours are still waiting for money for projects.

As the president of the harbour authority, it's my job for sure to make sure that our planning process is appropriate, so we work on five-year plans. We make sure that any projects we need are on the books, so that if money does come along, small craft harbours can respond. I don't think there's anybody who doubts the dollar value that the small craft harbours directorate provides in projects that they do. It has excellent staff right across the country.

As a harbour authority, we can only do so much. We prepare our five-year plans, and we're ready to go if the money is available. Then it's up to them to decide which projects they're going to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Legresley: Ben mentioned that one third of the port authorities or harbour infrastructures were affected by the \$200 million. But just because a third of the port authorities or harbour infrastructures are getting funding does not mean that the fishing harbour problem has been resolved. Tomorrow, we might say that all small craft harbours still have safety issues. We need to be careful when we talk about one third or two thirds. In some places, ramps have been built, but the wharf beside it might not be safe.

•(1610)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank you, gentlemen, for coming. We always appreciate hearing from you. We get straight answers to our questions, and we always appreciate that.

I want to take the opportunity as well to thank you for your work. We certainly do acknowledge the good work that the harbour authorities do. In fact, we're always very impressed when we're out there or when we're talking to you here with the investment that you make on our behalf. We realize that, and we do want to thank you for that on behalf of the government.

I'm going to split my time with Mr. Allen, so don't let me go beyond five minutes if possible.

I want to thank you, Ben, for the point that you made. I think it's a point we may have missed so far in our study, that we need to do a better job of consulting when there are fish management issues that will have an impact, or ocean issues that will have an impact on the small craft harbours. I think we do need to keep you in the loop there better than we've done.

I want to follow up a little on Mr. Blais's line of questioning with respect to how work gets done. We've heard along the way that it would be helpful to the harbour authorities if the \$40,000 limit were increased perhaps several times, to maybe \$200,000. I think that's a figure we might have heard in our travels. I just wonder what you think about that. Would that help you get your work done and perhaps get more bang for the buck in the dollars that are spent?

Mr. Ben Maberley: Thanks.

We've talked at this table before about the \$40,000, and the thing we have to realize is that \$40,000 doesn't do much of a project any more. Most of the time what we have to do in the harbours is take a project and break it down into pieces so that we don't exceed that limit. Through the NHAAC process, we came up with what would be a suitable number, which would be about \$200,000 for projects for harbour authorities.

I'm in a small community, and it's very important to my community that we be able to do our work and do the projects in our harbour with community members. We would like to keep that money. We don't want to see Public Works come in with their bids. We would like that competition to be within our community.

We do need to get that number up there. Forty thousand dollars is not enough. Of course, in my previous testimony we did ask for it before, and it was reduced when we asked. Maybe I should ask for it to be reduced and maybe it will go up. I'm not sure what the strategy is here, but clearly we do need to get it up to a reasonable level where harbour authorities are able to manage their own projects.

If you want bang for the buck, that's the best way to do it. We all realize that.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Thank you, Ben.

Mr. Osborne Burke: Just to add to what Ben said, the \$40,000 is not \$40,000 to start with, because it's inclusive of HST, first of all. In reality it is about \$34,800 or somewhere around there. That may not be exact.

Second, the \$40,000 was set way back when, which is probably not keeping pace with the cost of inflation, the cost of materials, and everything these days.

Third, we definitely need that raise, because in many cases it's the harbour authority putting out the tenders. We can get it done just as effectively with supervision from either Public Works or private engineering and hire local contractors, put local people to work where possible, and take on jobs that are within the abilities of the harbour authorities, because those can vary from region to region and even within regions. I think if you want an efficient use of dollars, somebody has to convince Treasury Board to understand.

In addition, harbour authorities have a proven track record with small craft harbours, with over 20 years of delivering on them and being very mindful of the funds, because we're all taxpayers too.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Legresley: I think that before we increase this amount, we need to make sure that the work will be done according to standards. A floating dock, for example, is a minor job, but in Quebec there are no floating docks. Our tides are quite high. This is also true in the Maritimes.

Personally, I wouldn't like to be given \$200,000 to do something that I have no experience doing. Of course, in Quebec, construction standards also need to be considered. Some work cannot be done there, while it can be done in other regions. The \$200,000 can always be given to someone with the skills required to do the work. The work will be very well done in that case. However, the same amount could be given to somebody who will do a much bigger project that won't last as long. The quality of the work will perhaps not be the same. I think it's important to make this distinction. You cannot give \$200,000 to just anyone. The individual has to have the skills required and be able to ensure that quality work is done. That is important.

•(1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Good. Thank you for that.

