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Chair

Mr. Ken McDonald

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are doing a study of the current state of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' small craft harbours.

I'd like to welcome our guests this morning. By video conference, we have Mr. Alex Patterson from the community services and tourism division of the Municipality of Wawa. Here in person, from the NunatuKavut Community Council, we have the president, Todd Russell, who, of course, is no stranger to the Hill as a former MP for Labrador. As well, we have Mr. Robert Coombs, a consultant.

Welcome, gentlemen.

We will start off with NunatuKavut for seven minutes, whether you're splitting your time or one person's doing all the talking. We're good to go when you are.

Mr. Todd Russell (President, NunatuKavut Community Council): Good morning, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the invitation to appear at the committee.

Good morning to all of the members.

I represent the NunatuKavut Community Council. I have with me Rob Coombs, who joined our team a few months ago as an adviser and as a consultant. We're proud to be here to present to you a little bit of context for what the NunatuKavut Community Council is, and also to speak more specifically about small craft harbours and how they fit into that particular context.

I'm going to take you through a fairly quick and, we feel, concise presentation. Of course, then we'll be available for questions.

In terms of the NunatuKavut Community Council, "NunatuKavut" means "our ancient land". It's an Inuktitut word. It is the territory of the Inuit of NunatuKavut, the southern Inuit who reside, primarily, in central and southern Labrador.

Our traditional territory covers the entirety of south central Labrador and the adjacent marine areas, and also extends westward to the Labrador-Quebec border. As you can see, it's a vast area, and like most indigenous territories, it is the land that our people are in relationship with. It is the territory our people—traditionally and currently—use and occupy.

The NunatuKavut Community Council is the representative government of approximately 6,000 southern Inuit who belong to this territory. Do you see this lady here? People ask, "Why do you put her there?" Women are strong in our culture. They're the culture carriers. This is a woman who was obviously the head of her household. In our tradition, she would be fishing and she would probably do a little bit of hunting at the same time, providing for her family, and in some regards, for her community. That's what we want to do as a government—provide for our community.

We have a vision to be self-governing. We will provide and care for one another, our families and communities, while nurturing our relationship with our land, ice and waters. We try to keep that vision firmly in front of us as we do our work on behalf of our people.

The NunatuKavut Inuit are a rights-bearing people, and we have a responsibility to ensure that the land, sea and ice, and our water rights and titles are recognized and respected, as our ancestors taught us.

July 12, 2018, was a historic day. The Government of Canada announced a renewed relationship with us that will recognize the indigenous rights and self-determination of the southern Inuit. That was a day to celebrate, and one that we engaged in with the Government of Canada. Talks are moving quite well with the Government of Canada. For as long as we have existed, the people of NunatuKavut have also been dependent upon the resource industry and the resource partnerships that contribute to community sustainability.

In this context, I now want to move towards small craft harbours. Here's a map. We have a vast coastline. We want to talk about the marine infrastructure, but in order to talk about that, I think it's important for the committee and for members to also know the importance of the marine resources off our shores and how important they were to us for subsistence, travel, economy, recreation and our culture, of course. We're all linked to the sea.

There's another Inuktitut word—*sikumiut*. It means "people of the sea". We are a people related to the sea, to the marine environment. All NunatuKavut communities touch salt water, either figuratively or literally. Port facilities and small craft harbours are certainly culturally significant as well.

The Labrador Sea is also critical for the ecological, economic and societal health of the North American and European ecosystems. The Hamilton Bank, which is right off NunatuKavut, is one of the most productive areas in the northwest Atlantic. The fishery, we can say with some confidence, has been such a vital part of our past, is still a part of our current way of being and is certainly part of our future. It is the lifeblood of our people.

In terms of core fishing harbours—and this is quite telling—there are so many resources off our coast, but just look at where the port infrastructure is. There is very little port infrastructure within NunatuKavut or within Labrador generally, and it is crucial and important.

There have been some investments this past summer of \$18.5 million to seven small craft harbours. I have to tell you, this is more catch-up than it is the forerunner. There is much need. They're long overdue investments. While we appreciate them, there's much more to do.

What we have heard when we reached out to our small craft harbour organizations was that further investments are required. A funding model is needed that looks through the lens of indigenous and northern communities and fisheries development. Basic operational and administrative funding should be made available for northern and indigenous small craft harbours, and issues of governance and capacity development need to be addressed in order for small craft harbours to work more efficiently and to bring more value to the fishing industry and to our communities.

We also want to talk about safe harbours. It might be a different concept. We have 4,000 miles of coastline in Labrador. The fishery, of course, is adjacent to all of that territory, but where are the safe harbours? There are vast distances. With global warming, storm surges, more severity when it comes to storms and the changes in the ecosystem, people are feeling that there's a great need, for small craft harbours, to look at the infrastructure that they may not be utilizing as much in the current situation, and ask if they can keep the infrastructure up and designate them as safe harbours. It is very important. It is something that has certainly been an issue raised by our fishers and by those in the fishing industry. It's a concept we also want to bring to the committee.

● (1110)

By way of conclusion, we want to again thank you. We want to say how important the commercial and subsistence fisheries are to our culture, our way of life. We also want to say that small craft harbours can play a fundamental role in fisheries development. We should also look at how this program plays out over the next few years through the lens of reconciliation.

I appreciate your time, Mr. Chair. I look forward to the other presentations, and I welcome questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Russell.

I'm sure that anything you didn't say in your presentation will probably come out in the line of questioning.

Now we'll go on to Mr. Patterson, for seven minutes or less, please.

Mr. Alex Patterson (Director, Community Services and Tourism, Municipality of Wawa): Thank you very much for having us. We certainly appreciate the opportunity to be consulted.

For those of you who don't know where Wawa is, we're the small town with the big goose on Highway 17 in northern Ontario.

We have some history in our community with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and specifically small craft harbours. Originally, the marina, which is what we're really concerned about today, was built as a partnership between private organizations and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. It was originally intended for the commercial fisheries of Lake Superior. After that was devastated from various reasons, mostly with sea lamprey but also overfishing, the marina transferred from a commercial fisheries' marina to a recreational marina.

That's where I think a lot of priorities were dropped because a lot of these commercial facilities come first and our recreational facilities come second. This marina was leased to the municipality several years ago as one of two options: either lease it to the municipality to continue to run it, or stop running it completely.

We've had several issues going forward with the marina specifically related to how this asset is maintained. As it's not a municipal asset, we've had a lot of difficulty in having the resources to maintain this asset, and we also have different contractual obligations with this asset that prevents us from maintaining it. For us, it's a very critical piece of infrastructure in our community, not only for recreation but also for tourism.

If you look at a map of Lake Superior, you see there's one key leg missing in going all around the lake to get fuel and safe berths, and that is Wawa. The whole north shore, except for Wawa, is essentially covered. There is a great deal of boat traffic and potential tourism traffic that we're missing out on. Part of that is because we're lacking the support or the resources to really get our facility running again, but we're not lacking the willingness to do so.

We've undertaken some investment, approximately \$150,000 over the past three years, to address specific concerns at the marina. That's the municipality putting municipal tax dollars into a federally owned piece of infrastructure.

What we're essentially looking for in the recommendations we're making here is going to surround how we approach resources like this in the future. I think I speak for a couple of other municipal marinas around Lake Superior and in Ontario when I say these pieces of infrastructure that end up being extremely important to smaller, local communities like ours have essentially been left to rot. As we move forward and realize the importance of tourism to our communities, these pieces of infrastructure get more and more important as we try to diversify our economies.

Looking to the future, specifically in regard to the lease agreement, small craft harbours has actually been extremely helpful to us in pursuing divestiture. But this is where we're looking for a strategy and some funding to ensure that these resources can continue to operate in our communities. Our community, in particular, has decided that this resource is particularly important. We would like to continue to operate it. However, given the state of the resource and the lack of maintenance it has received over the past 10, 15, 20 years, we're in a situation where we cannot afford to take on this asset in its current state.

However, we would like to partner with both provincial and federal organizations to make sure we can continue to have this asset, not only for the betterment of our community but also for the betterment of our regional communities in trying to create that link between some of the northern and southern communities via Lake Superior.

In speaking with a couple of operators, boaters and within the municipality ourselves, we came up with some recommendations to small craft harbours that we would really like to see pursued. We believe that small craft harbours cannot just abandon these assets in their current conditions. So many of these assets are in such a state that no municipality of our size would ever be able to take them over, given how much liability is associated with the disrepair of these assets.

We believe there are really two options for these assets. The first one is that small craft harbours maintain these assets and upgrade them as necessary so the community can continue to use and benefit from them. The second is that small craft harbours provide some funding to these communities to ensure that we don't leave small municipalities with large liabilities.

