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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, November 28, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Fabian Manning**

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## Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

• (1540)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.)):** I'll call the meeting to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we'll continue with our study on the operation and maintenance of small craft harbours.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses and committee members here this afternoon. We're anticipating the arrival of our chairman, Mr. Manning. We were hoping he'd be here, but we decided we'd start with your opening statements. We hope that Mr. Manning will arrive during your statements.

We have two presentations, so we're going to ask Mr. Desrape or Mr. Poirier, whoever is the spokesperson, to deliver their opening statements, followed by Ms. Eastman.

Mr. Poirier.

[Translation]

**Mr. Léonard Poirier (Director General, Association des pêcheurs propriétaires des Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak to you about the current situation of small craft harbours in the Magdalen Islands, as well as related problems, from the perspective of our fishermen's association.

We are the oldest organization of its kind in Quebec, having existed for 32 years. Our members are classified as inshore fishermen with boats under 50 feet. We work in many areas of the fishery, and the issue of conservation is one we are passionate about: preservation of the resource, of course, but also the preservation of the core infrastructures which are the harbours.

Having said that, in the Magdalen Islands we have nine small craft harbours for fishers. There are 400 boats and landings average 20,000. We land 9,000 tonnes of products, of which 80% are lobster with a value of approximately \$45 million.

The problem in harbours is one of congestion. In fact, the rate of occupancy of these structures is very high. In the Magdalen Islands, it is a problem that requires a great deal of maintenance and dredging. There are also structures that can be said to be rusting out, that is to say that their useful life is very advanced, if not to say near its end.

The dredging budget for the Magdalen Islands is about \$800,000 out of an operations and maintenance budget of approximately \$1.7 million. We are therefore talking about 45% of the budget,

which increase constantly, because our needs, which we shall see in greater detail later on, are greater and greater. One must not forget that the Magdalen Islands sit smack in the middle of the gulf; it is a layer of earth deposited on a mountain of sand. You must understand the particular situation of the Magdalen Islands in the overall gulf area, in relationship to the urgent and growing dredging needs.

As far as I know, Quebec's operations and maintenance budget is perhaps \$3.5 million, including \$1.5 million for dredging. Therefore, if the Magdalen Islands are receiving \$800,000 of the \$1.5 million provided for the other regions of Quebec as well, like the North Shore, the Gaspé and others, we can see that we are eating up 50% of Quebec's dredging budget. The needs are therefore enormous.

We will give you an overview of the situation. Clearly we are here to describe the situation in the Magdalen Islands, but we are primarily here to encourage you to ask for more money. We know that there is a need, as I have said, not only at home but also elsewhere in Quebec. We need more money at home for dredging, but also in order to settle the issue of congestion. We need to see some expansion, and we also have needs concerning rusted out structures, that is to say structures that have reached the end of their useful life. We also have renewal project needs. Therefore, we need money and we strongly encourage you to speak to the people in charge of increasing the small craft harbours budget.

Very quickly, without being a numbers expert, perhaps only for the Quebec region—and I offer these figures parenthetically and I am talking about the situation over several years—we could easily use an extra \$5 million a year. Certainly if we include all of the other regions in Canada, we would perhaps be talking about \$40 million or more. In any case, we feel this is necessary to meet our needs because, as I said earlier, the situation is desperate.

• (1545)

As far as the situation in the Magdalen Islands is concerned, I will give you a rapid overview. Mr. Desrape, who is an experienced fisherman, would be pleased to answer questions more specifically afterwards.

If you look at a map, the Magdalen Islands are to the north and somewhat on an angle. I will start from the south and move towards the north of the Magdalen Islands.

In the southwest, there is Millerand. In this location, the general state of the infrastructures is rather good, but the big problem is siltation, which requires very significant annual dredging.

In the southeast, there is the village of Havre-Aubert. We have been relatively lucky, because a construction project ended there in 2007. We thank all of those who worked on this file.

Moving now towards the north, we reach the central area of the Magdalen Islands. On the west side, there is Étang-du-Nord, where there is an aging infrastructure we call the COOP wharf. There is a lot of wave action in this basin, because of its extent. A documentary was filmed in this area. We have to decrease the wave action in the harbour and make the marine conditions safer by building a finger pier. Work is underway on this issue, because it is an urgent need.

Still in the central area, there is Cap-aux-Meules, which is situated on the east coast. The infrastructures are in good shape, the problem here is more one of congestion. There is a great deal of congestion in this harbour, which is a very important one. The harbour authority for the area has been asking to expand the harbour for several years now. There is a planning study also that is underway. These needs will come under the major budget, as we say in the departmental jargon.

Still on the east coast of the central area, there is l'Île d'Entrée. Reconstruction work ended in 2004, but there are still enormous needs in terms of annual dredging. At Pointe-Basse, there is also a big congestion problem. The harbour is full to capacity. There is also a significant siltation problem, which requires annual dredging.

A little more to the north, we arrive at Pointe-aux-Loups, on the west side of the islands. The infrastructure is rusting out and the wave action is significant in the basin, which forces the fishermen to bring their boats up onto the slipway most of the time, rather than mooring them to the wharf, because there is no protection at the end of the wharf. We would have to build a protective section at the end of the wharf. There again also siltation requires annual dredging. In 2008, we will have to make a significant investment into dredging the Pointe-aux-Loups basin.

Still moving north, on the west side, at Grosse-Île, the infrastructures are generally in good shape, except for the crib at the entrance to the harbour. The cribwork at the harbour entrance has crumbled significantly. This has also required significant annual dredging. The extension of the jetty at the entrance, once again to cut off the high waves, could help to somewhat reduce the dredging. There again, we need significant funds.

The final area, which is situated completely at the other end of the Island, on the northeast shore, is called Grande-Entrée. There is an infrastructure that dates to 2001, on the eastern part of the wharf. However, there is an old part that dates back to 1970. More than 50% of the regional fleet moors on this older part. We have replaced some of the sheathing over the course of the last few years, but there seems to be a depth problem on this section. We will therefore have to redo a portion of that sheathing.