I'm out of time. I was going to ask a follow-up question, though: Do you see any sort of negative aspects of raising it? So I think that's a good point, Luc, at least a caution there that it needs to be spent well if it's higher and to make sure those things are in place.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today. I do appreciate the straightforward answers. It's very good.

Luc, I just want to start with you. In your document, where it talks about situations and questions, it says, "Wharves for divestiture are located near cultural sites or in villages, and since many of those wharves have been abandoned, the effect is not esthetically pleasing." And the question is, is it normal for the federal government to allow those structures?

I want to ask a question about the A-base funding, because each of you has talked about that, and I'm sure everybody sees that kind of thing for these wharves targeted for divestiture. We're going to be looking at the department and making a report here, but what are your thoughts on the ground about this?

Given that budgets are so tight, and Morris, you've asked for two wheelbarrows full, maybe you should ask for half and maybe you will get a full one, using that same theory. But would you be concerned that budgets are so tight that expanding that mandate would result in difficulties at the core fishing harbours?

I'd appreciated any of your comments on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Legresley: The wharf you are talking about is located in my community.

Approximately 14 years ago, when we started work on this file, we were talking about approximately \$250,000 to \$300,000 in work. Today, the work has been assessed at anywhere from \$1 million to \$1.5 million.

Earlier, I said that I was unable to forget about the December 22 storm, because it is my birthday. On that day, I got a call telling me that something very serious was happening. We could no longer see the wharf, just the lamp post.

In this case it is also important to recognize the work of the people at the Quebec Department of Transport. One man has worked there for 35 years. There is Highway 132 and a bridge. In 35 years of work, this man had never seen the tide that high. Furthermore, we sent photos to engineers at Fisheries and Oceans Canada and they all had the same reaction. They asked what was happening. The tide was at 4.4, which is extremely low. Normally, it is dangerous at 5.2 or 5.4. This is quite a unique situation.

Furthermore, a lot of tourists come to this regions. We have fought a number of battles, and I think it is unfortunate to see facilities... People from all over come to pay us a visit—from Europe, etc. When they see it, they ask us who it belongs to. The answer is always the same, the Government of Canada. It is a bit unfortunate to see this. It is right in a village. We are not alone. I am certain that this is happening in various regions across Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Allen: Does anybody else want to comment about the A-base idea and whether it should be expanded?

Mr. Osborne Burke: For clarification, when you say "expanded", are you talking about small craft harbours taking on additional dollars for divestiture?

Mr. Mike Allen: On the basis that these divested wharves are targeted for divestiture and they're sitting there in bad shape—and they're an eyesore, really—should we just be targeting that A-base funding to make sure that it's for the direct core fishing harbours and maybe something else, or whatever?

Mr. Osborne Burke: With small craft harbours—and it might be a question for them as well—my argument to the committee would be, let's put the dollars in A-base funding. My understanding is that small craft harbours would have a plan on how to deal with divestiture region by region or where there's a large number of harbours that need to be divested. I'd put my trust in them that they would obviously have the priority to the core harbours, but at the same time, the reality is that those facilities are there, and with the dollars and enough time to plan, I think they have the ability to do both: to focus on the core harbours, but also to slowly deal with, over time, those other harbours that need to be divested.

I would trust their judgment. I know they have plans and priorities and try to deal with so many a year. I'd leave that to them to deal with. I think they're quite capable of handling it.

•(1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Legresley: I would like to give you some more information with regard to the divestiture program. Two or three years ago, it was \$82 million. Today, I am certain that this figure is closer to \$100 million. It is essential that the A-base funding for essential harbours not be touched.

According to the document that I submitted to you, 70% of the funding in Quebec goes to dredging, and approximately \$1.1 or \$1.2 million remains for some 100 fishing or pleasure boating harbours. It should be a completely separate budget. If funding is taken to repair essential harbours, those other harbours will suffer. There already is not enough money. Clearly, we need a completely separate budget. It should be a completely separate program for essential fishing harbours.

[*English*]

Mr. Osborne Burke: The only caution I would throw out, though, to my fellow representative is that I wouldn't want to see small craft harbours' hands tied if there were a separate pot of money and they had no flexibility. Suppose there comes a time when there's a core harbour in the A-base funding, and we have to trust their judgment. If you identify a separate pot of money, will they have the ability to work with that and apply it to a core fishing harbour if priorities change? I'd be very cautious. I would throw that caution out on that.

Mr. Ben Maberley: Yes, I think it's worth remembering that we have a fund right now for divestiture. I believe it was \$45 million over five years. That's still available. And I echo the comments. A-base funding is critical. If our A-base funding is increased and there are problems, we can solve the problems. But it's very difficult if money is targeted for one specific problem at the expense of A-base funding.