We certainly appreciate the current process where you have essentially come to us and asked us for some recommendations, our opinion, and given us the ability to present on these topics, but we'd like to see a more developed process where local stakeholders are able to really give their input into small craft harbours when we're deciding the fate of these organizations.

●(1115)

I know that distance is often an issue. It's very difficult to come to all of these communities and talk to all of the people involved, so certainly, there can be a process developed that helps people get their input known and helps decide the future of these assets.

We also believe that municipalities have a role to play. We must also pursue small craft harbours if we want to continue to have these assets in this community, and that's what we've made efforts to do. I would applaud the small craft harbours staff. The ones I've dealt with over the past several years have been extremely sympathetic and helpful, but they're also aware of the resources that they have and they seem to be quite constrained by those resources. For small craft harbours to really do a proper job of off-loading these assets, if they've decided to off-load them, then it's key that, along with those assets comes a little bit of help from municipalities that wish to continue in their operation.

At the end of the day, we're looking for a holistic solution for our particular site that incorporates not only the recreational value of the

site but also the understanding that there's a great deal of economic development that can be had, and not just from commercial harbours but from recreational harbours, as well, specifically, looking at tourism development. For our particular facility, we've talked to both provincial and federal partners to try to make sure that we can continue to operate this asset. The primary function that we really run into is the condition of the asset and how much capital investment it needs to really operate properly.

What we're really hoping to see come out of the recommendations of this particular panel is a really good funding model that understands that these assets have been under-maintained for a great deal of time and that needs to change one way or another and that not only the federal government needs to be at the table but the provinces and the local municipalities as well. They need to all come together at the table to make sure we continue to have these particular assets in our communities.

I appreciate your taking the time. We're open to any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patterson.

We'll go now to the government side.

Before I do that, I'll welcome Ms. Jones here today, who is the member of Parliament for Labrador. Welcome.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you.

The Chair: On the government side, we have Mr. Rogers, for seven minutes or less.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. T

Thank you, witnesses, for appearing before us today to give us the benefit of your personal experiences from the communities in which you live, especially for you, Todd, since the region in which you live is vast, as you suggested. It's a pleasure to be here today to ask you a few questions.

Labrador has such a strong fishing industry with the engagement of your people in the fishing industry for a long time. One of the things that you made reference to was that you had received the announcement of \$18.5 million in August, with seven harbours to be dealt with for the long term, but you referred to that as catch-up.

In Newfoundland and Labrador and around the country, many of us see that there is a lot of catching up to do. Do you have any suggestions for this committee or for government, as to how to try to accelerate that process, either through small craft harbour funding programs or...?

●(1120)

Mr. Todd Russell: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

I also want to acknowledge our member of Parliament, Yvonne Jones, who made the announcement on the \$18.5 million, over the last few weeks in some of our communities.

If you look at the map we drew showing where there are small craft harbours in Labrador, you see there are only a handful of them. The reason why we talked about the great fishery or marine resources off of Labrador is that these resources have had little fisheries development, and that I could attribute probably to quota allocations, to licensing, historically, and to the lack of participation of indigenous peoples in that. If you correlate that with the number of small craft harbours, which are supposed to support fisheries industry development—at least in our particular context, that's one of the primary reasons we have it—you can see how the two are together.

As to the lack of fisheries development, some of it comes down to access, licensing and these types of things, and how that correlates to what has been a lack of investment, historically, in small craft harbours in Labrador, in NunatuKavut and in Nunatsiavut in particular. You can see that correlation and I think that's important. That's one of the reasons why small craft harbours have had such a small impact in Labrador and a small investment overall.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I want to get to a couple more questions. How do you describe your relationship with the department and small craft harbours people in the province? To my understanding, a dedicated program officer was installed in Labrador just a couple or three weeks ago. Have they been helpful? Are they hearing you?

Mr. Todd Russell: As an indigenous organization, we've had a good relationship with the personnel in the region. We've also had a good relationship with small craft harbours authorities. My understanding is that, for the most part, small craft harbours authorities have a good relationship with DFO personnel in that particular directorate or in that particular program.

There are also issues of governance, which I've touched on. I believe people in small craft harbours will talk about this. Small craft harbours are run by volunteers. In a lot of our harbours and a lot of our ports the revenue you can generate as a small craft harbour is minimal so we talk about the need for capacity building in communities so that they work more closely with small craft harbours.

We are happy with the additional personnel. For the first time ever we've had a small craft harbours representative in Labrador in our vast region and in our territory so that's a positive development as well, but we need to concentrate on the small craft harbours authorities themselves. How do we get revenues going in to them for operations and administration? How do we build capacity?

I think these are necessary investments and important ones for the overall health of the program, to make sure we get the most out of the small craft harbour program itself.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Some of the things we heard when we were on the west coast, the common theme of the small craft harbour tour we did in B.C., was that people who had good, strong harbour authorities, well-organized, well-coordinated and so on, seemed to be doing much better than harbours in communities that were struggling with having that kind of capacity in place.

In Labrador, you're saying that's a challenge, and you need to improve on that.

●(1125)

Mr. Todd Russell: Yes. One of the things we heard back from small craft harbours was that they were volunteers and most were already involved in the industry with their own enterprises, doing their own activity. As well, some of the responsibility for harbour operations can be quite onerous, quite technical and sometimes very legal. They need that kind of capacity to be able to efficiently run these facilities and that infrastructure. I think that small craft harbours has a fundamental role to play in that.

The other thing is, in our own self-determination process, we will also have to work out what our relationship as an indigenous governance body is going to be with small craft harbours over time.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I appreciate that.

Mr. Patterson, you mentioned a lease with the small craft harbours authority. Do you find these kinds of leases to be challenging?

Mr. Alex Patterson: Yes. The lease terms are fairly favourable toward the government. Fundamentally, it's not the cost of the lease as much as it is the regulations and the liabilities put on small communities.

In our particular lease, all the liability for the small craft harbour we operate is on the municipality. However, we have no ability within the lease to perform the upgrades we feel are necessary to make sure that liability is mitigated. I think that's one of the most challenging parts.

That being said, the staff at small craft harbours in Ontario has been very good at working with us. For the recent upgrades we've done, we essentially said we had to do this and we had to get *x, y, z* approvals from them as small craft harbours to do those upgrades. However, again, those are all on the municipality.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Patterson.

Now we'll move to the Conservative side, Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Thank you to our guests.

Mr. Patterson, is your harbour listed as an asset in your capital management plan?

Mr. Alex Patterson: No, it's not, because it's not a municipal asset under our asset management regulation.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Then you couldn't plan, or you couldn't assign funds to any upgrades for that.

Mr. Alex Patterson: That's correct. Essentially, the only upgrades we've been able to do are what we've considered emergency upgrades—the difference between shutting down the facility or not based on health and safety concerns.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Does part of your management plan also include staffing on that part?

Mr. Alex Patterson: Not at the current condition, no.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay.

Who manages the operational safety of it?

Mr. Alex Patterson: Essentially, I do. Community services is just a different way to say parks and recreation, so it's fallen under our banner as parks and recreation to try our best to manage the asset.

What we're allowed to do within our contract is essentially minor repairs to the facility.

Mr. Todd Doherty: In asking this, I'm going back to my background in aviation and managing airports. What does your agreement with the federal government, small craft harbours, entail?

Mr. Alex Patterson: It entails minor repairs and no major capital upgrades, as well as the operations of the facility. It's basic things like taking funds for use of the facility and making sure the place is clean, very minor things, all things considered.

Mr. Todd Doherty: What about safety and security?

Mr. Alex Patterson: Safety and security would be our liability, essentially, as it's been transferred to us with the contract.

Mr. Todd Doherty: And you receive no annual funds outside of what you apply for, for that management plan.

Mr. Alex Patterson: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Is there revenue? What would you assign as revenue from that on an annual basis? How much?

Mr. Alex Patterson: The revenue is minimal. We give 10% or \$500, whichever is more, to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for the lease of the facility. Most of the revenue generated would go back into the ongoing maintenance of the facility. It's very minor. We're talking in the tens of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you.

Mr. Russell, what would you say the annual revenue would be for the ports in your area?

Mr. Todd Russell: I don't have those numbers in front of me. They're obtainable from small craft harbours themselves.

•(1130)

Mr. Todd Doherty: What would you say is the market value of the fish, the product coming and going out of those ports?

Mr. Todd Russell: It varies from port to port and from species to species. That would be a technical question, and I don't have the answer at my fingertips.

As to revenue for small craft harbours in our communities, I would think you're talking about maybe \$20,000 to \$40,000. That's it.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Is that just for the port authority?

Mr. Todd Russell: Yes, just for the port authority.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Not the product itself that's being—

Mr. Todd Russell: No, that's right. That's just what they would collect in user fees or wharfage fees and things of that nature.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Have either of you entered into any divestiture discussions with the federal government to take over completely the operation and the ownership of those harbours?