• (1550)

Those are our needs, and they are enormous. Once again, the needs are urgent and require additional funds.

On that note, I thank you once again. Mr. Desrape will be able to answer your questions.

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC)):** Thank you, Mr. Poirier.

You may make a 10-minute presentation, Ms. Eastman. Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman (Harbour Manager, Harbour Authority of North Lake):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members.

Let me begin by saying how very pleased I am to be here today to speak to you on the issues that face all harbour authorities on Prince Edward Island.

It has been my pleasure over the past six years to be involved with small craft harbours in my capacity as harbour manager for the Port of North Lake harbour authority, and I would like to address some of my concerns and some of the concerns of other members of our fishing community concerning small craft harbours in Prince Edward Island.

As members of the standing committee, I am sure you have been made aware of some of the shortcomings that Atlantic Canadian fishermen face when it comes to repairing and protecting our harbour structures from the rigours of Mother Nature and from the normal wear and tear of time.

Small craft harbours in Prince Edward Island is made up of 44 harbour authorities, only five of which have harbour managers. The bulk of the work at the remaining ports is left to a very dedicated group of volunteer boards comprised of fishers and harbour users.

My hat goes off to these volunteers, as I know the time I dedicate to trying to secure funding, to environmental assessments, to doing project proposals, and to the day-to-day running of my harbour. These volunteers deserve our utmost respect and support. They do all this while they are fishing their own fleets to provide for themselves and their families.

While the day-to-day running of our harbours is our main concern, one of the toughest tasks we face is the lack of funding given to small craft harbours to allow us to provide a safe environment for our users and for the general public.

On P.E.I., most of our infrastructure is fast approaching the end of its life cycle, which in turn means we are all fighting for the same replacement dollars. Our relationship with small craft harbours is very much a landlord-tenant arrangement, and we must both do our part to meet our commitments under this arrangement.

From the fishers' perspective, maintenance is a very essential necessity if we are to keep our wharves in a usable condition and safe for the fishers to access in their day-to-day activities. Over the past number of years it has been apparent that the funding provided to small craft harbours' budget is being cut, while the need for repairs to existing structures is increasing.

That being said, we were ever so grateful for the motion placed on the floor of the House of Commons by the member for the Cardigan riding on June 6, 2006, to increase the budget by an additional \$35 million, reinstating \$20 million that was to lapse and increasing it by \$15 million. We understood that part of that request was included in the next year's funding.

I understand that departmental officials estimated back in November 2006 that it would require an ongoing budget of \$130 million per year to carry out the small craft harbour program, but in fact it is my understanding that the annual budget is much less.

You must understand that without the appropriate dollars, a job that would cost a few thousand dollars, not done when repairs are needed, can escalate to hundreds of thousands of dollars, and one such incident comes to my mind.

At the port of Mink River, it was determined that approximately \$30,000 was required for a small maintenance project to repair a section of wharf. Due to the fact that it was not secured and the project was not done, an 80-foot section of that wharf collapsed into the harbour in the spring of 2007, leaving fishers with nowhere to tie their boats and no place to land their traps at the end of the season.

Now, six months later, the part that fell into the harbour is being retrieved by a contractor, and instead of fixing the problem, basically what they are doing is infilling with a bit of rock, up to the old, existing piles. I was to Mink River yesterday, and from what I saw yesterday and from what I have been told by various officials, it is not suitable, it will be totally unusable to the fishers in the spring, and, furthermore, if the other section of wharf that is there is left untended, it may meet the same fate and collapse into the harbour in the spring.

● (1555)

Small craft harbours officials tell us there is nothing they can do, as they have no budget for such a problem as this, which is outside their normal maintenance.

Tracadie harbour also comes to mind. Over 12 years this port, which is home to 19 lobster fleets and large mussel operations that require space for 25 to 30 vessels, has faced problems with insufficient berthage space.

Also at Tracadie, the boat slipway is only usable at high tide, so if you happen to be fishing and happen to break down and happen to have to go up the slipway, you had better pray it's high tide or you will sit until the tide turns.

Also at Tracadie, dredging is an annual problem, as it is with most of our harbours in Prince Edward Island.

In the spring of 2007, ice damaged a section of wharf at Tracadie, and to date only band-aid solutions for their problems have been offered.

The problems at Mink River and at Tracadie are not isolated. They occur on P.E.I. from tip to tip, and everywhere else in our Atlantic coastal communities. If we are to provide a safe environment for our users, more funding must be put in the hands of small craft harbours.

On Prince Edward Island, an increase in the minor maintenance budget, which now is approximately \$700,000, would go a long way

in helping to ensure that problems like the one at Mink River are taken care of, which in turn would result in dollars saved that could be used elsewhere.

Now, I am not saying that everything is negative, as we enjoy a very good working relationship with our colleagues at small craft harbours. They do the best they can with the limited funding they are provided. But let me emphasize that cutting funding only leads to more disasters, disasters that are predictable without proper maintenance. I can think of a few harbours—Graham Pond, Savage, Launching Harbour—where the problem was seen, the problem was rectified, and things are well.

I manage the harbour at North Lake, and North Lake is a very heavily used harbour. My harbour numbers—my vessel number count—is 92, and 93 in the spring. My transient population during tuna season brings the vessel count in my harbour at night up to 200.

I am a harbour that was made for 78 thirty-eight-foot vessels. On a night when I would have 200 vessels, they would not only be from Prince Edward Island, but from Îles-de-la-Madeleine, the Gaspé, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. We also have a fairly high aboriginal fleet that comes in because of our adjacency to the snow crab grounds.

We are also known as the tuna capital of the world. We've played host to a lot of world class fishers and provide a service to an overcrowded population for that period of time. And let me tell you, our port, like many other fishing ports in the Atlantic region, was not designed for the size of vessels that fishermen use today, whether it be for tuna, lobster, scallop, herring, or other species, because the method of fishing has changed dramatically since the early days when these ports were built and designed.

As well, there has to be ongoing dredging maintenance at some of our harbours to ensure that fishers can travel in and out safely without going aground on sandbars placed by strong tides or storms.