The Chair: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

We'll go to Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you very much, and welcome, ladies and gentlemen. You do a great job. I was here when this was established. I don't know that I was the biggest fan of harbour authorities at the time, but I think it turned out to be a pretty efficient way of handling things. I think the people who know best are the ones who walk on the wharves and know exactly what the problems are.

I want to also welcome the people behind you. I want to also make sure to say that you're representing a lot of great people right across the country who do an awful lot of work for nothing. We all know and appreciate that.

I have a lot of questions and a short time.

You mentioned that there are 237 harbour authorities in your area. You mentioned a figure—I don't know if you knew the figure—which was what you thought it would take to put the harbours back in reasonable shape. That figure is not available, is it?

I forget who it was who indicated, I think, that there was a \$200,000 job that became a \$1.5 million job, and that's what happens when the face of the wharf allows the water to go in behind, and the

ice.... I'd just like you to explain what happens when the dollars are not spent. That \$200,000 can become a one- or two-million dollar tab for the government. It is a disgrace for government to have dilapidated wharves around the country.

I'd just like you to comment on that first, Osborne, and anybody else who wishes to.

Mr. Osborne Burke: Certainly. In relation to the numbers, I think we've heard in testimony in the past the number \$500 million or something. The small craft harbours directorate would probably be best suited to providing the actual numbers in terms of dollars. What I mentioned earlier today was that just in projects we could potentially complete at harbours in the Maritimes and gulf region, the amount would be in the range of \$600 million to \$700 million for about 1,500 to 1,700 projects, if you wanted to do everything that needs to be done over the long term.

I don't think we'll ever have enough dollars to address it all. We're just fooling ourselves if we sit around here and think we will. We're trying to be as creative as we can be. That leads into the second point you're making, which is that wherever we can, we need to do preventive maintenance. There are several initiatives we're doing nationally with small craft harbours staff and regionally. We're coming up with harbour authority maintenance manuals and checklists for the volunteers, or paid staff, where we have them, so they can get out there to check our facilities to try to catch something.

It's no different from your house. If you have a minor leak and leave it alone, a little while later, if you don't deal with it, the whole wall is gone, and you're into major repairs. We've seen that over a number of years when we didn't have sufficient dollars in the A-base to deal with it. If we deal with something today, it might be a \$40,000 repair. If you leave it alone, you could have ice damage and storm damage. It gets undermined, and the first thing you know, the whole wharf collapses.

•(1625)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: And there's the ice.

Mr. Osborne Burke: The ice is a factor. We have global warming and the impact of rising sea levels. That's another thing that concerns us, and we're seeing the impact of that. We're seeing more infilling, more storms, and less ice cover.

That's something the committee should address as well, because that's going to have a significant impact as we go forward. In many cases now, I believe they're designing, if you talk to Public Works, somewhere in the range of a metre of additional height for newer facilities to try to deal with it. Of course, here we're mostly patching up and repairing existing facilities. We don't have the dollars to even visit a whole lot of new facilities at this point in time.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Do you feel that we need an analysis, or should DFO do a study on the situation of wharves—of what is essential, what needs to be done in two or three years, and what needs to be done over the next five years?

The problem I see, having been involved in this, is... I know that one harbour in my district was a \$150,000 job, but by the time we got to it, it was a \$1.5 million job. It was done, but you know what that does to the A-base funding.

Mr. Osborne Burke: Certainly, and I'd ask any one of the others to jump in here.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I don't want to answer the questions, but it's—

Mr. Ben Maberley: I think you raise a great point. For years we've been playing catch-up here. At some point we can't do that; we're going to lose facilities. We have facilities now that are becoming divested because they become derelict.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Why?

Mr. Ben Maberley: Well, we all know why; it's because of lack of funds. It's great, at some point, to get the \$200 million so that there's a good portion of work being done in a very short period of time, but we know that's not realistic for a long-term plan.

You see this throughout the country. You see docks that are slowly deteriorating. You can't get the funds to do the small work that we should be doing at that particular time, rather than the big work, but the problem you run into is just trying to get the money in the department to do the work. If we don't have any money, we don't have much to do anything.

I think most harbour authorities have five- to ten-year plans. We know what the problems are in our harbour. So I'm not sure that a study would help.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Harbour authorities have them, but does DFO have one?

I think the \$40-million increase would eliminate some of the big problems down the road.

Mr. Ben Maberley: A \$40 million increase would?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: I'm talking about the emergency funding, the \$20 million. If the emergency funding allocation were increased, you could deal with a lot the difficult problems.

Mr. Ben Maberley: I think...but I would put the number far higher than that.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Well, so would I.

Mr. Ben Maberley: Yes, it's a matter of scale. You're going to get what you pay for, at the end of the day.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

Monsieur Lévesque.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good day, gentlemen. I also want to welcome the individuals accompanying you and who seem extremely interested. They are not missing a word of what is being said.