Mr. Todd Russell: There has been no specific process or negotiation regarding divestiture when it comes to small craft harbours and NunatuKavut Community Council.

I do know that sometimes we get consulted on divestiture plans around particular assets that might fall under small craft harbours or something like that, but that's about the size of it. We haven't really had a discussion about what the divestiture plans are for small craft harbours or how we might be involved, or not, in those particular plans.

I note that when you raised that issue, we talked about safe harbours. A lot of the safe harbours that we talk about are places where small craft harbours have had assets, or where they've had infrastructure. The nature of the fishery has changed, particularly with the closure of the cod fishery and now a move more to the offshore.

We're positing with this committee that small craft harbours should look at those particular assets, not totally with a view to divesting them but to asking whether we can maintain some of the infrastructure that provides a safe harbour and that is supportive of the fishing industry in the 21st century and where it's going to go in the future.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Would the divestiture concept be something that your first nation would be interested in, in terms of self-governance, self-reliability and being able to chart your own course?

Mr. Todd Russell: As an Inuit organization, as I've said, with the close relationship with the sea and the ice and the marine environment, yes, we would probably like to entertain that particular discussion. But our discussion would certainly like to go to further investments in places that support, as opposed to divesting and seeing who else can take up the liabilities of the government. We'd like to see more investment in our harbours and ports and more investments in fisheries development generally.

Because there is a correlation between fisheries development and small craft harbours development, the model where you look at landings, for instance, and how they give rise to what I would call a kind of sustainability model for small craft harbours, doesn't work in northern and indigenous communities. The participation is probably not as robust as in some other areas. The development, as I said, in the fisheries has not been great.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Perhaps a percentage of market share, like an agreement with the fishermen or those who are using it, could help. The reason why I offer that, again, is—

Mr. Todd Russell: They do pay. Fishers do pay—

Mr. Todd Doherty: Right.

Mr. Todd Russell: Fishers do pay as part of being a user. What I'm saying is that the level of activity is not enough to sustain them.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Right. Okay.

Mr. Todd Russell: There are capacity issues. In northern and remote areas, I have to tell you, there are going to have to be some major investments to bring some of these facilities up to a standard.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Right. Similar to what we did when we did the NAS airports, the divestiture of those airports—I was part of one, the last one actually—what those local airport authorities got were oftentimes antiquated services. There had to have been a partnership with provincial and federal governments with that local airport authority or that local harbour authority to be able to bring it up to snuff, so to speak, or up to code.

It does require that those who are applying or those who are interested in it have to build a business case for how they're going to be self-sufficient as they move forward, but it is challenging and I fully appreciate that from our witnesses. It is challenging to try to find a steady stream or a sufficient enough revenue generation stream to be able to keep that up.

• (1135)

Mr. Todd Russell: Yes. We've advocated as well that investments may be made or the funding model by small craft harbours should look at northern and indigenous communities through that particular lens.

I think there are peculiarities, specifics, historical contexts that are important for small craft harbours to understand when they make those types of investment decisions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

We go on now to the NDP.

Mr. Donnelly.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for joining us today on the small craft harbour study.

Mr. Russell, if I could continue with you, could you give the committee an idea of...? I'm assuming it's almost entirely commercial fisheries that are being serviced by the harbours.

Mr. Todd Russell: Yes, you could say that. The other big one is subsistence fisheries, which we participate in. But outside of subsistence fisheries and commercial fisheries, there's not a lot of other activity. There are not a lot of, say, cargo ships coming in and using small craft harbours.

There are some ports, I know, where there's off-loading of fuels and things like that, which creates at least some revenue for the port authority or the small craft harbour, but there's not a lot outside of—

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Could you tell us what sort of fishery products are being landed?

Mr. Todd Russell: Primarily in Labrador it's crab and shrimp. Now cod is starting to rebuild. Other than that, it's herring, capelin, some of the species you would generally associate with Labrador.

Crab and shrimp are by far the most.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: What kinds of changes, repairs or upgrades are you looking at in your area for the harbours to come up to standard or the kind of standard...? Are we looking at dredging, breakwalls...?

Mr. Todd Russell: All of those things. It would be very harbour-specific, obviously. It would be driven by need and by what the industry requires in a particular harbour.

Again, this is important. Small craft harbours does not have a long history in Labrador. In fact, some of the harbours that we're talking about were only added to the small craft harbours list less than 10 years ago. Some of the investments that are being made are first-time investments in some of these particular places. Some of the other investments are coming after some of the harbours were there for 20 years, for instance. As for local governance of harbours, some have only been configured in the last couple of years, for instance.

There are lots of reasons, I suppose, why there's been a lack of a presence in small craft harbours in Labrador, but we're trying to change that. We're looking to the committee to say how small craft harbours can have a greater impact and have greater investments in northern and indigenous communities. Labrador is a prime place, we feel, to do that, particularly with the fisheries resources that are off of Labrador.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: You spoke about an \$18.5-million injection that the government recently made. How much do you think your council needs to bring the level of standard that your council wants to see? What kind of funding are we talking about to bring those harbours up to the standard you're looking at?

Mr. Todd Russell: Again, it varies by harbour. On the north coast, they may want upgrades to a harbour, in terms of lifting it up, because the tides are having such an impact. If you're in a place like Cartwright, where you've seen some investments, they're also looking for launch pads and things of that nature. If you go into another community, it could be a breakwater. Each of these has their own plans. They do that aligning themselves with small craft harbours as well, using the personnel of small craft harbours, when developing that infrastructure plan.

I can't give you a global figure. The \$18.5 million is a big help, but certainly we have a long way to go yet.

• (1140)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: These harbours do have plans, though. They haven't just identified what sort of funding needs they have, and you haven't done an amalgamation of the global need yet.

Mr. Todd Russell: No, we haven't. Not yet.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Patterson, you talked about a partnership with the federal and provincial governments, and you identified mostly recreational vessels in your harbours. What would your municipality require funding-wise to satisfy what harbour needs you're looking at?

Mr. Alex Patterson: We're likely looking at about \$1 million per party from the federal government. That would involve essentially fixing the assets there that are broken. Then from the provincial government, we would pursue those upgrades that would be beneficial to regional tourism—things like fuel and additional facilities down at our marina site to make it attractive for visitors and encourage visitors to the marina to come into our community.

We're really looking at transforming our site from a historical commercial fishery site, by trying to maintain the economic development but turning it into tourism instead to diversify our economy.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Does the municipality have a business plan or some implementation plan developed?

Mr. Alex Patterson: Essentially, it's under development, the reason being that we just started pursuing a divestiture process. Within that we're starting to look at this asset as becoming our asset, and at how exactly we would deal with that asset and offset the potential costs via revenue, whether to the community at large or specifically with this asset generating revenue down at the facility.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Is there anything else that you'd like to say to the committee that you haven't said already today?

Mr. Alex Patterson: I think the only thing is that we're seeing this as one of the untapped markets in our local tourism industry. We feel that these assets are so particularly important in northern Ontario because our economies are so based on resources. Diversifying our economies has been a priority for the municipalities and the provincial government for several years now. We're essentially looking for ways to use existing resources and form partnerships to pursue that diversification.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donnelly.

We'll go back to the government side now for seven minutes or less, Mr. Finnigan.

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Because I've had a chance to question and to visit the small craft harbours in my region of Atlantic Canada, and because we have the opportunity to have Ms. Jones here and some people from her neck of the woods, I'll transfer my time to her.

Thank you.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you, Mr. Finnigan. That's very kind of you, and I appreciate it.

I want to welcome President Russell, Mr. Coombs and Mr. Patterson to the committee. Thank you for your presentations.

I have a couple of questions. I'm going to start with you, President Russell, because I think your area is very much representative of many northern areas across Canada where we've seen a lack of designation of small craft harbours. In your territory alone, of the eight small craft harbours, five have been designated in the last 10 years, and of those five, I think four have been designated just in the last few years. For the three outstanding, I reviewed them and the first investment in one of them was just last year.

I think that represents what we're seeing across the north, where many ports in many communities were not designated. Whether they didn't have the right number of fishers or didn't have the landing value, that should not have changed the fact that they were engaged in a commercial fishery in Canada and they should have been designated.

I have three questions for you, and you can answer them all together.

One, how should the Government of Canada be treating northern and indigenous regions that have been left behind in small craft harbour designations in the past?

Two, in areas where there are abandoned properties—and your area is one of those areas—I have noticed that the Government of Canada is contracting large amounts of money to dismantle certain properties. Should there also be other models whereby local groups can take those over and receive the funding to repurpose some of those facilities? That's just an option. I'm wondering what your opinion is on that.