We are always at the mercy of Mother Nature, and sufficient funding for small craft harbours is essential for the fishers to carry out a safe fishery on Prince Edward Island.

In conclusion, the harbour authority program has proven it can and does work. While we as harbour authority members do our utmost to ensure that our harbours remain vital pieces of our coastal communities, we ask that you strongly consider putting more funding in place to allow each of us to maintain safe and functional harbours, for our use as well as that of the general public.

Thank you.

● (1600)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Eastman.

We're going to Mr. MacAulay.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

To the presenters, thank you. I think it's excellent to have somebody come to this committee who sits there every day and deals with the problems that you deal with all the time and who has a basic understanding of what's needed.

Mr. Poirier, you mentioned, if I understood correctly, that there's a great need for breakwater construction in Îles-de-la-Madeleine. I'd like you to elaborate a bit on that, because if I understood you correctly, you're telling me a lot of wharves are being damaged because you don't have the proper breakwaters in place. Is that correct?

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Desrape (President, Association des pêcheurs propriétaires des Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

As Mr. Poirier was saying earlier, there is a siltation problem in practically every one of the harbours in the Magdalen Islands. It is an island, and to get to 20 fathoms of water, you have to go 20 miles off shore. The water level decreases and once you get to the shore, there's no water left at all.

[English]

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** Slower.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Desrape:** Why are breakwaters essential? Because in a number of harbours, the wave action is too strong, given that there is no shelter. Furthermore, you have to stop the siltation, and in order to do so, you have to change the currents so that the sand is deposited elsewhere than the entrance to the harbour. Those are the two main reasons.

In the Magdalen Islands, there are 400 boats, but they travel from port to port. We are not always assigned to the same one: in fact, you have to follow the resource. In the case of pelagic fish or groundfish, you have to cover several fishing harbours. However some are not safe, and there is more than one. Put yourself in the place of a fisherman who's coming in from offshore and has to enter a harbour when he is not sure how much water he is drawing at the entrance. The dredging may or may not have been done that particular year, or it may have been done in early spring. In the mid-season, the entrance may become blocked in an instant.

We did not say so specifically, but in several seaports, dredging needs to happen twice or even three times a year. At Pointe-Basse, among others, it is done in the early springtime, that is in the month of April. If there are heavy windstorms from the southeast afterwards, it is already blocked up by May. I am not joking. I saw my brother-in-law, when his boat almost capsized at the entrance to Pointe-Basse. He had to turn around. I had to accompany him all the way to Cap-aux-Meules just so that he could get shelter. That kind of thing has been seen and is still seen regularly.

We are 400 fishermen, but our fishery is competitive. Every spring is windier than the last, it seems to me. Obviously, we want to earn a living like anyone else, so we push the envelope as far as the weather is concerned. When the time comes to seek shelter, it is not always

easy. Moreover, once we enter the harbour, we are not even sure of having shelter. Where are we to go, gentlemen?

We chose this profession of fishing because we like it, that is certain, but it is a profession that involves uncertainty and a great deal of worry. Our business income is uncertain, that we have well understood. Our fishing gear, which we leave offshore, is sheltered from bad weather, but there is one thing that we can neither understand nor accept...

• (1605)

[English]

**The Chair:** The interpreters are having a job following you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Desrape:** What did he say?

[English]

**The Chair:** You're very passionate with your answer, but you're very fast also. I'd ask you to slow down so that the interpreters can catch what you're saying and relay it to those of us who are less fortunate than you to be able to speak both languages.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Desrape:** I would like to take this opportunity to tell you that leaving our fishing gear offshore leaves us no guarantees. We chose to be fishermen, but once we get back to port, we want our boats to be safe. We want to be able to go home and rest in peace and tranquility. Our boats are worth between \$200,000 and \$400,000. Even if our income is not increasing and we are losing gear, we want our boats to be safe in the harbours of the Magdalen Islands. That is currently not the case.

For some, maintenance is the problem, but for others, it is the lack of space within the harbours. There is almost no leeway whatsoever. As I told you, when there is a bit of wind in the morning, getting out of the harbour is quite a feat. The boats are jammed in like sardines. There's no space, but you have to get out of there.

In answer to your question, I would say that we need calmer waters in the harbours. We also have to prevent siltation.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. MacAulay, try it again.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** Thank you very much.

I appreciate that. I do understand the need for breakwaters.

Sheila, thank you for coming. You talk about the cost. You've been dealing with wharves and repairs—you've been after me most of my political life—so you understand what happened when the breakwater was not fixed at the black wall in Savage Harbour. It went from \$200,000 to \$2 million or \$3 million to repair.

Perhaps you could explain a little more about Mink River and what took place. Isn't it in fact the case that because of the lack of funding, the funds that are spent are not going to be spent very wisely either? I would like you to expand on that.

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

Mink River is an interesting scenario. I have pictures here that I took yesterday. If anybody wants to see them, they are more than welcome to.

What you don't see in this picture is that the actual physical sheathing and the whalers that were already purchased to fix that piece of wharf are sitting right here.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** Sheila, all the people here might not understand what that means.

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Basically—I don't know whether you can see it or not—the front of the wharf, which was wood, fell off. The bolts let go; it just fell into the water. But when it was falling into the water, the pieces that were to replace it were sitting 35 feet away from it, paid for but never installed.

The sad part of it is that those pieces are still sitting there paid for but never installed. The repair work that is taking place right now looks lovely, but when they go to put the sheathing and the whalers back on, the repair job they have just done will all have to be torn back out.

Plus, if I were a betting man, I would bet that what they just did, and what I saw yesterday, won't be there next spring if we get one good tidal surge this winter. It will rip that rock out of there and put *it* in the harbour.

So as I said, we have very much a landlord-tenant agreement. As the tenant, we do our best to keep the grass cut, everything painted up pretty, and the whole nine yards. But the rooves are leaking and the basements are crumbling. If we don't stop putting band-aids on, and if we don't come up with more funding, all of the infrastructure on Prince Edward Island.... Most of it was built in the sixties and the seventies. There was a gap there, when there was not a whole lot done, and it's all coming down, and all coming down at once.