Luc, you mentioned in your report a \$2.3-million amount just for dredging. In your opinion, would it be preferable for dredging fees to be taken out of your budget and allocated to the navy? You could then use the rest of your budget to maintain small craft harbours.

You mentioned a problem you had dealt with, Ben, on the Pacific coast. You talked about adopting legislation under which you could divest yourselves of small abandoned boats. I don't know whether anything has been done in this regard. Once Luc has answered, could you respond to this question?

If there is any time remaining, I will give it to Raynald.

• (1630)

Mr. Luc Legresley: The budget forecast sets out a formula for this, but we are not going to get into a fight over money. Some politicians do not want to provide any more money for this. Whatever happens, I certainly believe that the best-case scenario for the Quebec region would be to have dredging considered separately. You have to remember that at the moment dredging represents 66% of the budget, and next year that figure will rise to 70%. Dredging costs are not static; however, they are recurrent, and have to be addressed every year. If the matter could be settled for 10 or 15 years, that would be great, but today there are so many problems with dredging in Quebec that we have to start from scratch every year. It is becoming increasingly expensive, especially because of storms. The situation is set to become increasingly catastrophic for the Quebec region. The reason that I am speaking about Quebec is that I cannot speak for the other regions.

You have to mitigate the high costs Quebec faces because of dredging. We have nothing left to repair our wharfs. We only have \$1.2 million over 5 years to repair our wharfs, and that is a serious problem. In fact, we no longer repair our wharfs, we patch them up. Rather than carrying out \$30,000 or \$40,000 dollars' worth of work, we spend \$1,000 or \$2,000 and then do it all again the following year. We are unfortunately not solving anything.

[English]

Mr. Ben Maberley: Are you referring to the derelict vessel problem in Pacific region? I'm not quite sure what you were referring to in the Pacific region.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: I was referring to abandoned boats.

[English]

Mr. Ben Maberley: Yes, okay.

In the Pacific region a committee has been formed to study the issue. It involves agencies from small craft harbours throughout the province, but also the volunteer organizations, harbour authorities, and what's called the HABC, the Harbour Authority Association of B.C. The committee has been formed, and they've done a study to get a handle on the problem to see where the solutions can be found.

It's a very difficult issue, because it crosses so many jurisdictions. The problem you have, of course, is that once again you have volunteers trying to find a solution for a problem, and it's taxing. But there is a study underway to try to get a handle on the problem. It's very big, from what we understand from the numbers we're getting. We're hopefully going to be able to come up with some solutions, but it's a very difficult issue, and we don't really have any answers to it right now.

We had presentations during the conference on derelict vessels. The truth is that one sinking of a derelict vessel at your harbour can bankrupt the harbour authority. It's that simple. We need to find a solution for it. This is going to be an issue right across the country. I talked with Morris earlier, and it's an issue in Newfoundland now.

The problem we have, once again, is that we have volunteers trying to find a solution to a problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Legresley: If I may, I would like to comment on that.

Unfortunately, in today's society, the various port authorities and departments act once a problem has arisen. Why do we not act until disaster strikes? I am sure that if the Canadian Parliament took preventive measures, rather than waiting for problems to arise, it would make life easier for all of the departments and port authorities concerned.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Chair, I've been on this committee for almost three years, and this is the first time this has ever happened. We actually have an Albertan testifying at the committee—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blaine Calkins: —so I would like to welcome Mr. Linington here.

I'm assuming that you're filling in for or have replaced Mr. Benson, who I think was here last year representing the central and Arctic region. Is that correct?

• (1635)

Mr. Stacy Linington: Actually, it was Dave Thomas.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Was it Dave? Fair enough.

Anyway, I can die a happy man now—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blaine Calkins: That's all it took.

I would like to welcome everybody here. I feel as though I've been flailing away as an Albertan—as the only prairie boy on this committee—for a couple of years and am going to waste all my time in joy, rather than getting to these questions.

But let me get to the point.

I want to talk about the funding for the central and Arctic region. When the bureaucrats come before us, the funding we hear about for the central and Arctic is considerably less than that for the other regions. That goes without saying.

In your testimony, Mr. Linington, you've indicated that there are all kinds of issues around landing of fish, not having the proper authorities, and fish getting basically put in the bush because it doesn't store like grain on the prairies, as you well know.

In previous testimony, we also heard from fishermen, when we were in Manitoba talking about this issue in the first round of testimony, that the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act is something else that particularly separates the freshwater fishery from the saltwater fisheries. Could you give this committee any advice on how the lack of harbours impacts upon the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation on how the corporation affects your fishery, and on what we should be looking at as a committee to make recommendations to the government?