Last, I know that in your region the landed value for communities is about \$23 million annually. One would think it would be easy to generate revenue from that, but a lot of communities are isolated. It's very costly to operate those ports. What model could work in those communities to help support the small craft harbour committees and boards?

● (1145)

Mr. Todd Russell: Thank you, Ms. Jones.

I just want to give a shout-out to our MP for the fine work that she has been doing with us and for us as well.

We thank you for those particular questions.

There has to be a different funding model and there must be a different approach, I think, to how investments are made. As you've indicated, the northern and indigenous communities should be looked at through a different lens. In the past, small craft harbour designations and small craft harbour investments have been tied to fisheries development. If there has been a lag in fisheries development, there's going to be a lag in small craft harbour infrastructure as well.

The committee needs to take that into account and small craft harbours need to take that into account when they're looking at future investments, because at the same time.... We all say that if you're at a level of investment and you do the same level, you're always going to be behind. There's going to have to be a model that takes into account the history and then provides for some boosting in terms of investment.

From a northern indigenous perspective, I think that needs to be taken into account. It needs to be taken into account in the context of overall fisheries development. Why can't small craft harbours also be a leader in fisheries development and not just a follower of fisheries development? That might be another way to look at it and to approach how small craft harbours make their investments.

In terms of abandoned properties, obviously I think there needs to be a very intentional process that involves indigenous governance bodies in terms of any type of dismantling or divestiture. This does affect land. It does or can affect water rights, we feel. At the same time, we need to be talking about the issue of repurposing. If that is allowable, or if there need to be changes in policy that allow for repurposing, I think that needs to be looked at by this committee. We've discussed with Yvonne and other committee members the need to look at the concept of safe harbours, where some current infrastructure might exist and how that can be repurposed or upgraded.

In terms of landed value, that \$23 million might sound like a big number, but when you start to take it down to the community level there's very little opportunity to generate. That is the value, basically, of what a fisher is getting. You have a processor. The fishers go to the wharf and sell their product, and that is the landed value, but that will not generate enough money for even the administration and the ongoing maintenance—such as paying the light bills or doing some basic maintenance work—of any of the small craft harbours that I'm aware of in our particular territory.

There has to be a different way. Again, we're saying that because of capacity issues, the nature of the fishery, the low value in terms of landings in some of these communities and the small amount of traffic, you're going to have to look at a model that invests in what we would call core funding, or some kind of a fund that helps these volunteer boards actually run the harbours themselves. I think that needs to be certainly considered and needs to form part of the recommendations of this committee.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Is there time for any more...?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds if you can get in a question and an answer.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: The only other question I was going to ask is about how there hasn't been a northern division for small craft harbours. Labrador, as you said, is one of the regions that has been left behind for a long time, but if you do an assessment across the northern regions of Canada, all of them have been left behind when it comes to small craft harbour investment. Do you have any recommendations around that particular piece? I'll leave it there.

The Chair: Give a very short answer, please.

Mr. Todd Russell: I think saying to the committee to make a recommendation around looking at investments through a northern and indigenous lens would be a step. Of course, doing that through reconciliation and in partnership and collaboration with indigenous governments is also an important consideration.

• (1150)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go back to the Conservative side.

Mr. Arnold, please, you have five minutes or less.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Alex, Todd and Robert, if I can call you by your first names, for being here.

We are all here on this earth for a short time and in fact we are here in Parliament for an even shorter time in terms of making long-term changes, legislation or recommendations that will span much more than our lifetime, hopefully, so we need to make those changes correctly.

The rate of change in Labrador and northern communities is exponential, I believe, from multiple sources, but basically, rural development is one of them. Can we sustain the systems, the cultures and so on in light of those rapidly developing changes?

Mr. Todd Russell: Could you clarify the question a little bit?

Mr. Mel Arnold: It's been interesting to hear some of the comments.

It sounds like there were harbours... You mentioned that there were some harbours existing that have only just been taken over by the small craft harbours program in the last 10 years. How were those harbours being maintained or built in the past?

Because of the changes that we're seeing, it sounds like that wasn't sustainable anymore. Can this current change be sustainable?

Mr. Todd Russell: I suppose in some sense it gets back to what sustainability means.

Does sustainability mean that you have enough revenue coming in to make sure that everything's maintained and operated? Is that the only model of sustainability that one has? Some would say that's a financial model of sustainability.

I think the other thing is that, when you look at it as part of the community or the region's infrastructure and how that fits in, you might get a different way of looking at sustainability. If you just say, "Here's a dock. Here's a wharf. Do you have enough users and revenue to keep it going?", if that's the approach, we're probably going to say that there are a lot of places that aren't sustainable.

Mr. Mel Arnold: That's what I'm getting at—

Mr. Todd Russell: If you get into the fact that this is about healthy communities, healthy resource development, public safety—all of these values—and that's brought into the model of sustainability, I think you're going to arrive at a different conclusion: that it is sustainable for the Government of Canada to continue to invest taxpayers' dollars into these public facilities that are important to industry and to community well-being.

Mr. Mel Arnold: If I can, I'd like to carry on. No impoliteness is meant here.

You also mentioned that you're moving towards self-government. As a legislator, my responsibility to all of Canadians is to ask this: During the process of moving to self-government, when do assets and liabilities go with that, or do they go with that?

Mr. Todd Russell: Certainly, they could form part of the conversation that we would have with the Government of Canada—and, in some instances, with the government of a particular province or territory—about how self-government manifests itself.

Do we, as an indigenous organization, want to have a conversation with small craft harbours about divestiture or about actually taking over all of these small craft harbours? Then, of course, there will have to be some intense talk about liabilities and assets, and maintaining them going forward—those types of considerations.

That could form part of our talks and negotiations with the Government of Canada. That is possible. Certainly, again, we would have to talk about sustainability, at least from our vantage point, from an indigenous government vantage point.

Those things are possible, I think. Maybe there are other ways, in terms of partnerships over time or in terms of governance and ownership, that we can also address.

• (1155)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

Do I have any more time?

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Okay.

Mr. Patterson, do you see a change in the use of your facility? Did it used to be more commercial-oriented? Are you seeing more recreational use, different funding sources or a different financial model?

Mr. Alex Patterson: Yes. If you look historically, it was originally a commercial-use facility. That really died off with the devastation of the Lake Superior fishery. There's a very clear line in the sand there. Since then, it's been primarily recreational.

We're seeing a resurgence of tourism in our community. As people are going further and further north for their recreational activities, we're seeing some recreational events that had died down actually increase over the last couple of years. As a trend goes, I think we're going to see that continue as the population moves further and further north for those particular recreational activities.

For us, we're trying to get ahead of the ball to make sure that we have those facilities available and to create that regional link to ensure that we can take advantage of some of that tourism development to diversify our local economy.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arnold. Thank you, Mr. Patterson.

Now for the remaining time, we'll have Mr. Fraser, please.

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Did you have more questions, Yvonne?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: I could if you want.

Mr. Colin Fraser: I'll share my time with Mr. Hardie and Ms. Jones.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Ms. Jones, go head.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Actually, I didn't get to ask Mr. Patterson a question I was wondering about.

I know that you represent a municipality, and I also know that many of the small craft harbours are in very active municipalities that do not always have the financial resources to do the things they want to do. The other thing I realize, coming from an area with many rural communities, is that the commercial fishing industry is really a cultural tourism attraction. Most people who come to my community go to the fish plant. They want to tour the fish plant facilities. They want to see a fishing boat. They want to see people as they are processing the product.

What would be your recommendation to the government in terms of how we tie those industry sectors, those resource sectors, together? How can municipalities play a different role in what's happening right now with small craft harbours and how our programs are rolling out?

Mr. Alex Patterson: I think the key is, again, partnerships and diversification. It would be very narrow-minded to think that these harbours would be just commercial or just for recreation or just for tourism, because they can be a combination of several efforts. Our recommendation would be that when you're assessing these small craft harbours and when you're divvying up funding.... In our case, in particular, our local first nation and our municipality are heavily involved, and we partner with each other on a lot of things and try to make sure that we both benefit from whatever happens.

We have a federal historic site literally just across the river from us. It's very important, we feel, that when these harbours are looked at, they're looked at holistically. You can say, yes, this may be just for commercial fisheries, but there could be some tourism and some recreation benefits that keep these northern communities alive.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Go ahead, Ken.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I have one question, and it's to Mr. Russell and Mr. Coombs. I want it to be very clear, on the record, that this is coming from someone from the west coast.

Your map really illustrates that there are a large number of small craft harbours in Newfoundland and very few in Labrador. If everyone is competing, basically, for funding to provide maintenance, upkeep, a state of good repair and improvement, do you think it's time to look at maybe rationalizing the number of small craft harbours in Newfoundland so that there is more funding for the places that are underserved? This came from the west coast, I have to say.