The scariest part, from where I sit as a harbour manager, is that I think back to Hurricane Juan, and I think back to the tidal surge we had on December 27, 2004, and I think of what would happen if we got Hurricane Juan times two.

But if the conditions were a little different than they were, and if the major part of that surge were on the north shore of P.E.I., where we have extreme problems with infill and siltation, the same as our colleagues in the Madeleine Islands, I'd hesitate to think what would happen on P.E.I. I would be very surprised if we were not to see, the next morning, a giant pile of toothpicks from North Lake to Tignish. All of the structures are in the same shape. They are not good.

We need to start taking care of some of these structures now. If we don't.... A little bit of money—I'm not talking about \$100 but about \$20,000 and \$30,000—will save you \$100,000 in the long run.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

Mr. Blais.

[*Translation*]

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

Good morning Madam, good morning gentlemen. Greetings, Mario and Léonard; I am very happy that you are here. I am also

very happy to hear you speaking from the perspective of fishermen. It is essential that we understand what infrastructure and small craft harbours represent. It is not simply a tool that allows you to find a mooring. You have addressed the issue very sensitively, I feel.

Theses wharfs absolutely must be repaired, but the dredging work also must be done properly. In that regard, I would like you to talk a little bit more to us about safety. You had started to do so when you were answering a question a little earlier on.

**Mr. Mario Desrape:** Thank you, Mr. Blais.

Clearly, it is all about safety, wether it is within the harbour or on the approach to it. It must be safe, and for that to be the case there must be water under the keel. The harbours were built many years ago; some are even more than 35 years old. Moreover, they were built to accommodate the boats of that time. Since then, boats have gotten bigger. If the boats get bigger, more space is required. Several of the harbours have become quite dangerous when you are inside. As I was saying earlier on, there is no more leeway in the harbour, and sometimes there is not even any place to moor. We have gotten to the point where they are using floating docks. As there is no more room on the fixed wharfs, they add these little floating wharfs, as we say. Unfortunately, they are not very stable. We now have rather large boats and several other boats around these small floating docks. In the wind, or in a storm, they don't hold. We are running the risk that the dock will come lose and the boats will find themselves on the rocks, on pieces of cement as we say. We fear that a great deal.

I will give you an example of the safety problem. In some ports, if we don't get there early enough in the day, there is no more room to moor on the fixed wharf. You therefore have to moor on one of these floating docks. There is no way to get there with a vehicle, we have to go on foot. Fishermen have to transport their baits, as they did on 1940, on trolleys and with two men dragging baskets weighing 150 to 200 pounds every morning and night. I do not think that is acceptable in 2007. It is archaic, but that is what we are experiencing every morning and every night in the Magdalen Islands.

The boats have a huge value. They are an enormous investment for fishermen. If the boats are not safe in the harbour, they lose them. You have to understand the fisherman. The fisheries sector has made enormous sacrifices to help the government deal with the Canadian deficit. I remember very well when the minister at the time came to see us and he said that the fishing sector had to do its part, like all Canadian citizens. Our permit prices tripled; you are aware of this, I do not need to repeat the whole story. Permits, insurance regimes, the wharfage fees that we pay today, all of that—and not only that, of course—has ensured that now the Canadian government has a surplus. I think that given that surplus, the pendulum should swing back the other way. The fisheries sector could at least have the right to the maintenance and renovation of its structures. The structures are overwhelmed because of the modernization of the fleets, the cost of living and life in general. It is the same thing as with highways, it is the same principle, but here, we are talking about the fishing harbours.

•(1615)

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** You are in fact saying that putting more money into infrastructure, that is wharfs, is not charity. It's a duty and it's also an issue of safety.

**Mr. Mario Desrape:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** The fishery has changed, vessels are a little bigger, etc., but I would like to hear your comments on climate change. We were talking about storms; we're talking about them more and more. Storms cause erosion of the coastline, which is catastrophic for the Magdalen Islands.

What does it mean for a fisher such as yourself? I'm referring to the issue of infrastructure and safety, among other things.

[English]

**The Chair:** You have time for a short answer.

[Translation]

**Mr. Léonard Poirier:** I could comment on that.

Climate change is having a significant effect on several areas. Once again, however, you need to look at our situation: we are in the middle of the Gulf, therefore we are extremely affected by storms.

Studies were undertaken by a group of specialists. There is enormous erosion around the Magdalen Islands. Erosion leads to an increase in siltation. The reality is that sand-covered areas will continue to increase. As I pointed out, we're noticing that we need more and more money to remove sand and to dredge. Future budgets must particularly take into account the situation of the islands.

Of course, as I stated earlier, this has an effect on safety, depth... Mr. Mario Desrape referred to this. Of course safety is becoming more and more compromised.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Blais.

Mr. Allen is next.

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

I have a few questions. I'm going to split my time with Mr. Keddy, if I happen to leave him some.

I have a couple questions for Mr. Poirier.

I have two questions on the \$5 million per year that you talked about being needed. First, is that ongoing in every year for the foreseeable future? Second, would that amount include dredging, or would you see that as an additional amount over and above that amount?

[Translation]

**Mr. Léonard Poirier:** I was talking about the Quebec region. Without being an expert in the numbers, I would say that the Quebec region's budget is approximately 8% of the total budget. In absolute numbers that would represent approximately \$9 million in all. From what I know, \$3.5 million of that is for maintenance and operations.

The budget that is normally allocated to us is not sufficient to renew infrastructures. Therefore, it would take Quebec several decades to renew its infrastructure. We would never succeed because before we had a chance to rebuild some infrastructure others would have been destroyed and we would never manage to stay ahead of it.

Without being an expert in the numbers, I would say that for the Quebec region a supplementary amount of \$5 million would have to be added to the regular budget which is \$9 million. That is what I was trying to say. And given that other regions have needs, if we need an additional \$5 million in Quebec every year then I would think that for the Maritimes an additional \$40 million would be required. That is what we would hope.

•(1620)

[English]

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Thank you.