This committee will be tasked with doing something different once this report is over, and it would be my desire to have the committee take a look at the relevance of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act and the corporation to see whether they still make sense for freshwater fishermen.

Mr. Stacy Linington: Right now the only solution we have is to talk about getting rid of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. It's something you'd have to prepare for years in advance. Our plants would all have to upgrade first and you'd have to start to develop markets well in advance of even thinking about such a change. I know at times it seems that they're not serving us very well. The prices aren't as high as we'd like, but that's something we need to plan with a view to the future, probably ten years down the road.

I was talking earlier about the lack of harbours in our area. There are many opportunities for commercial fisheries in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and right across. There's a lot of water out there and a lot of potential to produce fish. We're probably under-producing in the freshwater area by six or seven million pounds a year. That would be a conservative estimate. If we were to start to use some of the species that we're throwing away, it would probably be three or four times that. A lot of these fisheries are not accessible right now, because the infrastructure isn't in place to access those fisheries. These are some of the things that fishers in our area would like to see addressed. The budget doesn't allow for it right now, but we hope that one day down the road it will.

Because the program has been geared towards the upkeep of the harbours we have right now, the percentage of money going to the central Arctic is small. We've always had fewer harbours, and our harbours are smaller and easier to maintain. Our percentage is small, and the chances of getting those harbours in the other places doesn't seem likely in the near future, except when there's a political push as there was for the Pangnirtung project. That's millions of dollars, and it's not counted in the budgets we talked about today.

There has to be a lot of political pressure to get a new harbour built. We're trying to maintain the old harbours, but for the new ones there needs to be political pressure and funds have to be set aside. That would have to be outside the core funding that we're talking about now.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Let's get on to the Arctic area. There's been a study commissioned about economic viability, and it's been proposed that seven harbours would work for the Arctic fisheries. One of them is Pangnirtung, which our government has already committed funding to.

How do you see that playing out? You have an interesting stake there. You're the only area that would have a competing interest within your own region for a saltwater fishery versus the freshwater fisheries. If it should come down to funding issues, what would your recommendation be? Would you proceed with the freshwater fisheries or the Arctic fisheries?

Mr. Stacy Linington: We've always said that all fishermen deserve a safe place to land their fish. They're fishermen like we are. They've been left out of the loop forever. It's their time to get some money spent up there. There has been a fishery up on Baker Lake and other areas in what is now Nunavut for years, but there has been no money spent on that fishery. It's their time. We'd like to see our time come somewhere along the road. We'll be patient for a little while longer and we hope it'll come, but it is their time right now, and they need to have that investment.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): First, thanks for coming. I'll pass on my compliments as well for the work that all of you do.

I had a question about derelict vessels. I thank you for answering the question. I discovered the size of the issue and how complicated it was a little over a year ago when we travelled to British Columbia, only to come back to Newfoundland and Labrador to find much of the same thing happening there. That too is starting to multiply.

One of the big messages we got out of it was that the boats are not getting any smaller—they're getting much bigger and this is becoming a problem. When you formulate some of this stuff, it seems like a lot of it is based on the amount of harvesters within each wharf, but they don't take into account the size of the vessels. Someone brought up the change in rules for the bigger vessels.

My question pertains to funding. As Mr. MacAulay pointed out earlier, you are the ones who walk on the wharves. Sometimes you're expected to walk on water, and that's not easy to do. Outside the government funding, the A-base budgeting, how has it changed in the past few years with respect to revenue and the fees you charge? That's a difference, too. Some provinces charge more and some charge much less. It depends on the market. How is it that the model you have right now is not working? Of course, I include not just recreation, but primarily landings and that sort of thing.

Mr. Ben Mabblerley: I love this question.

Harbour authorities are independent organizations. We have within that structure the ability to set our rates. I would really question the fact that it's not working. Our revenues were \$11 million ten years ago. Today, a conservative estimate puts them at \$24 million. We believe that number is much higher. We've asked small craft harbours to do a study on what that number is, because we believe it to be significantly higher. The fact is that in those ten years we have done our job. We've found different sources of revenue. We've managed to raise our revenue base to the small craft harbours program by 250%, so I would question that we need to look for new sources.

We're getting to a point now where all our structures are full, so at some point you're going to see a levelling off of what we can do outside of raising rates. But you have to remember, if you look in the Pacific region, that the average crew share for a fisherman is less than \$20,000. That's poverty level. You can't expect people to pay.... The expression right across the coast is that it all comes out of the caught end. It doesn't matter if you raise the rates. It is either coming out of one pocket or it's coming out of the other pocket. These are fishermen. If you look at those 5,000 volunteers, they are fishermen. There are fishermen on these boards of harbour authorities. They are running these harbour authorities. The fact that in ten years these fishermen, these harbour authorities, have been able to raise their revenues by 250% suggests to me that we've done our job. We are doing our job.