Mr. Todd Russell: The wisdom of Solomon is required. There's no doubt about that.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I think he refused to answer.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Todd Russell: Investments should be made where investments are required.

I have to say that there has often been a lag in terms of investments in northern and indigenous communities, and that is one of the reasons I'm saying that the committee should recommend to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans that when it's making investment decisions, it should look through a northern and indigenous lens and look at small craft harbour investments not just in a silo but as part of an overall fisheries development package or, and I don't like this particular word, strategy. If you have a fisheries development strategy in northern and indigenous areas, then small craft harbours should be part of that and not see themselves in isolation, so that the proper investments are made where they're required and needed.

• (1200)

The Chair: That concludes our first hour. I want to say a special thank you to our witnesses, Mr. Patterson, Mr. Russell and Mr. Coombs. Your input, I'm sure, will be much appreciated and will come forward in some form in the report when we get to actually writing the report itself. If there's anything you think needs to be added, you can certainly make a written submission before the deadline, and we'll include it as well.

Thank you.

Mr. Todd Russell: Mr. Chair, in conclusion, we commend the presentation to your analysts and the clerk to form part of the record, and we appreciate the opportunity to be here to speak from our perspective on small craft harbours. *Nakurmiik*. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll suspend for a moment while we change over to our next session with guests.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1200)

The Chair: If I can get everybody's attention, we'll get started again.

In our next hour, we have two guests appearing by video conference. From the national harbour authority advisory committee, we have Mr. Tim Wentzell, committee representative; and from the Pacific regional harbour authority advisory committee, we have Mr. Frank Mauro, who is a representative of that committee.

Gentlemen, when you're ready, you have seven minutes or less for your presentation.

Mr. Wentzell, you can go first.

Mr. Tim Wentzell (Committee Representative, National Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): Good afternoon. First I would like to thank Mr. Chairman and the honourable members for giving me the opportunity to speak here today. I am presenting on behalf of fellow committee member Osborne Burke, who is unavailable to attend today.

My name is Tim Wentzell. I am a commercial fisherman from the south shore of Nova Scotia. I've been president of my harbour authority for 25 years. I have also been an elected member of the Maritimes and gulf harbour authority advisory committee for 12 years, and a member of the national harbour authority advisory committee for seven years.

My family has fished for generations, and I currently fish from the same wharf in the same community as my father and grandfather did. The future of wharves in coastal Canada is a topic that is very important to me, very close to my heart. I take pride in volunteering and helping to manage the ongoing issues.

I will now make mention of the document we submitted to the committee for review.

The national harbour authority advisory committee is a national advisory group that provides advice to small craft harbours. Fifteen volunteer representatives make up the group from all five DFO regions in Canada. Meetings are once a year in person and ongoing conferences calls when needed. We represent 565 harbour authorities across the country with a network of 5,000 volunteers.

The harbour authority model is very successful, largely due to the hard work of the volunteers in these communities. As successful as the program has been, we do have our challenges. One of them is that our structures are aging and getting older. My particular wharf was built in 1948, so it was post-war. It's outlived its lifespan. We're still using it. It's still functional, but it's getting tired. There are many facilities like that around the country in the same state.

Overcrowding at different harbours is another one of our concerns, because a lot of these wharves, like I said, were built post-war and they were designed for the fishing fleet of the day. The fishing fleet nowadays is considerably larger. The vessels are a lot larger and a lot wider. The current vessel compared to that from that time period back in the 1950s to now, fishing the same licence, would take up three times the area inside the harbour basin.

The growing aquaculture industry is also putting an amount of strain on the small craft harbours program.

Climate change is another issue. With storms increasing and water temperature rising, the frequency of storms in coastal areas and the impact they have on the infrastructure is quite noticeable. Any new structure and any existing repairs have to be built higher because of rising water levels, and that is another increased cost.

The increased cost around regularly scheduled maintenance dredging is another one of our concerns. Currently, \$8.6 million is spent on maintenance dredging, which is far less than what is required. The small craft harbours program estimates that \$21 million per year would be a more sufficient fund to do the maintenance dredging.

All of these add up to one big safety concern.

The next thing is the A-base and B-base funding for small craft harbours. A-base funding has remained relatively stable since 2007-08. Small craft harbours received a permanent A-base increase in 2007-08 of \$20 million with B-base funding under 13 different programs since 2000-01. The program needed B-base funding to carry on the ongoing operations. Since 2007, small craft harbours' purchasing power has been greatly diminished by regulatory inflationary pressures. Without an A-base increase, the program will require future infusions of B-base funds to remain sustainable.

Regarding divestitures, because small craft harbours' mandate is to support a core group of commercial fishing harbours, the program can't sustain all the harbours. Some of the non-core harbours have been divested. Eleven hundred non-core harbours have been divested, but 330 still remain in inventory. Small craft harbours do not have dedicated funding for these sites. Without dedicated funding for divestiture, there is pressure put on the core harbours and the small craft harbours program. Continued deterioration leads to increased liabilities, etc.

• (1205)

The small craft harbours program is there to meet the principal and evolving needs of the commercial fishery. The program supports a wide range of successful harbour authorities in coastal communities across the country, with a network of safe, accessible harbours in good working condition. Investments at small craft harbours support economic growth in the fishing industry and the surrounding communities.

If there are any further things you want to get into, you can refer to the brief we submitted. A lot more detailed information is there.

Thank you for giving me time to express our concerns.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wentzell.

We'll now go to Mr. Mauro, for seven minutes or less, please.

Mr. Frank Mauro (Committee Representative, Pacific Regional Harbour Authority Advisory Committee): Chairman and committee, thank you for inviting me.

I'm a member of the Pacific regional harbour authority advisory committee. I've been the local, elected rural area representative. I'm not a fisherman, but I've served on the harbour authority since 2007 and on PRHAAC since 2010.

As a bit of background on the Pacific region, the 105 small craft harbours in B.C. are managed by 54 harbour authorities. We're obviously a member of the NHAAC hub. In B.C., there are more than 500 volunteers involved with the harbour authority program. It provides 200 to 300 ongoing permanent jobs and temporary jobs. Many of them are in small communities and they're absolutely necessary.

In B.C., our harbours serve the most diverse client group anywhere in the national program, including 80% of the commercial fleet, aquaculture, recreational fishing charters, first nations and tourism, and they're at the centre of many communities.

In terms of significant economic benefits, the Gislason report of 2015 indicated that every dollar spent on small craft harbours in the

B.C. region returned \$52 in economic benefits. More recently, the B.C. wild and farmed seafood production reports for 2016 gave a total landed value of \$1.17 billion and a wholesale value of \$1.72 billion. It's made up of a commercial fishery of \$840 million and aquaculture of \$881 million. This was up 23% over 2015. Obviously that \$52 return for every dollar has increased.

They provide year-round operations in many of the remote communities, and a very strong environmental focus. In many cases, the harbour authorities are the first responders and suppliers of local knowledge for all events.

As just a bit about infrastructure and budgets, obviously my predecessor speaker here defined virtually everything, but the Pacific region infrastructure replacement value is \$291 million. We have carrying costs of \$31 million and the annual A-base budget is around \$10 million.

The federal infusion of funds in initiatives one and two and the 2018 budget recently are much appreciated. It has helped us greatly in allowing catch-up on aging and overdue infrastructure maintenance and repairs.

There are challenges with a B-base budget. They're greatly appreciated funds and obviously much needed. Basically, we have a lot of things to consider. Consultations need to be completed with first nations, with short time frames. Stress is placed on small craft harbours, their staff and the volunteers on harbour authorities to complete all the work in the accelerated times. Also, this type of funding program puts continuous stress on harbour authorities to have a suite of shovel-ready projects with completed business cases and at least preliminary engineering, but sometimes even more detailed engineering. This stress is both due to the time effort required and the financial load on harbour authorities with funds that could be used for operations.

I want to stress that we want the fund to continue, but perhaps there's a better way of setting up the programs. A longer heads-up that these things are coming certainly would help. I understand that current funding levels are insufficient to support the amount of infrastructure as mentioned. We work on divestiture, but it must be balanced with the needs of the fishing industry. Some of the conversations are difficult to have.

The biggest concern we have here is dredging. Dredging has become more and more challenging. We're faced with the fact that it's absolutely necessary for some of our harbours, a lot of major harbours, including our largest harbour in Steveston.

•(1215)

Disposal of the dredge material has been the key issue, and we understand it's more difficult environmentally. We want to protect the environment. We all live in coastal communities and place great value on protecting the natural environment and these species, but we need to find a balance, perhaps by designating some disposal sites and doing an initial—thorough—environmental assessment. Thereafter, we would do a more streamlined assessment for the same locations so as to retain their inherent value and not repeat the work already done.