Ms. Eastman, you were commenting on the capacity issues and yours are a little different. Quebec had some good issues, but with respect to a lot of dredging and breakwaters. You were talking about a lot of end-of-life issues that you have in P.E.I., as well as capacity issues. You talked about having 92 vessels and then 200 at night, potentially, during the tuna season and normally 78 thirty-eight-foot vessels.

If you compare North Lake harbour to the other harbours in P.E.I., how does your congestion issue compare to the other harbours on P.E.I., and are you sharing an inordinate amount of the load because of the fishing and that type of thing?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Yes and no. When it comes to tuna season, yes, probably we are sharing a bigger part of the load because of adjacency to fishing grounds. We do tend to get more of the tuna fleet. We do, North Fraser harbour does, Tignish harbour does, Rustico harbour does—all the North Shore harbours get them. So we do tend to get more congested then, but we also are in the spring.... What I said was I have 92 to 93 vessels that are mine. My harbour is actually built for 78 thirty-eight-foot boats. But in the springtime I have 93 that are mine. They call North Lake home. If I have a snow crab fisher from the Madeleines, from Quebec proper, or from New Brunswick come in to my port, my life has just gotten miserable because 93 is way overcapacity, and two more boats....

Tuna season is a carefree thing. When they come in, they come in at night. It's very congested and I lose a lot of sleep thinking about what could happen when you've got that many vessels in a harbour, but it's fairly orderly. If you have to actually physically unload product, I can't put two more boats in that harbour when I have 93 because I have nowhere to put anything.

There are a lot of harbours in the province that are very congested also, and going to become more so, because we are getting to the point that we have structures that are starting to be barricaded. You cannot put traps on them. Therefore you can't load your boat off them, and some of them aren't safe to tie your boat to. So it's not just North Lake. It's a lot of the harbours.

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Mr. Chairman, just to follow up on that question, because of those capacity issues there, what kinds of model do you have? Obviously you have government revenue that comes into this. What are the other revenues that some of these fishers are paying in terms of using the wharf?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Our harbour users that call North Lake home pay an annual fee, their annual berthage fee, and they also pay for any land they may have leased the building on, or whatever. Our other main source of revenue is through what we call transient fees. Those boats from Nova Scotia, Quebec, and New Brunswick that come and spend the night at our harbour, or in some cases months and weeks, pay a per-night or per-week or per-month fee that goes back into our coffers. That helps to offset some of the cost of having them there. It's nice to have them there—yes, they pay you a few dollars—but they're also using your electricity, your water, which we're paying for. Small crafts is not. We are one of the bigger harbours in P.E.I. and we do have a fairly heavy transient population so we do generate a little more income.

The problem with small crafts and the way the money is dished out is that what might be considered minor maintenance to me because I'm a bigger harbour would be major maintenance to someone who only has 19 vessels.

• (1625)

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Mr. Keddy.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank our witnesses for appearing. I think most of us on the fisheries committee have a pretty good understanding of most of the challenges that our small craft harbours face, and that our harbour masters face in particular.

Listening to Mr. Desrape speaking about the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, I just want to revisit that for a moment. When we were out to the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, one of the challenges that we saw there if you're building breakwaters is the lack of rock. You would have some of those same challenges in Prince Edward Island. I'm quite concerned that you're dredging once a year, or an annual basis sometimes several times a year. It would make a lot more sense to do a business plan based on your tide and your currents, and where your sand is being deposited, and build your breakwaters.

Have you tried to figure that out? I know cost is a problem here. I would assume you'd have to build that out of cement and make your rock up out of cement. Have you considered that? Have you priced it out and done the business plan over a period of time versus what it would cost you to try to bring the rock from the mainland?

[Translation]

**Mr. Léonard Poirier:** I will repeat once again that this was not our choice: we were put on the map, right in the middle of the gulf, on the Magdalen Islands. This is a very good fishing area. We are dealing with the problem of sand deposits. Of course there are solutions. All of the port authorities are suggesting solutions to stem these sand deposits. We have no other choice but to remove sand and to dredge because there are many wharfs, that I listed earlier, that

have not been finished yet. You said that there were solutions for most of them. Wharfs are subject to many waves and currents.

Jetties would help cut off part of the entrance. That would be a huge help. Most of the wharfs I mentioned need that. However, these are costly undertakings that require more money than the operating and maintenance budget contains. They require the type of money that comes from relatively large projects.

That is the situation in some cases and others are different. Some of them are almost unfinished projects. It's almost as if there wasn't enough money, despite the amount that was invested. It's as if there wasn't enough money to actually finish the projects. So we are simply asking that these projects be finished.

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** I appreciate that. I guess the question I was asking was much more simplistic than that. Most of us who represent fisheries ridings have lots of examples of breakwaters being put in where you cause a siltation problem instead of fixing one. That's why it's important to have the study done ahead of time, and have a plan, and know where your tides and currents are and the effect of them.

I have a couple more questions.

• (1630)

**The Chair:** They have to be short.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** I'm going to run out of time, Mr. Chair.

I have one question on Mink River for Ms. Eastman. How many boats would typically fish out of that wharf?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** The fast answer is fifteen.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** And that would be typical of a lot of small wharves.

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** It would be typical of the smaller ones, yes.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Exactly.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Keddy. Time flies by. Sorry about that.

I'd like to ask our witnesses to take a break for a moment while we take care of a small portion of committee business. Mr. Matthews is going to return to the chair. I have to leave.

Committee members, on Monday we will have the deputy minister and her people here. On Wednesday we will present our first draft report, our interim report to the House. François tells me that he hopes to have it in our hands on Monday or Tuesday, before the meeting on Wednesday.

Are there any questions on any of that? Is everybody okay? *Oui?*

**An hon. member:** *Ça va.*

**The Chair:** Just for clarification on a point we adopted earlier, if the government House leader announces that the last supply day will be three days from December 3, which is a Monday, we cannot do estimates. We can get the deputy minister here on a performance report, which means that the members can still ask any questions they want. But from a clarification standpoint, we can't do estimates if he announces that. The announcement is being made tomorrow morning, I understand.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Stephen Knowles):** It will be tomorrow afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Okay.