Mr. Scott Simms: I'll expand. I'll let you answer, but just to add to that point, of that extra money you are getting, in my opinion, from what I hear, a lot of it goes toward the operation of the outfit itself. Now you are looking for capital investment. What of that revenue covers off only operating expense?

[Translation]

I am not aware of what the situation is in Quebec. I do not know whether it is the same.

Mr. Luc Legresley: With regard to the Quebec region, I find it a bit strange that you are talking about increasing revenues. We have done our share. By way of example, when I started out, vessels paid an average of \$200, and sometimes as much as \$500 or \$600. You have to remember what fishermen earn, and bear in mind that it was a disastrous year for lobster fishers.

A reference was made earlier to the difficulty of collecting money. Fishermen are increasingly struggling to pay their berthing charges. Like it or not, we are going to see more and more cases brought before the small claims court in Quebec. You can increase the charges, but it does not mean that people would be able to afford to pay more. I think that, as Ben said, in true Canadian style, we should say to the government that we have done our bit. It is now time for the Canadian government to see what can be done to help the industry, port authorities and fishermen.

• (1645)

Mr. Scott Simms: What is the situation with...

[English]

The Chair: Very quickly, please.

Mr. Scott Simms: I had better let you comment on this, because some other people didn't have a chance.

Mr. Osborne Burke: One quick comment I could make is that harbour authorities have a lease with the federal government on the federal facility, and in that lease it states quite clearly that, as volunteers, we are responsible for operating costs. That's the sum total right there. When you look at economic viability, if we have a harbour with ten vessels or six vessels and they're generating \$2,000 or \$3,000 and they're covering their operating costs, they've met the basic commitment in what they are trying to do as volunteers, in my opinion. But in the vast majority of cases, you have these harbour authorities that are well in excess of that and they are contributing and it would be on a project-by-project basis how many dollars. It doesn't all just go into operating. Moneys go from harbour authorities into projects. In our region, there are some that have put in hundreds of thousands of dollars. Some of them may have put in \$2,000, but it's just as important to that harbour and far and above what the requirement is or what's required in the lease.

And we are continually looking for money. We personally made a presentation to our municipality, which we had never done before. We got \$100,000 over five years to contribute. That's \$100,000 we can now put somewhere else in the small craft harbours program, from another source. So that benefits everybody. We are continually striving to find these dollars.

I really hope the message around the table is that we have more than done our job. What we need is A-base funding. We need \$50 million annually in A-base funding. Let's give it to the small craft harbours. Emergency funds and pots of money like we just saw are good. We were starved to death for years. Thank you very much. I think Lawrence mentioned \$40 million more earlier. That would be great. We'd take it. But if we want to do the right job for everybody's benefit and for the taxpayers of Canada, we need consistent funding over a longer period of time to plan properly and spend wisely. Pots of money are great, but don't starve us for five years or ten years and then give us a pot of money. It just doesn't work. With anything, you need to know what you have coming so you can plan.

The Chair: Mr. Linington, you wanted to make a comment?

Mr. Stacy Linington: I can't speak to every other harbour, I can only speak to my own harbour. When we started our harbour authority some years back, we took over a facility that you wouldn't have gotten anything for if you were to try to sell it to the private sector. You would have had to pay to get rid of it. Over the years small craft harbours directorate has probably invested somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100,000 in our harbour. We've invested in our harbour an additional \$300,000 to \$400,000 of our own money, not counting our time and effort. We turned that facility into something today that's worth millions of dollars. That value goes to you guys. We don't retain any of the value from all of our efforts on that project. Now, for people to say that maybe we're not getting good bang for the buck, that's not the case. It may be the case sometimes, and I can't speak to every harbour, but if you look across the country from the time those harbours were turned over to the harbour authorities, and the actual difference between the value of them then and the value of them today, I think you'd find you have a lot more money there now than what you've invested in those harbours over the years.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Blais.

[Translation]

Mr. Reynald Blais: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I may, in the next few minutes, we could talk about the renewal problem and volunteers in general. The last time we saw one another, I heard a clear message, that is a lot of frustration, exhaustion and fatigue. I sense today as I did last time, that you remain focused and are not discouraged despite all this. At the same time, the renewal is a problem.

People see what you are doing, and at some point, they think that it's not necessarily interesting to have to scratch the bottom of the barrel and more to ensure that users can get their money's worth. You are also subject to their frustrations. We must not forget that. I know that people will not forget it, particularly the committee members. This is part of the problem.

The volunteers of yesterday, today and tomorrow need new blood. I'd like to hear you talk about the level of burnout, irritation and frustration that you're experiencing. Is it still there now?