In B.C., first nations reconciliation is a big thing. Most first nations in B.C. don't have treaties, and there are 200 first nations. Significant efforts are made. The Harbour Authority Association of B.C. has been going out and visiting the first nations that are considering becoming harbour authorities and has provided mentoring sessions on what's involved. This has been valuable. I see that DFO has supported this. Right now, there are two first nations with the harbour authority association, and six first nations are currently in discussions. We see this as very positive. I could tell you about personal experiences but I'm going to run out of time.

I want to summarize the asks that are inherent in what I have proposed. First, obviously, is help in establishing a dredging material disposal system. It's absolutely critical here.

We want help with funding program process design to minimize the load on harbour authorities for achieving shovel-ready project status before applications can be considered, and we want the time frames relaxed.

We want help in maintaining consistency in the relationship with volunteer harbour authorities. They contribute much, and for them, the relationship is everything. We really depend on these volunteers to provide the services to the community.

We want help with increasing understanding—amongst this committee and others—that many of the harbours provide services to a fishing community that extends far beyond those fishers who moor at our harbours. It provides all services, including loading and unloading and stopovers with sporadic openings. They're absolutely critical, and they're not all the moorage customers.

Thank you very much for listening. I'll take any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mauro.

We'll go now to the questioning. First, on the government side, we have Mr. Hardie for seven minutes or less, please.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you both for being with us.

Capacity is an issue that comes up in a lot of different places. I sit on the transportation, infrastructure and communities committee, as does my colleague Mr. Rogers, and we quite often hear that smaller municipalities also have challenges in matching the funding, getting projects shovel-ready, etc. They just don't have the in-house talent to do some of this stuff, and it must be even more difficult when you're dealing with a volunteer crew drawn from interested people in the community.

I know that the federal government did provide funding to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to assist small municipalities in building their capacity. Is there an organization or a body somewhere that could perhaps assist in building that capacity in your network? Some funding to do that kind of work would be well used.

Mr. Wentzell, do you want to comment on that?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: With respect to the east coast, I'm not sure of that at this moment. I can get back to you. It's not on the tip of my tongue if there is another agency that would do that. At the national meetings over the years, I think I've heard my colleague from the west say there are some contacts out there—or are there not?

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Mauro.

Mr. Frank Mauro: There are a couple of ways of achieving this, but I think the funds need to be targeted specifically. We certainly wouldn't want these funds to go into a pool of funds that are available for all kinds of projects. We want them directed to small craft harbours.

The Harbour Authority Association of B.C. is a very vibrant community. We hold a conference. DFO actually does provide funding to assist with the annual conference. They have annual zone meetings. The whole area is set up in zones. They certainly could administer the—

•(1220)

Mr. Ken Hardie: Sorry, sir, I would ask for a fairly short answer because I do have other questions. Basically, there's no FCM equivalent that would be a focal point for building capacity amongst your groups.

Mr. Frank Mauro: FCM, UBCM or Community Futures—I'll say those three.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Very good.

To what degree are the shortcomings in your small craft harbours impeding the commercial success of your commercial fishery?

Mr. Wentzell, from the east coast, I'm given to believe that the commercial fishery is obviously much more important in relative terms than it is on the west coast. If you're looking at, say, southern Nova Scotia, are you seeing the shortcomings in the small craft harbours getting in the way of the commercial success of your fishing industry?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Most definitely. There are harbours in my region right now that are currently closed to any new members coming, and they can't accommodate more vessels. They're actually bursting at the seams because of the size of the vessels.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Given that, and given that there's material interest on the part of the fishers to get those facilities in good shape, are you of a mind that we have the proper balance between the user-pay model for necessary improvements or a state of good repair, and the everybody-pay model, which of course is funding that would come through small craft harbours?

We heard that the industry in your area is especially lucrative. We wonder if there's a sufficient contribution from the people who are deriving the financial economic benefit from the small craft harbours but are looking for somebody else to pay for improvements that would make their business even more profitable.

Mr. Tim Wentzell: A lot of the areas are impeded by actual land availability in the harbour vicinity. You only have small uplands so you can't develop the area as such, right there. The facility's already there. You do have impediments in place to hinder that progress.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Okay.

Out on the west coast, we sense quite a variety of approaches. We were out there touring small craft harbours about a month ago now. The amounts being paid, for instance, by recreational boaters seem to be quite modest in terms of the money coming in, at least for operating the small craft harbour. Have there been some discussions about what a reasonable contribution would be from what is a fairly well-heeled industry in many cases, the recreational boating society?

Are they actually paying their fair share for the services they're getting?

Mr. Frank Mauro: In most harbours I would say yes. There are some harbours where obviously some work can be done. I want to say that with the small craft harbours, we don't run the luxury moorage that some marinas offer with the services at the harbour. I think our recreational rates are in the order of 80% to 90% of the local marina traffic, so I believe they're a fair rate, and we review them at least every couple of years to ensure that we're in that ballpark.

Obviously, the control of the number of boats in the small craft harbour is determined by that, and we certainly would increase the rates if we didn't have the room.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I have one final question for you, Mr. Mauro.

The commercial fishing industry is under stress, I think, in British Columbia, and certainly they would be looking for investments in small craft harbours, again, to obviously support their industry.

An ongoing concern we have is that the financial benefits of the commercial fisheries don't necessarily stay in the communities so much, because of the transferability of quotas out there. We see an awful lot of the revenue going to people who rent quotas, and they can be from anywhere and don't necessarily reside in the communities where the action is taking place.

Mr. Frank Mauro: That's certainly a concern.

I have to tell you that's not really my area of expertise. I'm looking at providing a service, and I think there are fishing associations that really could speak better to that than I could. I have concerns that money spent by small craft harbours does not go to improving the harbours and the facilities for fishers. I believe, though, that we do our very best to do that.

•(1225)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

We'll go now to Mr. Doherty on the Conservative side for seven minutes or less.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to our guests for being here.

To both of our guests, with regard to the testimony that we've had over the last few days or weeks on this, it's interesting to hear the value of product that's coming through the wharves in the harbours versus the income or revenue generated by the harbour authorities. There's quite the difference in value. Would either of you like to comment on the potential opportunity for harbour authorities to perhaps see a percentage of the value of that marketable product that's coming across the wharves and harbours?

Would that help in some of the issues that we're seeing—a revenue share?

Mr. Frank Mauro: I guess the value of the product is an impressive value. I think, though, that there are many costs that must be attributed: the costs of running and maintaining a fish boat and paying a crew. It's wages that are local, so a lot of that money does end up staying in the local community. I just want to say that it certainly would require significant analysis before you ever embarked on it, to see the profit and loss statement for the operation of the fish boat and what the net income actually is after that. It's another expense for them.

Mr. Tim Wentzell: A lot of the small craft harbour facilities are on federal government land, and a lot of the harbours are class C harbours. I think 70% of the asset base in Canada is made up of class C harbours. There could be like 15 boats and so on in remote communities, and this is the only federal presence in these communities. These facilities are more or less regarded as highways to the sea. In the community, you have a community mind that this is part of the government infrastructure and part of the whole program as a country as a whole.

Mr. Todd Doherty: My understanding, though, is that in Newfoundland, fishermen pay a fee per pound landed. Is that correct? Does that go to the harbour authorities?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Each harbour authority is different. I'm not sure what's done in the Newfoundland region. I know that in the Maritime and gulf region, each harbour authority sets up its own model to meet the terms of the lease as set out by the federal government, and to meet its day-to-day operational costs.

Mr. Todd Doherty: On DFO's website, there is a listing for the small craft harbours program. The objectives for this program state, "Our goal is a sustainable national network of safe and accessible harbours that are: fully operated, in good working condition, managed and maintained by self-sufficient harbour authorities who represent the interests of users and communities".

In your opinion, are they living up to their mandate?

Mr. Frank Mauro: I believe that's true, that they are living up to their mandate. I just want to say that the fishers do pay moorage. It's less than the recreational boat moorage fees.

Yes, I think that they do live up to their mandate. Here in B.C., there are a few issues, as I've identified, but I think we provide a good service to the fishers. We need improvements in loading and unloading product because of the lack of distribution facilities for the product and of required transportation, but yes, I believe that the mandate is being met and that problems are being identified and addressed.

Mr. Tim Wentzell: I'd say that they're being met. There's considerable strain on the staff, though. Looking at it from my side, looking at the staff, you can see that there are stresses upon them to try to deliver a program with limited funding because the strain that dredging is putting on the whole program is astronomical. It's in the numbers. You have a deteriorating asset base, so they have to pick and choose as to where the funding goes to fix up different structures. Yes, they're meeting the mandate, but it has to be a struggle.