In the event of that, I'm going to ask that we adopt the following motion:

That, in the event the last Supply Day for the period ending December 10, 2007 falls on or less than 3 sitting days after December 3, 2007, the Committee rescind the motion of November 14, 2007 with respect to a study of Supplementary Estimates on December 3, 2007 and, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), proceed to consider on that date the Performance Report of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for the period ending March 31, 2007 tabled in the House and referred to the Committee on November 1, 2007, pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), and that the Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans be called to appear.

Go ahead, Mr. Blais.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** You read that very quickly. Just as it can be difficult to translate from the French to the English, the reverse can also be true. I hardly understood anything of what you said in English. Perhaps you could repeat that but slowly, please.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Blais.

Maybe I read it in Newfanes. I'll try English instead this time, okay?

That, in the event the last Supply Day for the period ending December 10, 2007 falls on or less than 3 sitting days after December 3, 2007, the Committee rescind the motion of November 14, 2007 with respect to a study of Supplementary Estimates on December 3, 2007 and, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), proceed to consider on that date the Performance Report of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for the period ending March 31, 2007 tabled in the House and referred to the Committee on November 1, 2007, pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), and that the Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans be called to appear.

Is everybody okay? Does someone want to move to adopt it?

Mr. Blais—now that you understand it.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Is there a seconder for that motion?

• (1635)

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Right here.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** I'm going to ask Mr. Matthews to take the chair, if he'd be so kind. I have to depart for other business.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** On our small craft harbours business, we'll go to Mr. Byrne for questioning.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a delight to have the three of you here from both organizations to provide some really strong and firsthand expert experience on the management and administration of harbours and harbour authorities in Canada.

I think we're all seized with the reality that the small craft harbours program is extremely vital to an industry that is valued at over \$2 billion throughout the country, yet from an infrastructure point of view is facing serious deficits.

You pointed out that there's a lingering rust-out problem, an infrastructure problem. I can tell you that from all sides of this question, all sides of the House, we've heard directly that nothing affects fishing communities more than the quality and character of the harbour infrastructure. Sheila pointed out that the MP for Cardigan riding was extremely effective in making sure that case was made, as was Mr. Blais.

We had a wonderful opportunity to go the Magdalen Islands one year ago on a study related to seals and sealing. We also took Mr. Blais' request and guidance and looked at the harbours throughout the Maggies. We were very impressed with what we saw, but we also recognized that there was a serious deficit there in some of the infrastructure requirements.

Sheila, you mentioned that there were some significant shortfalls in the infrastructure, but you also recognized that you have changing fisheries. The tuna fishery, which is a highly migratory fishery, changes its character almost on an annual basis, depending on migration. Could you describe any changes in the patterns of fisheries that affect congestion and harbour requirements?

Mr. Poirier, could you do the same?

Could you also identify any other characteristics that you have your eye on for future years, such as changes in fleet size, vessel size? The Department of Fisheries and Oceans just came out with a new policy that allows a significant change to the structure of the cubic number—the size of vessels. Do you anticipate that a 38-foot vessel—or the 45-foot vessel, which is your primary customer—is going to change in the future? If so, how will it affect your harbour infrastructure and your future needs?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** I guess I'll go first.

I don't anticipate vessel size affecting those 44 harbour authorities on Prince Edward Island. You have to remember that on top of those 44, we also have those four big harbours that used to be Transport Canada harbours, the deepwater ports, and most of the bigger vessels—the druggers and those types of things—are at those.

I don't anticipate our size getting too much bigger. I think maybe we've actually come to the balance-out point, because out of 93, I only have three boats left to hit 44/11. When they hit, it's going to squeeze me up for room again, but that will be it.

I think if I can come to the point that I can have enough room to safely berth those, I don't need.... I can always use extra, because I'm adjacent to the fishing grounds, but the answer to that question is no. I think that in a lot of the harbours in P.E.I., the boats are as big as they're going to get.

Your first question was on the methods of fishing and what trends may be coming down the line at us.

One of the things we have been looking at—but we really are stumped as to where to go with it at North Lake—has to do with our actual adjacency to the north shore fishing grounds and with an aboriginal fleet, especially, that fishes out of Surrey. We would love to have them. Other than their berthage, it would actually allow us to produce revenue for ourselves by charging them, as they are charged in other places, a fee to unload. It would be a percentage of a cent per pound to unload their crab. We are much closer to the crab grounds than Surrey is. We could save them anywhere from an hour and a half to three hours of steam time if they could actually berth at North Lake versus having to go to Surrey. Their boats are virtually the same size as ours. The problem is that we haven't got the facilities to put them in.

I have, God willing, a proposal in for an expansion on a bullpen, and if that were to happen, I could do that. It would in turn increase my revenue, and allow me to be a little more self-sufficient.

• (1640)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** We're over time. I know you wanted Mr. Poirier to answer as well; I think we have loads of time this afternoon, by the look of it, so we'll go to Mr. Lévesque next, and then we'll have lots of time to come back to you, if you don't mind.

Go ahead, Mr. Lévesque.

[Translation]

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

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Prince Edward Island is in a privileged situation with respect to collecting rock for breakwaters, which is not the case for the Magdalen Islands where the situation is much more difficult. However, you stated that \$1.5 million is allocated for dredging for the whole of Quebec, of which \$800,000 only goes to the islands.

I don't know if you have assessed the construction costs for seawalls in your ports. I am wondering if once the seawalls were built, you would then be able to save enough money out of that annual \$800,000 to put into dredging. Building seawalls will reduce the cost of dredging and would protect your port infrastructures, but how many years would it take to recover the construction costs for those seawalls? Obviously if you have a breakwater and a seawall, your wharfs will be significantly protected and will last longer.

Do you have any studies on that?

**Mr. Léonard Poirier:** You are absolutely right. You talked about preserving our infrastructures. Those future breakwaters would most certainly protect or prolong their useful life. With respect to the costs, I mentioned earlier that it would be around \$800,000 but that is increasing. If those breakwaters do not result in a reduction in that \$800,000 cost, then at least they would prevent future budgets from being used for more dredging.