• (1650)

Mr. Luc Legresley: The answer is yes. However, I can tell you that the \$200 million was extremely useful. However, without further funding, the same thing could happen again in two years' time. If the pot bubbles over the lid will blow off.

I have been a member of the harbour authority for the past 14 years as well as a member of the regional and national advisory boards for the past ten. We have met with many people. I am convinced that if the government had not given \$200 million this year, Quebec would no longer be on the port authority map, I can guarantee you that. I had some 30 motions by port authorities that were prepared to quit the Harbour Authority Program. Let me tell you why. I am not in the business of politics but I want to remain true to myself.

We are tired of being told to be patient. In life, we need to be able to set deadlines. That's where it matters. For the past 14 years, we've been told that it's coming. It finally came after 14 years. It took a very long time. Starting today, the best thing that needs to be done is to stop selling dreams. We need to look at reality head-on. We can or we can't. We will be able to turn around and react or take action in order to reach solutions that will help us. If we are told to be patient because it's coming, we're going to wait. We have to stop that right now.

If our governments aren't able to invest, they should tell us that and then we'll see what we can do. There is not much more we can do.

[English]

Mr. Osborne Burke: To add to Luc's comments and Morris's wheelbarrow or two of money, if we have the dollars, we can go a long way on fatigue. Yes, we're challenged, no different from any other volunteer group across the country in recruiting people and getting them in there. When you get the volunteers in, typically it's the same faces in the community at ten different locations. God forbid you would call a meeting of all the volunteer groups the same night. It would be a tough situation.

There are challenges, and we'll always have the challenges, and we have to try to work on recruiting volunteers. But the biggest issue we come back to, when you talk many times with boards of directors, is the frustration level, whether their wharfs barricaded, whether they need dredging. Sure, we'll have all those challenges. I think we always will. We're going to have it in many groups. We'll have to continually work on that, and we are with small craft harbours staff.

We have funds for training and are trying to get orientation packages together and recruit people. Once we get them in the program or volunteering, usually they're not going to leave. They're usually committed, and they're in there. They're usually lifers. We got them there; we only need to get a few more.

But overall it comes back.... Once again, dollars can carry us a long a way if we have decent facilities. We can concentrate on recruiting volunteers when we have our facilities in conditions that are safe.

To add one more comment, our wharves are no different from anybody else's, or your workplace here. If you had a workplace to go to that was barricaded, deteriorating, the deck falling off, the roof falling in, occupational health and safety people would probably close it down and something would have to be done. Well, for our fishermen and these fish harvesters, these are their workplaces, other than their vessels. They need a safe workplace to come to and to come home to at night. That's what needs to be addressed.

Mr. Morris Fudge: Fatigue, to me, I don't know what it means. As far as I'm concerned, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. But what I get frustrated with is the people, the fishermen. In my community, we're supposed to have this breakwater and we've been working on this the last three or four years. Yes, we're going to get the breakwater; we're going to get it this year, we're going to get it next year. Well, hopefully, I'm going to get it next year. But that is the problem. If you tell someone, "We're going to get the money this year, we're going to get the money", they're coming back, "How come we never got the money? Where's the money? We never got the money." I mean, that's what gets you down a bit, but fatigue, nah, there's no such thing as fatigue.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Andrews: Not in the Newfoundland region, at least.

• (1655)

The Chair: Mr. Linington, please.

Mr. Stacy Linington: Yes. I think when we're talking about fatigue, if you take a group of volunteers and they go to work and put in 1,000 hours, say, and at the end of their 1,000 hours their facility looks much improved, they walk away and they're smiling,

they're happy. They're not fatigued. If that same group of individuals puts in that 1,000 hours and, because there was no investment in their facility, at the end of 1,000 hours their facility looks rundown and no better than when they started, that group is fatigued.

As long as we see improvement in our facilities as we go along, the fatigue isn't nearly as much an issue. But the guys who are putting in a whole bunch of hours and seeing their facility continually run down further and further, they get fatigued.

Mr. Ben Mabberley: I'm a commercial fisherman. We've been in that fire a long time, right? We don't feel the heat any more.

You know, it is an issue. You look behind and you don't see a lot of young people coming up into the fishing industry. You hope things are going to get better, because that's going to allow you to recruit more volunteers.

I've been involved in this, you know, Pacific and these advisory boards for a long time. Pretty much, if you have a problem, fishermen can solve it. At the table, you look at the insurance issues, the maintenance manuals, the initiatives that have come out of the advisory boards—we've solved quite a few problems for volunteers in this process. You know we can do that.

We're not worried about volunteer fatigue, if we can show progress. I think everybody says that. At the end of the day, you have to show that you're replacing the planks on your dock. You just have to. Otherwise, you lose them. Yes, like Morris says, what's fatigue, right? We're fishermen.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you and welcome, all of you. It certainly is nice to have you here.