• (1230)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Have either of your associations done any work on what the cost would be for a complete divestiture of core harbours?

Mr. Frank Mauro: We have not in the core harbours. Non-core harbours, yes, there has been a study and there is a committee looking at that.

Mr. Todd Doherty: What would the cost be on that?

Mr. Frank Mauro: I don't have that cost in front of me. I'm sorry.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay.

Mr. Frank Mauro: I would have to get that.

Mr. Tim Wentzell: I don't have it either, sir. I know about the divestiture program in regard to the non-core harbours. Some 200 or 300 remain in the inventory to divest, which requires significant funding because a lot of those facilities are dilapidated and need to be transferred to local municipalities or community-based organizations that wish to develop them in aspects other than the fishing industry.

Mr. Todd Doherty: In DFO's own words, the program needs to transfer ownership of designated harbours to a third party, such as those that are derelict, low activity or recreational. In their own words, they would be looking to transfer those harbours that are derelict and in need of repair.

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Yes, they have a non-core group of harbours that aren't core to the fishing industry, and those harbours are scheduled for divestiture, but they do not have adequate funding to divest those sites.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay. There has been a study on what that cost would be, is that correct?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: I'm not sure of the actual number, but I can find it and I can return it to you.

Mr. Todd Doherty: That's great. Can I ask that our witness provides that to the committee?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

Now to Mr. Donnelly for seven minutes or less, please.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for your testimony and your presentations today.

Mr. Wentzell, I'm looking at your document that provides an excellent overview, which I think is very helpful for the committee, certainly from my perspective, given that the committee has travelled to the east and west coasts and inland as well and talked to many harbour authorities.

Is there a standard definition of "small craft"? What is small, and then what is too big for a small craft harbour?

Either witness could answer that.

Mr. Frank Mauro: I can say something, if you like. I think that Mr. Wentzell did comment that the numbers and the sizes of boats have been increasing. We have noted that on the west coast also.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: That's the root of my questions.

Mr. Frank Mauro: It's 60 tonnes.

Some may be bigger.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Wentzell, is that the national standard?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: That's been an ongoing debate in our region because the harbours were designed for smaller vessels, and the vessels are larger now. Some small craft harbours had 100-foot vessels in them and 125- and 130-foot vessels.

In the fishery I'm involved in, we are limited by size per licence, so we are designed to 44 feet 11 inches but we go wider. You have 1,700 licence holders in southwestern Nova Scotia in lobster alone, and we are limited by size and length but we can go to the widths, so the vessels have increased in size to 44 feet 11 inches. They used to only be 16, 17, or 18 feet wide and now they are 30 and 32 feet wide. They are more like a square on the water.

But, no, there is nothing there to—

• (1235)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: When we've talked to a number of others, we've heard the concerns you've just mentioned. These are significant investments for fishermen to invest in these \$1-million or \$2-million boats, or more. Of course, they're getting larger, but the infrastructure designed to keep them safe isn't keeping up with the investment the fishermen are making in their vessels. That has been one of the questions I've been asking. How can the small craft harbours program recognize this and keep up?

Mr. Wentzell, you identified many of the concerns we'd heard from a lot of HAs across the country. You talked about aging wharfs and infrastructure, overcrowding, climate change and growing aquaculture, and you really emphasized dredging. You also talked about safety, A-base funding and non-core harbours.

Mr. Mauro, as well as the dredging, you talked about the design process, the relationship with volunteer HAs and understanding the larger role the HAs play in the community. We heard these mentioned in the field as well.

This is for both of you, particularly Mr. Wentzell from a national perspective. This was in earlier questioning and you may not have it, but I'm wondering if there's a document or a study available. Knowing what the collective financial needs are to bring all the harbours across the country up to a recognizable standard—so in terms of the operational shortfall and the capital needs—has there been a study done in the past, or is there one currently happening?

I have to say, Mr. Wentzell, the document you provided is very helpful. It provides a lot of the financial picture of harbour authorities and what they're facing, but I'm wondering about a collective approach. If the government were to look at a 10-year program to tackle the problem of the financial needs of small craft harbours across the country, can it point to a document that explains what we're currently operating under, the organizational shortfall and the capital needs? Given the concerns you've identified, limited tax dollars of course, and some of the challenges like climate change or—as we just mentioned—indigenous relations and talks with our first nations, and of course factoring in divestiture with non-core facilities....

I guess that's a long-winded question. Is there such a document or a study that's happened, that you know of, that the committee could look at?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: We have the same document here that I submitted to you, with the numbers regarding what it costs every year to keep and maintain the structures. As far as the long term goes, to bring them right back to the significant standard where they should be, I don't have that right now and I'm not sure it exists, but like I said before, I can find out and get back to the committee from someone within small craft harbours.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Let me put it this way: Is this something you'd like to see as a recommendation? Would you like to see the government either assist or work with the small craft harbour program to develop a document that would identify these concerns in a financial way?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Most definitely, because even today we still have unsafe harbours in some areas. Even with all the B-base funding that's come in to dress up the program over the years, we still have harbours that are unsafe. They're barricaded facilities, but fishermen are using them because they're in their communities and they have to find a way to get on those wharves and fish. They have to get on the water to make a living.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Maybe Mr. Mauro could give a very short response. We're out of time.

Mr. Frank Mauro: Yes, obviously an overall plan would be a good idea. It's a fairly comprehensive study, but along with an overall plan, you have to balance it, and a 10-year plan is sometimes difficult to finance.

Yes, I think we need it.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donnelly.

We'll go back to the government side and Mr. Fraser, for seven minutes or less, please.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you both for joining us today. I appreciated your presentations and your thoughts.

Mr. Wentzell, I wanted to start with you.

I'm from Yarmouth, so I'm familiar with many of the points you raised. Down our way and throughout my riding of West Nova, we hear from lots of harbour authorities that the dredging work that takes place doesn't do the full job, so they have to do it again after a couple of years. If they actually did the job properly in the first place, they would not need to come back in a couple of years to do another half-job.

Do you agree with that suggestion? Your document says the funds for dredging are not adequate to get the job done, but do you see the need for separating out the dredging budget from the regular capital budget of small craft harbours?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Yes, there's been considerable discussion on that within the community. There is concern about the strain that dredging is putting on the actual budget as a whole, because it takes so much money, right off the top at the start of the year, just to maintain regular maintenance dredging. You have to look at climate change and the storms. They're bigger than they used to be. They are more intense. You're getting more sediment damage, more water flow around the facilities. It is putting a strain on the program in that regard.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Does dredging actually have an impact on the capacity issue, because of the room that you have within a harbour to, say, turn a boat around or get in and out of the harbour facility? Can dredging actually help the capacity issue to at least some degree?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Yes, most definitely. In some of the areas, like in my particular harbour, we have a dredging issue. We can't get dredged because of the high cost of getting rid of dredge spoils. We used to dredge and put it on federal crown property within the facility, but now they want it trucked away to a federal containment site on approved fill, and the closest one is 70 miles away. When you're talking about removing sediment from a smaller harbour like my own, it's a weigh and a balance thing of where you're going to do the work. In larger harbours, you have that problem also.

Mr. Colin Fraser: My understanding is that there's a limited number of businesses that actually do the dredging work. They are oftentimes having to move around to go to emergencies or take priority away from one harbour to another. It means that the full job isn't getting done anywhere. That's a concern, don't you think?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: That's right. There's also a limited number of contractors who meet the environmental requirements. Each province is different in regard to environmental requirements. Nova Scotia has put in some very stringent standards over the last few years. They have been working on them, and it's been getting a little bit easier, I should say. It was quite difficult three years ago. It's gotten better as of late.

Mr. Colin Fraser: I want to talk a minute about the national harbour authority advisory committee, and I thank you for the work you guys are doing.

Do you have any recommendations for our committee about how your work with the federal government could be made easier? How could your advisory committee be strengthened in the advocacy that you do in advising the government on what steps could be taken to improve things?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: We have a strong core group of people at that table right now. We advise on different things in regard to capacity issues and any issue that may come up, from dredging to overcrowding to how we can increase our revenue models.

That being said, it all comes back to dollars at the end of the day. You need funding for these harbours to maintain the fishing industry. These are federal crown properties in the government asset base. They need to be maintained and taken care of.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Absolutely.

I want to turn for a moment to the issue of safety on our wharves. We know there's an issue with the state of repair of some wharves. We know there's an issue with capacity at other wharves. We know that some have both problems happening at the same time.

Don't you agree that the safety of our fishermen is put possibly in peril when we don't have adequate facilities for them to unload and offload their boats and come into harbour safely?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Most definitely. I go back to climate change. You get a facility that's maybe been neglected. Maybe the rock wall isn't as high as it should be. The protection isn't as high. You get a severe storm that comes into the area.