We in the Association des pêcheurs propriétaires des Îles-de-la-Madeleine feel we do not have the necessary resources to undertake

a cost study. I imagine that a recommendation on that would have to be made to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for our region, Quebec. The department must have that kind of study. Otherwise we could ask it to undertake one.

I would like to add a comment in response to a question that was put previously. Without trying to start a debate, I would like to point out that when Quebec's budgets are calculated, the formula that is used includes certain criteria such as the size of the fleet, because we are talking about vessel size. In Quebec, and especially in the Magdalen Islands, we significantly downsized our vessels in the 1980s and the 1990s. Our downsizing has been done, contrary to some other regions. I am not sure, therefore, that this is reflected in criterion no 2 which deals with fleet size. I'm not sure that an adjustment was actually made. Once again, I am not here to provoke a debate, but I do think there should be consideration for the fact that we undertook significant downsizing, contrary to other regions, elsewhere in the Maritimes and even in the Gaspé.

• (1645)

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Do I have any time left, Mr. Chairman?

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** You may have a short question, yes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Fine. You referred to 9 ports and 400 vessels. Does that last number include recreational fishery and recreational boating in your ports?

**Mr. Léonard Poirier:** No, it refers only to the fishing vessels.

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

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Thank you.

Mr. Calkins.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to thank everybody for coming to testify before the committee here today. I'm certainly finding the presentations very interesting.

One thing that was brought up—I believe it was by Mr. Desrape—that I thought was very interesting, and I don't think I've heard that perspective before at this committee, dealt with the number of wharves or harbours for fishermen to come in and the effect that the fisheries policy had on that. You mentioned a competitive fishery. As the fleet of fishing boats moves around, it puts pressures on various wharves because of the nature of the competitive fishery.

Could you expand on the effect that policy has and do you have an opinion about maybe a quota-type system that is not so time-based, or whatever the case might be, to help illuminate for me, as a member of this committee, what might actually take some of the burden off the small craft harbours based on a fisheries management policy?

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Desrape:** The fishery being what it is, Fisheries and Oceans Canada manages it this way. I have no solution. However, we have to understand that small craft harbours have problems that are not just seasonal. The problems may increase during some periods, but many harbours have problems throughout the year; they are crowded throughout the year. In some periods, they may not even be accessible at all, something that causes even more problems.

In answer to your question, I don't have a solution. Many harbour authorities have defended the way they manage their facilities, but as I said—and we often hear this—many ports are crowded all year. Others are generally less crowded, but become crowded at certain times of the year. We have to be aware of the problem.

We are talking about harbour authorities. Of course, we pay top wharfage, but when you travel between two or three harbours a season, it all adds up. Here is what I am coming to. The issue was raised a little earlier. Harbour authorities do very good work within the system, in my view. To sell harbour authorities to Canadian fishers—particularly fishers in the Magdalen Islands—the current government has said very clearly that we needed to work with harbour authorities, and that it would be there when we needed it for major investment. The government said that we had every interest in working with them, that our interests would be looked after and that everything would be fine. The fishers accepted that in good faith. Port authorities are very good about minor work, facilities are very clean, and power, power outlets and small jobs are all dealt with and work very well. However, we should not let that make us believe that fishers can afford secure harbours, and that sort of thing. It's unthinkable. In any case, that is not the purpose of the exercise. I should tell you that some harbour authorities often feel quite alone, and perhaps even forgotten. We have every interest in trying to invest more in small craft harbours.

Thank you.

• (1650)

[English]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I appreciate that. That's what I'm getting at.

Ms. Eastman, as somebody who directly works at a harbour and under the auspices of a harbour authority, I have the same question. Are there any issues regarding those types of fisheries, a competitive fishery versus a quota fishery, that might help this committee?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** No, I don't really think that it makes any difference. But perhaps I can make one suggestion as to something that might be done with harbour authorities and through small crafts. We've talked a bit this afternoon about trying to find solutions to problems, trying to find solutions to infilling, siltation, and breakwaters. Part of the problem with small crafts is that we can't access the funds to do those studies because we're eating into the very dollars we need to fix the wharf. Is there another government department that has some type of an innovation fund that we could look to in order to fund some of these studies so that we're not taking our “mortar and brick” dollars, pardon the term, to fund studies into tidal patterns and erosion and siltations?

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

Just as point of clarification—and I don't mean to take this any further—I believe Mr. Lévesque referred to Prince Edward Island being fortunate in having a lot of rip-rap or other building materials like that. My visit to Prince Edward Island did not indicate that was the case at all. I had some very specific questions for some of the harbour authorities and fishermen there, and the breakwaters were made out of timber because there simply wasn't access to those kinds of construction materials, which poses another problem.

I just want to give you an opportunity to clarify if that's indeed the case.

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Thank you very much,

Yes, in fact every piece of stone that is on Prince Edward Island that is any colour but red has been brought in from Nova Scotia, and we use lots of it. We have nothing we can commit on our own there.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Thank you very much.

We've been through twice. Is it the wish of the committee to go through again? We have time and I don't mind. If members have a question or two, we can continue.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to tell Blaine that he did not interpret my comments correctly. I was wrongly quoted.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Okay. That's not a question—

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Chairman, what I meant was...

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** —it's a point of clarification.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Chairman, what I meant was that, on Prince Edward Island, we have an advantage—we have a bridge to bring in the rock. In the Magdalen Islands, they don't have one.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** I agree. I think they're quite lucky to have Ms. Eastman with the information she's given the committee today. She's been quite compelling, actually.

Does the committee agree to doing a quick runaround, for just one question each? Does everybody agree with that? And we'll have a quick answer, a short answer.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Sure.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Mr. MacAulay.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** Thank you very much.

Again, I want to thank you very much for coming on very short notice for a half an hour that ended up being two hours, which is wonderful; that's what happens around here.

There are things that did happen that are good, but what I'm concerned about...and of course with North Lake, you're there, and you're hard to deal with, and you need all the money, so that creates....