Coming from Miramichi, New Brunswick, I certainly appreciate the value of our wharves and appreciate the work that was done by you and all volunteers.

One person mentioned municipalities, and I'm wondering if there are any other breaks that we could consider that municipalities would give you, such as maybe exemption of taxes, or if there's anything else they could do for you.

As you know, we are putting a report together. If there's one thing you want us to take back to the government, of course, it would be more money. If there are any other suggestions you'd like to throw at us, we'd be completely glad to have them.

Mr. Osborne Burke: As far as taxes, I know in the Maritimes and gulf region we had to deal with that in New Brunswick; in Nova Scotia we're exempt. In New Brunswick we were successful in changing that. I believe we're exempt in Prince Edward Island as well. There may be challenges in some of the other regions, but the harbour authorities generally don't face the issue of taxes of the structures.

There were some issues with previous bills, and as I say, I can't speak in detail for the other regions.

From the Maritimes and gulf perspective, other than dollars, which come to the forefront every time—and I know dollars aren't the answer to everything, but the dollars will address a lot of the issues—there's enforcement, as I mentioned earlier. Fee collection we've talk about. We're harbour authorities without an authority. We're running the government facilities, and if you end up with an operational issue it's not just fee collection, they are operational issues of the harbour and the vessel that's tied there. Down goes the volunteer and you have to deal with or address the issue.

The vessel's in a spot where it's creating an issue. What abilities do we have to deal with that? In many cases, especially the Maritimes and gulf region, these people live in the communities; you know them. They could be relatives, and you're trying to deal with it. You don't have the ability to do it. If you look at harbour ports and other things, there are allowances for that. We've talked about people with fee collection becoming a debt to the crown, but that wouldn't really solve a whole lot of issues, because in that particular situation the funds would go there and not to the harbour authority.

But there has to be some ability, some enforcement mandate. Whether it comes under conservation and protection as an expansion of their role, there has to be some support for the volunteers. You can't necessarily be asking the volunteers to do it. We've done that. People have to duck punches on the wharves, so that's a pressing issue.

Another thing we're seeing, and I don't think we've mentioned too much about it here today yet, is the expansion of aquaculture and the impacts that's having in the Maritimes and gulf region, and I know in other regions. It's revenue generation and everything. But again, when that's occurring it's having a significant impact on our small craft harbours facilities, just to address the needs of the aquaculture industry and how we work with that.

I'll turn it over now to any of the others.

• (1700)

Mr. Morris Fudge: I'd like to say for the Newfoundland region a lot of our municipalities will exempt you from taxes if you talk to them. We are exempt from taxes, water—we don't pay for any of it. But there are places in the Newfoundland region where people do have to pay taxes. So I'd like to see it become the law that we would be exempt.

Mr. Ben Maberley: I think in the Pacific region we are much the same as Newfoundland. There are harbour authorities that give donations to the municipality in lieu of taxes, but by and large most harbour authorities are exempt. Some municipalities insist on being paid taxes.

We're encouraged by the recent court case in Ontario, which has said that harbour authorities are exempt from taxes in that province, so I would assume that's going to be something we can look forward to. As Morris says, that should be blanket across the country. Quite frankly, our harbour authority would refuse to pay them anyway. We're a federal facility, so come and take it. What are you going to do?

If there's one clear message I think needs to be sent, it's the work these volunteers do managing these assets for the federal government. I think Stacy talked about it earlier. If you look at the value we've added to your asset base in the last ten years, it's phenomenal. It's probably not stressed enough. We talk about the volunteers, but we probably don't stress it enough, because we've spent so much time just talking about money. But that's one message I would send back.

Mr. Stacy Linington: One other message I would like to see come out of this is that this is a group of commercial fishers from across the country. There are people among us who aren't in commercial fishing, but for the most part we represent the commercial fishing industry from coast to coast and across the prairies. This body should be used as an advisory body any time you're considering changes that have anything to do with any fishery right across the country. If we're used in that capacity we'll be better equipped to deal with the changes that are made in the fisheries across the country. We wouldn't be blindsided by some of the things such as the derelict vessels and the rest of it if we were considered a consultative body when you're making decisions that affect the fisheries.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Gentlemen, on behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you all for coming today and appearing before our committee. Thank you to the other members who are here as well for taking the time out of their busy schedules to come and provide advice to this committee as we prepare our report. We certainly do appreciate the work that each of you does within your respective communities. We certainly do appreciate your time and commitment.

Thank you very much, gentlemen.

Members, before we adjourn I just want to remind you that next week, on Tuesday and Thursday, the committee will meet in Room 112-N, Centre Block.

The meeting is adjourned.

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