I fish in wintertime, and when I saw the hurricane-force winds come through the area last year in January, and I saw a weather forecast for 16-metre seas, I honestly didn't believe what I was reading on my weather forecast. I didn't think it was possible. I never saw that in my 35 years around the water, but I saw it last year.

It's putting a strain on the facilities. It's more wind damage. As they get dilapidated it's harder to get them back up to standard.

•(1245)

Mr. Colin Fraser: One other thing I haven't heard discussed has to do with the issue of capacity at our wharves and the work being done in the boat shops, especially in Nova Scotia down my way. I know all the boat shops are so busy right now, trying to turn out these boats to make them wider, to give the fishermen better tools so that they can be more efficient in increasing their catch and becoming more profitable. I know how busy the boat shops are, but the fact that there are capacity issues at our wharves means that these guys aren't sure if they're going to be able to build a new boat, because there might not be anywhere to dock it.

Isn't this a bit of a concern?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Some harbour authorities have said that before a new member can get a new vessel, he should go before the board of the harbour authority and request an actual size increase.

We don't have that at our facility because we only have a small number of users, but there are larger facilities where that mechanism

had to be put in place. They didn't know how else to handle the situation.

Mr. Colin Fraser: These boat shops employ an awful lot of people in these local communities, don't they?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Yes, they do. It's a very vibrant industry. As the fishing industry goes, so goes the rest of the economy in certain areas.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

We will go back now to the Conservative side.

Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you both for being available today.

I have a question for Mr. Wentzell.

I'm going through the document you provided to the committee. Thank you for doing that.

The national harbour authority advisory committee was established in 2001 as an adviser to the small craft harbours program. How long before the creation of the advisory committee had the small craft harbours program been in existence?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: To my knowledge, the small craft harbours program has been in existence since right after the war. Small craft harbours managed all the harbours, and in 1988, they started to do the harbour authority model, where they turned the running of the actual harbours over to local users. You have input from the local users on how to manage the facility and what kinds of upgrades they need, instead of someone coming in and more or less deciding from the outside what you need in your community.

Mr. Mel Arnold: That's the direction I was going with this.

Part of what we've heard in testimony so far—maybe to you as a representative from this larger body—is that there seems to be a disconnect between the local users, the fishermen and the harbour authorities, and the people who are making the decisions on how a project is engineered and actually implemented.

Can you comment on that?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: There always was some of that in the past. It has been better, because the users have more input now.

At the end of the day, most of the volunteers around the communities who are running the harbour authorities are not engineers. They may have knowledge of a facility and how they're going to do that, but they're not engineers as such. They don't have the knowledge to input things in regard to how the project should be handled in certain ways.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

I want to move to page 10 of your report now, where you talk about more dredging being needed. It says, “Deeper basins and channels are needed—mainly due to larger vessels and climate change which is causing increased sedimentation.”

Would you be able to provide any evidence that climate change is the cause of the greater sedimentation?

• (1250)

Mr. Tim Wentzell: I'm just going by what I've heard in other parts of the country. I know that on Prince Edward Island the representatives on the committee have made the comments before.

Wharves in P.E.I. have to have periodic dredging, because it's mostly sand in their facilities around there. Sand moves rather quickly through water as tidal currents increase and wind increases, and you get a big storm surge and so on. Storm surges are higher than they ever used to be around the areas, and therefore, you're getting more erosion around the beaches. As that happens, you get more sedimentation within the harbours.

Mr. Mel Arnold: That's the only proof of the sedimentation being from climate change.

It's a distinct statement here. I'm just looking for the backup behind it.

Mr. Tim Wentzell: We've had presentations at the national level on the worsening effect of climate change on the facilities and how they're going to be maintained in the future.

When you build a facility now—anything, new repairs or new structures—they build what they call a hundred-year structure that would withstand a hundred-year storm. Once every hundred years, you'd get a storm that severe. They do notice that the magnitude of those storms is more frequent than they used to be.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I'm certainly not denying that climate change is happening. I'm just looking for the evidence that is affecting the sedimentation.

Another question I have is regarding icebreaking operations. We hear the icebreakers are often up and down through the gulf opening up the sea ice, the winter ice, early. The icebreakers are also going into the ports and opening up the ports, freeing them of the winter ice that has built up.

Do you believe that those activities could be adding to the climate change effect by breaking up that ice earlier, allowing a lot more sunlight to penetrate the water?

Mr. Tim Wentzell: This is a time I wish my colleague Osborne were here because he's from the gulf, in Cape Breton, so he knows a lot more about the ice factor than I do. To be honest, I don't know much about the ice factor. I just know that I've heard the comment from people in different harbours in their area that the less ice protection in the wintertime has left the wharves more exposed to the frequent storms and tidal action in the wintertime, instead of just having the ice there for protection.

As the ice decreases.... I can't say it's tied to the icebreakers, as such. I do know that it's been mentioned that the lack of ice coverage in the gulf has left a lot of the facilities more exposed to the climate and the weather conditions.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arnold.

Before I go back to the government side for five minutes, I would ask committee's approval of the budget for M-154 so that we can get our witnesses reimbursed for their expenses. I don't want to run out of time. It will be another two weeks before we can get this through if we don't deal with it now.

Now that everybody has a copy, can we go ahead and approve this amount?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now back to the government side, to Mr. Finnigan for five minutes or less, please.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Thank you for being here by the way.

We talked about the size being a factor. We've done a tour on the Atlantic coast and in almost every harbour, there are bigger boats, and like you said, square rigs, and they're taking a lot of the space.

It's one of the major issues, and I'm not suggesting anything but I just want to know. The small boat pays the same fee as the large boat. Have you ever looked at that side of it? Should the larger boat pay a higher fee? I'm just curious to hear your knowledge on that. Thank you.

• (1255)

Mr. Tim Wentzell: Each harbour authority, in their guidelines, sets their own fee structure depending on the harbour authority and what's going on in their facility. I do know that a lot of the larger vessels do pay more but it's not a uniform approach. One size doesn't fit all. Each harbour sets up their own individual fee structure in accordance with their own needs.

I can't say that it's one fee, but I know the larger ones do pay more, as an overall picture.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: I know we've been divesting of a lot of harbours because at one point every small community had a harbour.

What about even more concentration? Would that provide a lot more resources? Could you do a lot more with probably less money?

Again, I'm just asking. I'm not suggesting anything, but if you had a super-harbour where we would concentrate more into large harbours.... People might have to drive a hundred miles, but a lot of people drive to work an hour every day. I'm just asking if that has been looked at.

Mr. Tim Wentzell: There have been different harbours that have amalgamated issues around the area. They've incorporated six harbours to make one harbour authority, and they actually got rid of a facility that was one of the divestitures in the program. I do know of that issue, but a lot of these communities....

You talk about driving an hour to work. A lot of these wharves are in remote communities, and you have fishing gear to take. You just don't hop on the boat and go. You may not have property in the vicinity to store your fishing equipment and so on. You have to get to that wharf, and you can't just load it on a vehicle and travel that distance to get to the sea because you're dealing with weather conditions and so on. You don't know when you're going to be able to go for sure. Our weather is very unpredictable.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: I'm from the northeast of New Brunswick. Not only with this government, but I know that there are needs everywhere and sometimes I'm sure politics can make a difference to where the money is allocated. For instance, this fall I had one harbour that was on the list, but the funding went to Nova Scotia. I have nothing against Nova Scotia. I'm sure it happens the other way around.

If this is how we sometimes allocate resources, we know there's something wrong with this picture. It's not only this government. I'm sure it's happened.

What's your experience with that? Could you comment on that? I know that maybe you're not in a good position to do so, but I'd just like to hear what you're seeing and whether it is an issue.

Mr. Tim Wentzell: I know it's happened before. I can only go by personal experience. I know we had a long-term plan at our facility, back in 2006, and our structure was built post-war, in 1948. That's 70 years. It's outlived its lifespan. We've maintained the structure the

best we can. We have a structure that's still functional. We had a job that was put in and we met the criteria. We were at the top of the list, but somewhere along the line, it never got approved. I don't really know where. I do know that does happen.

Our job was a significant investment for the quay structure on the end of the wharf. It was for the actual quay. If it fails during fishing time, it's a very grave concern. It will actually close the harbour, if it fails. That structure underneath the waterline has been there since 1948. There has been nothing done to it.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Thank you, Mr. Wentzell.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Finnigan.

With that, I know we only have seconds left. I'll thank our two witnesses for appearing at this time and sharing their information and knowledge with the committee, as we try to clew up our small craft harbour study and make some recommendations back to government.

Thank you both for appearing. We really appreciate it. If there is any information you feel we didn't get in your presentation, by all means, please submit it to the clerk and we'll have a look at it, when and if we get it.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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