We have five managers, but we have a lot of wharves that do not have people like you. We have harbour authorities. What is your...?

We had the harbour authorities here before us. You viewed, before you came here, for a very limited time, what has taken place in some of those harbours. Fatigue for volunteers is a concern for this committee. I'd like you to comment on that. And what's going to happen if we don't get at least up to \$130 million or \$140 million on Prince Edward Island?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** I like this man.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Did he mean "for" Prince Edward Island?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Oh, he meant "for". We're not sharing that with anybody. That's just ours.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** I just wanted clarification.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** The small craft harbours budget has not increased.

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Harbour fatigue is and has been a problem for the last number of years. I don't know how these guys do it. I honestly don't. They're trying to fish. They're trying to make a living. If they have to phone an electrician, they can't phone him at 4:30 in the morning when they get up. They have to wait and phone him from their cellphone in the middle of hauling their lobster gear at half past eight.

If you're doing a job you love, that's one thing, but when you're doing a job you love, and you're doing a voluntary job on top of it for everybody's good, and you are the guy.... I know, working a paid position, the wonderful praises and glories I get some days. I can only imagine taking that as a volunteer.

The other hard part of the other harbours that don't have employed positions is that sometimes it actually can affect them on the water as well.

It really is. It's getting to the point where the harbour fatigue has grown quite a bit on P.E.I. You're seeing very good people just stop and walk away.

•(1655)

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** Can we get that \$130 million?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Mr. Blais, do you have a question?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** Thank you.

I just wanted to say that we have seen representatives or harbour administrations. One of the things the group points out—a group that represents all harbour administrations in Canada—is that they are exhausted and frustrated by the situation. They are exhausted because of the facts you have set out, and they are frustrated because of the situation regarding funding and needs. They are caught

between a rock and a hard place. They have to bear the brunt of everything because they are on the front line. People in cabinet don't have to face immediate recriminations, but the manager of a harbour administration, or the volunteer who is there, will have to respond to those initial expressions of frustration. It's very difficult.

Lastly, I would like to ask Mario if he would like to cap things off and deliver a concluding message on the situation of small craft harbours. I know that, as a fisherman, Mario experiences the problems involved every day. He has described them very well. I would like to give him time to make a few additional comments, if he wishes.

**Mr. Léonard Poirier:** I will take a few seconds, if I may.

We often make the connection between the harbour and the fishers, from what I can hear at the committee. However, there is an important connection that is a historical one, which has always existed, and which is becoming more and more important. That is the connection between the harbour and the community. In the past, the church was the heart of the community. It still is, but in many communities now, the heart, or the centre, is the harbour, because there are jobs involved. I think that you, the members, are well aware of it. This is something that you are concerned about. It goes further than the connection between the harbour and the fishers.

Thank you.

**Mr. Mario Desrape:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In conclusion, I would say that if I had a message for the Canadian government, it would be this: don't let us down. Mr. Poirier said it at the beginning—we are not doing that badly, even in the Magdalen Islands. We do, after all, have earnings that amount to \$45 million. We are not millionaires, but we can support our families decently, even today, through the efforts we have put in. So you have to keep supporting us, as I said. The government has to maintain the infrastructure so that we can keep our livelihood. If we can't use the harbours, we will be done. We will not even be able to maintain our boats. If our boats are not sheltered, if they break, our livelihood is in jeopardy because of poorly maintained government infrastructure. But we bear the repercussions. Please don't let us down, we need investments.

Thank you.

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Kamp.

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to our witnesses for appearing. I always appreciate hearing forthright testimony.

I don't have long, and I want to clarify a bit more with Mrs. Eastman. First of all, could you tell me briefly how long you've been in your position?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Six years.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** And were you connected with the harbour authority in any way before that?

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** I was connected with the fishermen but not the harbour authority.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** From the figures I've seen, I think we hear loud and clear that more funding is needed, and it's good to hear it again, but throughout almost all the nineties the budget was considerably lower than it is now. Some years in the mid-nineties the budget was 50% of what is being spent now. If you were around in those years, I wonder what that must have been like. Did that contribute to even greater volunteer fatigue than you're experiencing now, or did it feel about the same as it is now?

• (1700)

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** I wasn't around then, and the budget would have been at that figure before most of the harbour authorities in P.E.I. would have come into effect. So it was still small crafts being small crafts.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** So maybe not the same.

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** So not the same harbour fatigue because not the same working relationship.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** I have many other questions but I don't have time.

Could you tell us what your annual budget is at North Lake? We've heard about funding, but this committee really is about making recommendations to the minister. Are there other things related to small craft harbours that you think we should be recommending to the minister? I would like to hear that from you as well.

**Mrs. Sheila Eastman:** Our annual budget is about \$700,000, but if I had one recommendation to make to the minister, it would be to start filling the positions in small craft harbours that are not filled. And this is not bricks and mortar, this is bodies. I mean the chiefs who have retired. The brain drain at small craft harbours is incredible. In the last couple of years good people have gone mostly because of retirement, but P.E.I. has been without a chief now—we've had an acting chief—for almost a year.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** That's good to know.

Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Mr. Kamp, this is the first time you've spoken today.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Yes, that's true.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** So if you want another question, you can....

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Léonard Poirier:** Your first question seems important to me. I have been there for 25 years now, but not always as a fisherman. There have been many changes when we look back and compare past departmental budgets with current budgets. The change amounts to 50%, if I understand the question correctly. It's a matter of safety. Vessels are now much larger, for safety. I have not heard about many lives lost in my region in small craft harbours over the past few years. In the first few years, and until quite recently, lives in our communities would be lost. That is very hard to bear for small communities. It's all related to safety. Representatives of organizations tell us that we need safe boats, so people make their boats bigger. That makes harbours more crowded, and entails more spending. I do see a link to your question there.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bill Matthews):** Thank you very much.

I would like to once again thank our witnesses for coming. Your exchange with our committee members is certainly very valuable. We wanted to hear from people like you, people who are very involved with the day-to-day operations and who interact with fishermen.

Of course Mario is a fisherman; we certainly appreciate your coming.

With that, I will adjourn the meeting.

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